

## The Ages 1421

### Chapter 1421 - The Wiped-Out Army

With the Tumulus Pill God's age, his lifebound beasts had also long since gone past their peak. Even so, they still seemed like the kings of avian and terrestrial beasts. They combined the advantages of lions and eagles. In the sky or on the land, these were war gods among lifebound beasts!

As for him, after he had grown to over ten meters tall, his eight ears were obvious. It was the eight-ears talent of the wargodeans, which was an innate gift for combat that could push their echolocation to a terrifying level and give them even greater combat ability. No sound in the battlefield could escape his notice.

With his long spear and giant cauldron, and commanding five nine-headed war griffons, it was clear that the previous War God hadn't lost his sharpness yet.

This clash left Yun Tianque unable to breathe.

"Don't resist!" The Tumulus Pill God knocked aside countless cultivators protecting Yun Tianque, seizing the initiative.

A handsome and cold middle-aged man suddenly appeared in front of Yun Tianque and his gaze stabbed into the Tumulus Pill God like sharp swords. At the same time, eight shadows appeared by the man's side—they were darknight truefiends! When they appeared, the surrounding area was immediately plunged into darkness. In the dark, the horned figures with their blood-red eyes and giant, beast-like claws looked especially frightening.

"Yang Ce!" The Tumulus Pill God's eyes narrowed. He couldn't understand what he was seeing. Yang Ce was from the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect, what was he doing here? His instincts suddenly screamed danger and he turned around. Many experts had surrounded him. Long Wanying, Yan Wuxia.... Them being with Yang Ce was normal. But why was Gujian Qingshuang there? Even the Snowsun Quadspecters were preparing to fight the Tumulus Pill God!

"You all?" The Tumulus Pill God shook. He smelled a conspiracy, but his mind was a mess.

They all coldly looked at him. "Tumulus Pill God, you had a high prestige and commanded universal respect. Yet you chose to become a lapdog of the celestial orderians. That is... unacceptable," Long Wanying said.

"You and Yun Tianque!" The Tumulus Pill God stared with wide eyes as his heart pounded. He still didn't get it.

Yun Tianque and Gujian Qingshuang were generational foes! How could they be here, standing side by side? How did Gujian Qingshuang dare to come into the Supracloud Sanctuary's formation by himself? Why were the Snowsun Quadspecters serving them? He didn't get it! He couldn't see Tianming, who was spectating the battle from afar.

No one would solve his confusion.

"Interesting," the Tumulus Pill God couldn't help but laugh.

Long Wanying looked outside and said, "Let me tell you some good news. Right now, Li Wushuang is trying to bring two hundred thousand people north to escape. They're already at the gates of the Supracloud Sanctuary. However, the Northdipper Swordsage brought people to block them and their path. They're currently surrounded by an army of a million cultivators, so your current last ditch effort is meaningless. Don't you have eight ears? Can you hear the wailing of your hundred thousand wargodeans outside?"

The Tumulus Pill God felt his heart clench. No matter how good his hearing was, he couldn't hear anything from outside the formation. Long Wanying was mocking him, so he wouldn't believe her!

"Wretched woman, stop lying. How could you all stop her if Lady Wushuang wanted to bring people away? You think some words are enough to scare me?" the Tumulus Pill God coldly laughed, but he felt like countless ants were crawling over his heart.

"Look behind you!"

Battle had already erupted in the formation. With a ten-to-one disadvantage, the wargodeans could only flee.

"Inside, outside, all you all know how to do is run," Long Wanying said.

"Bastards!" The Tumulus Pill God was furious. "In the past, would a bunch of incapable children like you have dared to surround me?"

"Why talk about the past? Accept your fate!" Long Wanying said. She exchanged a glance with her team; none of them would care about fairness when it came to the Tumulus Pill God.

"All of you come at me together!" The Tumulus Pill God's status was nothing like Lan Sha's. He was someone whom all wargodeans respected and was the strongest opponent they had besieged so far.

From afar, Tianming felt his heart pound. Could they succeed? At least it would be hard for the Tumulus Pill God to escape now that he had entered the formation.

The darknight truefiends and nine-headed war griffons started attacking each other. The battle between gold and black tore apart the clouds, forcing Tianming to retreat.

"Yin Chen, what's the status outside?" Tianming asked.

"All is... under control..." Yin Chen proudly said.

"Speak clearly!"

"They have... countless casualties...."

How many exactly were countless? Tianming looked at the edges of the formation; he wanted to see it personally.

"To seize this continent, I need to chase away the invaders. Goodbye, wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean!"

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Smoke and blood filled the air as a rain of fire fell from the fiery clouds above to meet the bloody mist on the battlefield. The rain of fire caused the pools of blood on the ground to boil and release blood-red vapor that filled the air with a stench.

“This way, Lady Wushuang!” Among the mountains of corpses and rivers of blood, a small group was cutting through the bloodsoaked battlefield. It was Li Wushuang and her fourteen aides. Even now, they were still orbiting around her. If they flew, they would definitely be faster. However, they would be a target, so they stuck to the ground and tried to leave inconspicuously.

There was a crunch as Li Wushuang stepped on a fallen leaf, cracking a corpse’s arm bone hidden underneath. She remained expressionless as she continued on.

“Lady Wushuang, don’t be angry. It doesn’t matter. It isn’t like these are losses for our celestial orderians. They’re just some wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators. They’re servants of the emperor, so some of them dying doesn’t really matter.”

“Right, right. His Solar majesty won’t blame you.”

“The Northdipper Swordsage is too hateful. The Sky Palace, Dreamless Celestial Nation, and the Voidword Shrine haven’t even dared to speak up, but he still ran here to show off. That moron is seeking death.”

“When His Solar Majesty hears of this, he’ll definitely wipe out the Emyrean Sword Sect to help you vent.”

“In this situation, they’re so surrounded that even ten thousand of this two hundred thousand escaping would be a miracle. Let’s forget about them and leave faster!”

“Yes, your safety is the most important thing.”

Her entourage continued comforting Li Wushuang.

“Quiet. The next one to speak will lose their tongue.” Li Wushuang’s voice was utterly sinister. She didn’t sympathize with the dead; however, this sort of failure would mark her for the rest of her life.

Her attendants hurriedly shut up.

However, at that moment, a mob of several hundred rushed out. In the lead was a bloodsoaked Wind Swordlord. From how he looked, he had participated in a massacre. Even if he hadn’t slain a thousand, he had at least slain eight hundred. When he laid eyes on Li Wushuang, he gulped. He immediately used a divine ordered tome to send out a flare that lit up the sky, signaling Li Wushuang’s position! Countless people quickly surged in his direction, barring their path.

“How did he find us when we were so stealthy?” Li Wushuang frowned.

Her group was actually almost out of the battlefield. It seemed that the Wind Swordlord had known their location.

“That’s true!”

The way forward was swarming with people.

“It’s Li Wushuang!”

“Stop her!”

“Kill her!”

The sight of so many randoms looking at her with murder in their eyes made Li Wushuang coldly sneer. However, she was undeniably very irritated.

“Which of you betrayed me? Step out.” Li Wushuang looked at those around her with contempt.

They were all stunned. They didn’t know why the Snowsun Quadspecters had betrayed them, either. Due to that betrayal, Li Wushuang assumed one of them had leaked the information.

But in truth, the real reason was that Yin Chen was tracking them. Tianming had then used someone’s transmission stone to give the Wind Swordlord her location. The result was all Yin Chen’s merit.

There were at least eighty thousand people heading this way right now.

“Li Wushuang is here!”

“Stop her!”

Such shouts could be heard everywhere. These people didn’t show any mercy and directly charged in for the kill. However, ordinary people couldn’t pose a threat to Li Wushuang. She would have died long ago otherwise.

“What do we do now, Lady Wushuang? There are so many.” Some of her attendants started getting anxious.

“Shut up! Just kill them all! How dare they raise a hand against Lady Wushuang?”

At that moment, several attacks from lifebound beasts were lobbed toward Li Wushuang. This was a war! Even if Li Wushuang wouldn’t die in the end, her entourage might not survive.

“Kill our way out!” They sped up and finally managed to leave behind the forest and arrive at a vast lake. This was the northmost part of the Azurecloud Continent. Any farther and they would be in celestial orderian territory.

However, when they reached the lakeshore, they found over ten thousand swordpupils floating above the lake. And at their center was a man with a stone-like body wearing a mask and gently smiling at them.

He was the Northdipper Swordsage!

## **Chapter 1422 - Emperor of the Stonesword Race**

In the army, the powerhouse who ruled the Emyrean Sword Sect was especially eye-catching. He was the king of the Emyrean Continent as well as the leader of the stonesword race.

On the surface, in Orderia, there were clans, sects and a dynasty. However, fundamentally, it was all just about the high-grade bloodlines of the sun! The dynasties and sects were filled with all kinds, but internally, they all had powerful bloodlines as their foundation. The Azuresoul Palace had the Gujian and

Dongye clans. And the Emyrean Sword Sect had the stoneword race. As for the stoneword race the Northdipper Swordsage belonged to, they all had a distinctive feature—tough bodies that were both like a statue and a sharp sword.

The fingers poking out of his sleeves didn't look like flesh, but instead pure crystal. Instead of having ten fingers, it was more like having ten swords. Supposedly, the Northdipper Swordsage was the most accomplished in cultivating a sword body across all of Orderia. His entire body was suffused with divine hazard sword ki.

The stoneword race's physique was a natural sword body. It was easier for them to absorb and fuse divine hazard sword kis than anyone else. The Northdipper Swordsage was only showing his neck and fingers, but millions of strands of sword ki could clearly be seen flowing even in those small areas. The continuous sword ki emanating from his body left others unable to even open their eyes in his direction. He was a naturally sharp person.

Even stranger was the pure black mask he was wearing. There were no eyes, ears, mouth, or nose on it, but seven holes from which sword ki continuously leaked out like starlight. It made his face look like there were seven stars on it, which was the story behind his name, "Northdipper Swordsage".

When she felt the starlight prick her, even Li Wushuang deeply frowned.

"Northdipper Swordsage!" Her bodyguards didn't look very happy, either. Apart from the Northdipper Swordsage, the Wind Swordlord's signal had drawn over experts from other sects of the alliance as well. The land and skies were absolutely swarming with beastmasters and lifebound beasts, and even quite a few totems. Countless giant beasts snarled and howled at them. The fifteen of them had been locked down tight.

"We're surrounded." The fifteen felt gloomy. The Wind Swordlord was behind them, the Northdipper Swordsage was in front of them, and experts from the alliance were on both sides.

"Li Wushuang." The Northdipper Swordsage approached them. The ground shook beneath his feet. Massive sword-shaped stones burst out of the ground. There had to be over a hundred thousand of them, which quickly assembled themselves into five giant beasts. The beasts were covered in sharp sword thorns, and were clearly born for battle.

The stone lifebound beasts had a similar concept as the galaxy grandbeasts of the divineglorians. They also seemed to have a slight overlap with Yin Chen's skills. As the Northdipper Swordsage's lifebound beasts, these stone lifeforms made of swords were naturally members of one of the most supreme lifebound beast bloodlines on Orderia! They were the equal of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's Saintdragon's Blessing.

When the Northdipper Swordsage took action, a sea of sword ki formed around him. Together with his five stone beasts, it was like an entire world bearing down on Li Wushuang.

"You shouldn't have come here. The Myriad Solar Sects and Azurecloud Continent aren't places you can act willfully. We have a ceasefire agreement with the celestial orderians. You don't have the right to commit atrocities here and kill the innocent." Every word was like a mountain that crushed down on Li Wushuang.

She hoarsely laughed. "Ceasefire agreement? The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is almost gone, and you want to talk about a ceasefire?"

Actually, it wasn't very suitable for her to say those words, as the emperor had only attacked the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect with the pretext of returning the Veildragon Palace to their roots, thus he hadn't broken the ceasefire agreement. Yet here was his sister, mocking the ceasefire agreement.

"So you mean to say that returning the Veildragon Palace to their roots was just an excuse. You all planned to tear apart the ceasefire agreement and begin an invasion of our Myriad Solar Sects, starting with the Azurecloud Continent. If that's the case, don't blame us for marshaling troops and joining this war for self-defense..." the Northdipper Swordsage sneered.

Li Wushuang's arrogance allowed him to conveniently throw a label of invader onto Li Wushuang.

"Northdipper Swordsage, are you really playing word games? Why is it my fault that you massacred so many from the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean, members of your Myriad Solar Sects here? This is your internal conflict, don't drag me into it! Let me give you some advice. I know you want to rise up in the world and call yourself the leader of the Myriad Solar Sects, but people like you tend to die early deaths, understand?" Li Wushuang coldly smiled.

"The people of the Myriad Solar Sects can see clearly that the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean are your lapdogs. Why quibble when everyone knows it? The crimes you've committed are too numerous to list. Since you started this war, don't blame us for ending it!" The Northdipper Swordsage didn't use his name, but instead that of the Myriad Solar Sects. That was him being smart; the name of the Empyrean Sword Sect alone wouldn't be enough to represent justice.

"Do it!" the Northdipper Swordsage ordered.

"Split them up!" When the fifteen people were split up, they would be swallowed by the sheer mass of people.

"Swordsage, what do we do with these fourteen?" many people asked.

"Kill them to the last man!" A few simple words were a death sentence for Li Wushuang's henchmen. Her eighteen loyalists all had complicated histories; only a few were celestial orderians. Most of them were criminals of the Myriad Solar Sects who had fled to her for safety and become her bodyguards.

They were all peak experts as strong as Gujian Qingshuang, and could have become sect masters of second-rate sects. If they weren't in a war and surrounded, Li Wushuang would have been safe anywhere with them. They had arrogantly come to the Azurecloud Continent, thinking they were to play and hunt. But now, when they heard the Northdipper Swordsage pronounce judgment upon them, they finally realized they had been playing with fire.

They had poked a hornet's nest!

As per the Northdipper Swordsage's orders, they were bombarded by attacks from lifebound beasts and forced apart. They were even separated from their lifebound beasts and immediately surrounded by several experts of their level, as well as a few thousand others!

**Chapter 1423 - The Tumulus Pill God's Heart**

It was pressure by pure numbers. Several thousand solarians, even if they were low level, would easily overpower and leave no chance for the fourteen high level solarians.

Quite a few experts of the Myriad Solar Sects had come. There were over twenty of them on the level of sect masters of second-rate sects, and ten were present there. There were also a few experts from first-rate sects. There was no contest at all between the two sides.

Pained screams filled the battlefield. Their lifebound beasts were so large that as soon as they showed themselves, they would suffer concentrated fire from thousands of other lifebound beasts and immediately turn into piles of mush.

In comparison, the Snowsun Quadspecters were lucky. At least they were still alive.

“Lady Wushuang, save me!”

“Ahh—”

Pain. Despair. Regret.

However, that wasn't enough to quell the fury of the alliance. No matter how cunning the Northdipper Swordsage was, the main reason they had joined was purely to protect the Myriad Solar Sect's dignity and territory. They had already felt their comrades' pain when the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect was attacked. Regretfully, there had been no one to lead them then. But forty thousand of the Emyrean Sword Sect perishing in Myriad Solar Sect territory had pushed them over their boiling point!

Only a third of the sects in the Myriad Solar Sects had mobilized. It meant they were the bravest of the brave and weren't fighting for the sake of benefits. After all, there weren't enough divine herbs from the Azurecloud Divine Tree to go around for an army of this size.

“Kill!” In truth, the battle was nearly over. Judging by the number of corpses, it would be a minor miracle if ten thousand of them managed to survive. This was a true wipeout of the army!

However, Li Wushuang was still the one the Myriad Solar Sects hated the most. Whether they dared to kill her would be up to the Northdipper Swordsage. But her henchmen had to die! Her status was too high, so her fourteen remaining henchmen could only act as scapegoats for the anger of the Myriad Solar Sects.

“Kill them all!”

“Kill!”

Just two hours ago, these bodyguards had been living a happy life. Now, they were full of despair.

Li Wushuang saw everything as it occurred. Her eyes were bloodshot and her face was distorted. Over two hundred thousand elites had died, and her cronies were about to die. Even she herself was surrounded by the Northdipper Swordsage and Wind Swordlord. Disaster wasn't a strong enough word to describe it. She could only brandish her Skymoon Holyfiend and meet the battle with her eight ghostface moongoddesses.

One of her celestial orderian cronies crawled to her, his body covered in blood. He wanted to say something, but his pursuers quickly hacked off his head with a sword! His head rolled to her feet, still filled with pain and disbelief.

“Northdipper, you’ll die for this!” Li Wushuang’s hand couldn’t stop shaking.

“No need to be enthusiastic, you’re next.” The Northdipper Swordsage appeared in front of her, countless streaks of sword ki whistling around him.

Instead of getting angry, Li Wushuang laughed, “Don’t brag. Just come and try me.”

“Yes, let’s give this a try.” The Northdipper Swordsage shot forward.

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In the Myriadfold Skycloud Formation of the Supracloud Sanctuary, the battle was still raging. Just Yang Ce alone was enough to go against the Tumulus Pill God, and he had helpers distracting him now as well.

“Look behind you, Tumulus Pill God.”

The Tumulus Pill God, his golden skin covered in blood, turned around. He saw that the wargodeans he had brought were all in chaos and being devoured by the mist. Even he himself was like an arrow at the end of his flight. His ten thousand wargodeans had either been slain or captured, and the freed-up Supracloud Sanctuary cultivators all came to join the encirclement around the Tumulus Pill God.

In all directions, there were people!

His lifebound beasts were all heavily injured as well.

Let alone escape, even survival would be unlikely. His back was against the wall. The Tumulus Pill God sucked in a cold breath. He seemed to have aged a lot in this instant.

Long Wanying looked at him and calmly said, “It isn’t that bad here. Outside, your hundred thousand wargodeans have nearly been wiped out as well. Now there aren’t many wargodeans left alive on this continent.”

The Tumulus Pill God’s eyes were bloodshot. He truly wanted to go out and see if Long Wanying was telling the truth. However, neither transmission stones nor himself could exit.

“So, you all have won. Congratulations, congratulations.... But don’t celebrate too early. After this, His Solar Majesty, the Warlord, and the Deluge Emperor will be furious. This entire continent will be wiped out!” The Tumulus Pill God stared at Long Wanying’s group with hatred.

The nine-headed war griffon beside him gave a lion’s roar with its eagle heads, causing the surrounding clouds to vibrate.

“They’ll be angry? Will they send another few million troops? Is it worth it for some herbs and saplings? If this continues escalating and becomes an all-out war between the Myriad Solar Sects and celestial orderians, the casualties will be in the billions. The first to go will be the cannon fodder.”



Long Wanying continued, "Tumulus Pill God, we all live on the same world. No one wants to wipe anyone out. All of the clans have propagated and had too many descendants after the last million years."

"Why are you saying this? You want to let us go?" the Tumulus Pill God sneered.

"No." Long Wanying shook her head. "I only know that the wargodeans are different from the Blueblood Starocean. You all just took some benefits from the celestial orderians to strengthen yourselves and rise up in the rankings. It doesn't mean you will shed an unlimited amount of blood for them. And today, you all were used by a self-obsessed, stubborn, and cold-blooded woman. Hundreds of thousands of your brethren died for nothing. You all could've walked away."

The words stabbed at the Tumulus Pill God's heart. He had seen everything clearly from the start; the miserable ending of his wargodeans had been completely Li Wushuang's fault. When he had come here, all he'd wanted were some herbs. But now, so many of his elites had been lost!

### **Chapter 1424 - Swordlord's Raging Storm**

Everything could have been prevented. "All they gave you were some minor benefits, yet you were ready to throw your lives away for them. The pitiful hundred thousand wargodeans that you got killed don't only have Li Wushuang to thank for their deaths. They truly died senseless deaths after being used by her in a conflict that should've been between the Myriad Solar Sects and the celestial orderians. You, Tumulus Pill God, are just as culpable for what happened to them!" Long Wanying chided.

"Shut up!" The Tumulus Pill God closed his eyes and grit his teeth. "Enough, Long Wanying, stop wasting words and just wait for your demise! I've already been captured by all of you, so do your worst."

"Who said we were going to kill you?" Long Wanying smiled.

"What do you mean?"

"Tumulus, you're free to leave. We won't be stopping you." Long Wanying's words came as a shock to the others, who clearly hadn't been informed about this beforehand.

"Let me go? Are you trying to get me to do something for you?"

"Go back to your disciple, the Warlord, and tell him to think twice before taking action. Don't risk any more unnecessary deaths for the Azurecloud Continent. You aren't like the Blueblood Starocean. The wargodeans aren't meant to be used as fodder by the celestial orderians. Think about it... if the wargodeans continue sending reinforcements against the alliance's army while the celestial orderians send nobody, isn't it the same as your faction going alone against the whole alliance? Does that even make sense? You may believe that the wargodeans are comparable to the Veildragon Palace in the eyes of the sun emperor, but is that really the case?"

He looked at her for a long while without saying a word. Not only did he understand her logic, he couldn't refute it! He had known it for quite some time now, but it was a little too late for him to acknowledge it outright.

"As long as Li Wushuang still lives, wargodean lives will be used as chips for her insane gamble. She may be mad that she lost a hundred thousand chips, but it won't be out of pity for your loss, it'll be because she didn't win. She'll force you to raise the stakes more and more to fuel her insane drive for winning!"

"Shut up!" He took a deep breath and said, "Are you really letting me go?"

"I trust that you're someone who's a good judge of character and can see straight through to the core of people. I respect you as a senior, so I won't be holding you here," Long Wanying said.

The Tumulus Pill God had thought that he would die, yet Yun Tianque motioned for the other elites of his sect to make a path for him to retreat. Even the formation opened up for him.

"Fine! Fine!" he said, his eyes reddened. He didn't linger and immediately left, his body shrinking to his normal two-meter height as he did so. His silhouette almost made it seem as if he had aged quite a lot after just a single battle. Everyone watched him until he disappeared over the horizon.

"Inspect the surroundings and tie up any loose ends!" Yun Tianque said.

"Yes!" The hundred thousand cultivators immediately left, leaving the core figures there along with Tianming.

The moment Tianming came back, he asked, "Aunt Ying, why'd you let him go? I was preparing to see if I could control him." Yun Tianque and the rest wanted to ask the same question.

She shook her head and said, "Tumulus isn't easy to control. Don't make the mistake of thinking that just because he submitted to Li Wushuang. Normally, he'd resist anything that could harm the interest of the wargodeans. He's simply far too stubborn. Even if you manage to control him, he'd choose to suicide instead of betray his race." He wasn't the same as the four specters, who had no principles to uphold and could easily turn at the threat of their deaths.

"Do you all understand this? He can die in the hands of the Northdipper Swordsage or anybody else, but not by the hands of the Supracloud Sanctuary. He's the Warlord's master, after all. If he dies by our hand, that'll direct the Warlord's ire to us instead of the Emyrean Sword Sect. That would only make the situation on this continent even harder to resolve. Letting him go now will lead to a much better outcome and cause the wargodeans to refrain from participating in this mess," she continued.

Tianming also understood her logic. The alliance led by the Emyrean Sword Sect wasn't necessarily considered in the same camp as the rest of the Azurecloud Continent. While they could afford to offend the Warlord, the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary couldn't. Not to mention, he hadn't controlled anyone as powerful as the Tumulus Pill God before, so there was no telling if it would all go well. If he eventually went on to kill himself, he might even reveal the secret of the bonegnaw ants, which would actually achieve the exact opposite of the effect they wanted. Most crucially, he didn't care what the Tumulus Pill God did. No doubt, he would be returning to the wargodeans after the battle, and Long Wanying wanted him to consider whether sticking with a heartless person like Li Wushuang would really be worth it.

"I trust that it'll be more effective for us to convince him and get him to stop the Warlord after he comes to his own conclusions rather than directly control him," she said. No matter what kind of person the Tumulus Pill God was, he was undoubtedly someone who deeply loved the wargodeans. Li Wushuang

didn't even treat them as living beings. Just like the Supracloud Sanctuary, the wargodeans would start reevaluating whether her crazy lust for victory would be worth the lives of their own people.

"I see...." Tianming nodded in agreement. His seniors had much better foresight than he did, after all. The control afforded by the bonegnaw ants was only a single avenue out of many. The best method to employ would still be convincing others to join their cause of their own free will. All Tianming was doing with the bonegnaw ants was using them to get Gujian Qingshuang and Yun Tianque to come to his side at the beginning and allow them to willingly side with him.

"If the wargodeans are willing to extricate themselves from the affairs of the continent and perhaps even cause trouble for the sun emperor over what happened today, we'll have solved half of the issues we're facing now. That only leaves the Blueblood Starocean. Surely they aren't willing to give their lives to serve Li Wushuang either, right?" Tianming asked.

"They definitely wouldn't. Even less so than the wargodeans, in fact, unless the celestial orderians themselves send troops to lead them into battle. However, there's no incentive for the celestial orderians to do so at all. They don't really care about the divine herbs here, and the potential benefits the saplings may offer, if there even are any, are still unknown. Not to mention, the ones who have perished so far aren't celestial orderians, so they don't even have a bone to pick here. At the end of the day, there's no good reason on the continent that would make them truly discard the peace treaty. After all, they went out of their way to claim that what happened to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is due to the return of the Veildragon Palace rather than their involvement, right? They can also argue that the battle that happened here is a result of a civil war among the Myriad Solar Sects," Long Wanying explained.

The alliance's million-man army was far too much. If the celestial orderians really sent troops without any justification, like the Veildragon Palace's recent 'return', it would be a clear declaration of war. Should that come to pass, the Myriad Solar Sects would no longer have a good reason to not help the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect resolve their issues, which would throw a wrench in the sun emperor's plans to absorb that sect.

"At the end of the day, all the chaos here was caused by Li Wushuang alone. She's single-handedly caused the deaths of more than two hundred thousand wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators."

That definitely wasn't something that the sun emperor would have wanted. If he had smoothly obtained the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect, there would be no need for him to fight over these pitiful divine herbs at all.

Tianming could tell how angry the Tumulus Pill God was at Li Wushuang from the look in his eyes, and that was exactly what they wanted. As Tianming hadn't shown up just now, nor had he used his bonegnaw ants, the Tumulus Pill God wouldn't be able to figure out how the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary had come to work together. As far as he was concerned, it would probably be something along the lines of Yun Tianque caving to the pressure of the alliance's army and choosing to defect to their side. As for the Azuresoul Palace, it only seemed right that they were on the same side as the Empyrean Sword Sect was on. So, the only conclusion he could come to would be that the Northdipper Swordsage had forced Gujian Qingshuang and Yun Tianque to ally up.

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The mountains of corpses and rivers of blood mainly came from the golden bodies of the wargodeans. The Tumulus Pill God walked through the battlefield before kneeling in agony, tears endlessly flowing. "It's my fault! My fault! Long Wanying was right! At least, those of the Veildragon Palace were considered servants. Though they have a lower status, they're still treated as fellow people. Yet the wargodeans are regarded as nothing more than the sun emperor's pets! Why are we being used as fodder the moment the battle starts even though we celebrate the celestial orderians' victories with them? Why are we the first to give our lives? Isn't this the cardinal sin that breaks all alliances? Causes internal strife? Why did they have to go so far to use us as fodder...."

He looked up at his dead brethren who probably wouldn't even make it back to their homeland to be buried and felt his grief intensify. This was never what he wanted, but a symbol of Li Wushuang's depressing cruelty and stubbornness.

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"Lady Wushuang!" someone cried in pain. The last of her fourteen subordinates had been vaporized.

"Ugh..." Li Wushuang felt the world around her spin as she witnessed that sight. She spat out a mouthful of blood as she smashed into the ground, suffering multiple heavy injuries and knowing that the Northdipper Swordsage could have killed her long ago if he wanted to. However, she didn't feel the slightest bit of joy from that realization. Everyone beside her was now dead, without exception, yet she was left alive. It was almost as if she was being toyed with. The swordsage seemed to be planning to deprive her of her last bits of pride and dignity without leaving her with a permanent injury.

"Looks like they're all dead. It's your turn now," he said, smiling.

"You really are a boring one. Would you dare touch me if I just stand here and let you hit me?" Li Wushuang said as she struggled to get up, coldly smiling at him.

"I would!" someone cried out from behind her.

Li Wushuang turned back and saw the Wind Swordlord, his eyes as red as a raving beast's. He roared and growled as his sword stance diversified into myriad forms, forming a storm that came slashing toward her. He had gone mad! "Die!"

Though Li Wushuang didn't fear the swordsage, she did somewhat fear this madman. There was no doubt that he truly wanted her dead for his revenge. "Dammit!"

Her totems were still being held back by the swordsage, so she had no choice but to fight the crazed Wind Swordlord with her own body. His lifebound beast, the windfiend, turned into formless air and surrounded her, putting her in the heart of a storm. The strong winds ripped apart countless leaves in the surroundings.

"Li Wushuang, go to hell!" A formless sword emerged from the windfiend.

"Fuck off!" She swung Skymoon Holyfiend, sending out tens of thousands of strands of moonlight sword ki. However, the Wind Swordlord pressed on without regard for his own safety, breaking through her attacks and piercing his sword straight into her left arm. When she looked down at it, her wound exploded with the power of wind! One of her bane-rings had been there, but it had now been destroyed!

## Chapter 1425 - Myriadghoul Voidmoon

Li Wushuang had eight bane-rings. The crazed Wind Swordlord had fully intended on killing her, but she managed to avoid a fatal strike. He still remembered how his beloved's head had looked at him with pain and suffering after she'd been decapitated by Li Wushuang. Even after the Northdipper Swordsage's reminder to not go too far, he immediately forgot it when he got a chance to strike. Since he couldn't kill her, he would ruin her bane-rings!

The Wind Swordlord's astralforce instantly destroyed one of the bane-rings, causing the totem ki of one of her totems to uncontrollably explode and send the Wind Swordlord flying off.

"Ugh...." Totem ki continued wildly rampaging around as one of the ghostface moongoddesses shattered into countless shards before being absorbed back into the broken bane-ring. Li Wushuang was stunned and in disbelief, the shocking pain immediately causing her psyche to sink to its lowest point. The pain and frustration she felt was impossible to describe with words as all those feelings boiled up within her and rushed to her head. Ever since the two previous losses she had suffered, she'd been made to endure an amount of hardship she never had throughout all her life, and losing a bane-ring only made it far worse. She only had seven remaining, a far cry from the eight she'd had before!

"Empyrean Sword Sect!" she howled with a hoarse voice. Her bloodshot eyes turned to the Wind Swordlord like that of a beast.

"Die!" The Wind Swordlord came back with a strong assault unrelentingly. His lifebound beast, the windfiend, immediately scattered into a storm, surrounding him as he charged in for another clash.

"Stop!" the Northdipper Swordsage yelled, but the Wind Swordlord could only hear the raging winds around him.

It was as if he could still see Li Wushuang holding the head of the Rain Swordlord. "Rain, even if I'm going to die, I'll drag her down with me!" He no longer cared about the consequences of killing her.

Li Wushuang, having suffered a huge injury, was in no place to face off against the two of them. Fortunately, the Northdipper Swordsage stopped attacking, relieving much pressure on her and giving her time to recover. Then, her rage began gushing out like a powerful torrent. "Very well, Empyrean Sword Sect, I'll never be finished with you for the rest of my life."

As she spoke, she took out an eerie black book. It was common knowledge that top-tier battle arts were passed down through legacy formations. In Orderia, there were also divine ordered tomes created by combining the best divine herbs with impressive patterns in blank books. Even though there were very few tome gurus in Orderia, the divine patterned tomes that they created were far more potent than formations of the same grade, making high-grade ones even rarer.

This particular tome had a cover filled with patterns that depicted a black moon that looked like it was alive. The moment it appeared, darkness seemed to spread outward, swallowing all traces of light within ten thousand meters of it and plummeting the world into darkness. Li Wushuang used her blood to activate the tome; the book flipped open rapidly in the darkness and silence. Though it looked small, it had tens and thousands of pages, each of them filled with intricate and arcane celestial patterns that all formed black moon diagrams. When the book was flipped to its end, Li Wushuang's expression grew even more savage. Then the grade-six or possibly greater tome suddenly exploded.

"It's the myriadghoul voidmoon tome! Run!" yelled the swordmage, after which everyone, including the Wind Swordlord, fled from the danger. The name of the tome and its frightening might was enough to make anyone flee.

A shocking explosion was unleashed with Li Wushuang at its core, forming a black sphere of energy that continued to expand like a star, swallowing many lifebound beasts, beastmasters, and even part of the divine tree inside. Even light itself was sucked into the black mass, causing the surrounding area to darken. Screams of pain and agony began ringing out. Even people far away could feel the ground beneath them shake. For an instant, everyone seemed shrouded in darkness and unable to see.

Even after such utter annihilation, the remnant energy still destabilized the surroundings. Countless people around Li Wushuang had died, among them tens of thousands of people and beasts, ground to dust by the divine ordered tome's sheer force and leaving nothing behind but the odor of blood and death.

There was nothing else noteworthy about the scene apart from what looked like black, burnt residue. The entire area where Li Wushuang had been standing was void of any matter at all. She was nowhere to be seen. Naturally, she hadn't been harmed by the tome she had activated with her own blood, which could only mean she'd successfully escaped. Not only that, she had taken down tens of thousands of elites of the Myriad Solar Sects with her, not leaving any remains at all and dealing the alliance a critical blow. Even the nearby Yin Chen units had been eradicated, causing Tianming to lose track of her.

People began gathering around the explosion site. The Northdipper Swordmage found a bloodied old man amidst the pile of corpses. "Old Wind... we promised that we'd only give her a scare so that she wouldn't cause any more trouble. All we needed to do was to kill her subordinates and leave her be. Yet you destroyed one of her bane-rings.... Do you think I've lived too long already or something?" He was so mad he couldn't help himself from stomping.

"I wanted to... kill her..." the Wind Swordlord weakly said.

"Kill her my ass! Your wife is already gone, and everyone mourns for her. But it still isn't right for you to make our allies pay the cost with their lives for your revenge. Our goal today was to kill off every enemy on the continent and leave Li Wushuang alone. We'd already achieved that goal in a massive victory, yet your destruction of her bane-ring messed all of that up! A single rat is all it takes to ruin a pot of porridge!"

The swordmage wasn't an aloof and cold figure like many imagined. Instead, he was quite casual and would call everyone in his sect his brother or sister. Some even affectionately called him the Bossman of the Sword Sect, which sounded more like something one would call the leader of a group of bandits rather than a ruler of the Emyrean Continent.

### **Chapter 1426 - The Sanctuary's Troubles**

The Wind Swordlord gradually awakened from his madness. Even though he didn't want to admit it, he knew that Li Wushuang was someone that couldn't be killed. "Swordmage... what will happen... now that she lost a bane-ring?"

"It's hard to say. Guess it depends on the person," the Northdipper Swordmage said. The number of bane-rings determined the number of totems. Between two totemancers with totems of similar grade,

the one with more totems would have a much greater advantage. In other words, numbers weren't the most important factor. However, having seven or eight bane-rings was usually the limits of one's talent, and the gap between having seven and eight was stark. While a heptabane was still a constellier, an octabane might already have become a solarian!

In other words, the number of bane-rings was a good predictor of a totemancer's rate of growth, and the implications of people who have reached their peak losing bane-rings were different from those of a youth that was still developing, the latter of whom suffered from stunted growth before reaching their full potential. Li Wushuang could only still be considered middle-aged and still had room for growth, so losing a bane-ring wouldn't just affect her in combat, but also her future development. Still, it was much better than someone younger losing a bane-ring. That was why the swordmage said it depended on the specific person.

"Given her temper and how much the sun emperor spoils her, that might be enough for the sun emperor to make his move. Relations between both sides are sensitive right now. The sun emperor wants to absorb the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect using the Veildragon Palace, not through an all-out conflict with the Myriad Solar Sects. However, we can't be too sure if that's the kind of person he is...." The swordmage's voice trailed off, sounding rather downcast. This was rather rare for him; usually, he was the brightest optimist around.

"Apologies, Swordmage, for causing you so much trouble," the Wind Swordlord said.

"It's fine. I understand how you feel about this. Not to mention I'm no pushover, either. At least, I already managed to summon a million fighters to join us, right?"

"Swordmage...." The Wind Swordlord's eyes shook. He decided he would dedicate the rest of his life for the sect. "If anyone has to pay the price for this, I'll definitely offer myself up first. I won't let you be dragged down by this."

"That's enough. Right now, we're celebrating our victory, so let's not talk about depressing matters like these. First, let's clean up the battlefield and loot the two hundred thousand plus corpses. They're sure to have left a huge pile of treasures. Next, we'll go to the Supracloud Sanctuary. They have more than three billion divine herbs there, so we have to act fast. After that, I have to lay low!"

"Understood!"

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Some time later, the Northdipper Swordmage stood atop a branch of the divine tree. There was a corpse of a long snake lifebound beast in front of him, circled around the branch with its head hanging down. However, blood didn't rain down from the branch at all, despite the many wounds it had suffered.

"Huh, the Azurecloud Divine Tree seems to absorb blood. That's interesting. I only heard that it absorbed nova source."

"Swordmage, the divine tree is really mystical. Our forebears must've underestimated what it can do. Once we deal with the Supracloud Sanctuary and take over the Azuresoul Palace, this tree will be ours. After that, we can look into what it can do," the Wind Swordlord said, his voice still hoarse.

"Of course. There's still thirty-five pairs of saplings, right? Are they all in our hands?"

"They are. Li Wushuang wasn't willing to destroy the ones she controlled even at the last moment, so she probably still thinks she stands a chance to take them back."

"That sounds like her, alright." The swordsage stretched a finger out and touched the traces of blood left on the branch. He noticed that some of the vines of the tree had dug their way into the lifebound beast to absorb its life essence. "The divine tree doesn't feel like a plant at all... especially in the way it responds. It feels like a sentient lifeform."

"That's right. I also had that thought."

However, they weren't able to find out much. The tree was far too large for a cursory inspection to discover anything interesting. Then, someone came to make a report. "Swordsage, the battlefield cleanup is complete."

"How is it?"

"Less than ten thousand enemies escaped the continent. There's around two hundred and ten thousand dead with more than twenty thousand taken captive. Our army lost less than forty thousand thanks to our encirclement, a grand victory!"

"Do we have all the treasures collected?" the swordsage asked.

"We have most of them already. The Divinemight Empire, Lazuli Pavilion, and the Wildblade Fortress have distributed some of them among themselves."

"Alright."

Those three factions were first-rate factions that ranked above the Group of Celestial Maiden Halls. Combined, they accounted for around four hundred thousand troops, a substantial number. The Divinemight Empire ranked sixth, being the other empire that ranked under the dreamless celestial nation. It was an imperial clan composed of top-tier beastmasters.

The Wildblade Fortress was ranked seventh and were a true bandit faction. Though their name sounded crude and simple, they had a long history and impressive background. As for the Lazuli Pavilion, they ranked eighth and mainly consisted of oceanic beastmasters. Their sect was based out of the Lazuli Sea, the most beautiful ocean on Orderia. They were the only faction among the top ten to not have any land territory.

"Swordsage, the three of them have come to see you."

Three people approached from the distance, representing the aforementioned sects. The one the empire sent was a middle-aged general called Wu Lingcang. He was dressed in black and his figure was imposing, but not brutish. His cloudy eyes gave off an air of dependability. The representative from the Wildblade Fortress was called One-eyed Wang Hong. As his name suggested, he wore an eyepatch and reeked of the casual disregard of bandits and crooks. As for the Lazuli Pavilion, they sent a beautiful woman wearing an ocean-blue veil as their representative. Her ocean-deep eyes seemed impenetrable. These three were among the top five most powerful elites among the first-rate sects, putting them more or less on par with the Wind and Rain Swordlords.



When they arrived, One-eyed Wang Hong said, "Swordsage, we've already dealt with the situation here, so let's proceed to assemble the army and head toward the Supracloud Sanctuary."

"Yes, I was about to do just that," the Northdipper Swordsage swiftly said. He was concerned about what would happen as a consequence of Li Wushuang losing a bane-ring, so he wanted to wrap up the war as soon as he could.

### **Chapter 1427 - Troops at the Doorstep**

"Swordsage, I want to clarify something. According to our initial agreement, we won't touch the saplings, but the three billion divine herbs from the Supracloud Sanctuary is for our three factions to evenly split, right?" Wu Lingcang asked.

"That's right. However, the legacy and everything about the Supracloud Sanctuary is ours. Don't worry, I'm an upright person and would never cut your share short," the Northdipper Swordsage said. It seemed like he was getting a good deal. If he hadn't insisted on such terms, he probably could have forged the alliance even sooner. However, that still depended on the value of the saplings, which was still unknown. It was a gamble.

"Naturally, we trust your word, Swordsage, but there's a small issue here," Mu Qingqu from Lazuli Pavilion said.

"What is it?"

"Before our alliance arrived, the Supracloud Sanctuary betrayed Li Wushuang and cut ties with her. You might not know this, but the only reason your assault on Li Wushuang and her forces was so successful was due to the Supracloud Sanctuary activating their formation and preventing them from retreating. In fact, some of the Supracloud Sanctuary's characters even left their formation and tried to claim credit from us," One-eyed Wang Hong said in a mocking tone.

"I'm aware of that. The Supracloud Sanctuary only changed their tune because they fear our alliance. That doesn't change the fact that they're already considered to have sided with the celestial orderians. Don't worry. We just have to keep attacking," the swordsage said.

"Since you already said that, we can do as we please without worry."

"That's right. There's no way a dog can switch sides just because it bit its owner."

"A dog's still a dog at the end of the day."

"The three of you are correct," the Northdipper Swordsage said with 'righteous fury'. "Let's lead our troops to them right away."

"Yeah!"

The four went to make arrangements for the next battle right after the previous one had ended.

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On the way, the Wind Swordlord asked, "Swordsage, based on my understanding of Yun Tianque, the fact that he has turned against Li Wushuang and stopped her troops from entering shows that he's

completely cut off relations with the celestial orderians and learned his lesson. Wouldn't an attack on them now be bad for our reputation and be criticized?" He had deliberated this for a long time before bringing it up.

"Why overthink it? We have numbers on our side, so we'll just have to quickly end it. History's written by the victors. All we have to do is to defeat them and label them as traitors. It isn't like Yun Tianque has any significant standing among the Myriad Solar Sects anyway."

"I see...." The Wind Swordlord looked into the distance and sighed. "At the end of the day, did Yun Tianque change course because he wanted the three billion divine herbs for himself?"

"Old friend, the key to feeling better is to not overthink things," the swordsage said, the seven bright holes on his face turned toward the Wind Swordlord.

"Understood."

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Apart from those that remained to clear up the battlefield or guard the saplings, the other six hundred thousand elites pushed onward with their beasts toward the floating island in the sky and completely encircled it. Roars of great beasts shook the air. Many of these elites were solarians and each of them was on par with the stronger elites of the Supracloud Sanctuary. More of them would also come in time.

"Traitors and dogs of the celestial orderians, deactivate your formation and come out to face judgment!"

"You've embarrassed your ancestors! You aren't fit to be part of the Myriad Solar Sects!"

"Skyclouds, voidstags, lowly races like you can never be treated as our equals!"

"Come out to beg for forgiveness now and accept your punishment! Otherwise, we'll exterminate all of you to make an example once we break into your formation!"

Hundreds of thousands of people self-righteously cried out at them even though they knew that the Supracloud Sanctuary's actions had heavily benefited their side by cutting off a route of retreat for Li Wushuang's troops. They didn't think the act would absolve the Supracloud Sanctuary of their mistakes, however.

"We'll give you another ten breaths of time! If you stay cooped up, we'll attack! Don't force us to sentence you to an even harsher punishment!" The Northdipper Swordsage wanted to cripple the elite fighters of the Supracloud Sanctuary, softening them up for the Azuresoul Palace to eventually take over. If that went as planned, the skyclouds and voidstags would fall, marking the start of the slow death of their sect. It wasn't dissimilar to what had been done to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect—a slow but sure genocide, justified in their minds by the horrid deeds of those they sought to wipe out. They didn't fear baseless karmic retaliation, only that their own righteous wills would notice the fundamental inconsistency in their actions and affect their future cultivation. After all, there were tens of millions of skyclouds and voidstags in the sect, and the decision to wipe them out wasn't one to be flippantly made.

"Come out!"

The Northdipper Swordsage, Wind Swordlord, Wu Lingcang, Wang Hong, Mu Qingqu, and the rest stood in front of the army of six hundred thousand, coldly watching the situation. All of that was within Tianming's expectations. It was the natural conclusion of Li Wushuang's defeat and retreat. The Supracloud Sanctuary had been the alliance's main target to begin with, as wiping them out would allow the Azuresoul Palace to take over the continent as a puppet of the swordsage. Eventually, the Gujian clan and House of Dongye would be driven out of the sect until it was nothing more than a true branch of the Emyrean Sword Sect, fully controlled by the stoneword race. The ambition of the swordsage had to be curbed no matter what; Tianming wanted the Azurecloud Continent to be his main base.

Yun Tianque and a hundred thousand cultivators appeared within the formation before the huge army. They tossed out the corpses of wargodeans for them to see. Then, all of them spoke in unison, "We of the Supracloud Sanctuary speak on behalf of the people of the Azurecloud Continent. We thank the alliance for sending aid and saving us from our plight!"

Those words came as a shock to those listening. "Yun Tianque, stop playing games. We're here to help the continent, not your sect. You betrayed us for the celestial orderians, serving outsiders and dishonoring the Myriad Solar Sects. We've come to exterminate you as an example. You have to pay the price for going against everything your ancestors and comrades stood for," said Wu Lingcang of the Divinemight Empire.

The crowd cheered when they heard his words, shaking the entire sect with their sheer volume. However, Yun Tianque didn't change his tune at all. "You claimed that we were killing those on our own side, so I expect you to give specific instances of when we did such a thing. Was it when the grade-eight divine herb appeared? Or was it when the Rain Swordlord died?"

Wu Lingcang was speechless, having no words to refute them. The entire time, nobody from the Supracloud Sanctuary had actually joined the fights.

"It's true that you weren't directly involved in the fights, but you are doubtlessly accountable for bringing the celestial orderians and the traitors that have joined them to the continent and thereby endangering it," Mu Qingqu said.

"Bringing them in? That's funny. The Supracloud Sanctuary isn't powerful enough to resist the pressures the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean applied to us. Not to mention, nobody else came to our aid when they were forcing us to invite them in. Those two first-rate sects wanted the divine herbs of our continent for themselves. How can a second-rate sect like mine be expected to resist? We've been oppressed and used from the very beginning!"

"You can't imagine the joy we felt when we heard that the alliance of the Myriad Solar Sects was finally here to save us. We even activated our formation to cut off the enemy's retreat, thereby aiding the alliance's army. We also killed many wargodeans, as you see here. We were so happy and just about to welcome your side with gratitude, yet you sent troops to our doorstep and threatened to annihilate us the moment you arrived. Such a heartless, cruel display has truly chilled us. Did we drive away a wolf only for a tiger to come? Are you after the divine herbs that we and my descendants have rightful claim to as compensation just like those outsiders and traitors?"

Yun Tianque's impassioned speech resonated with the countless members of his sect. Many of them even teared up. The key point was that his arguments were airtight and indisputable. There was nothing

the alliance's army could say to refute his reasonable explanation. Not to mention, the goal they had in mind when all of them marched to the sect was far too blatant. The Northdipper Swordsage had been too reductive in his analysis—while it was true that victors wrote the history books, the true account of history would always remain, especially with so many witnesses to this event. That was exactly what Yun Tianque had been aiming for.

A commotion broke out on both sides. Even some from the alliance's army began to question whether their motivations were really no different from that of opportunistic bandits. The decision of the Supracloud Sanctuary to betray the celestial orderians had been the correct move to make. Otherwise, the alliance's army wouldn't even bother coming up with justifications and would have engaged in combat the moment they arrived.

Everyone turned to the swordsage, the light from the seven holes in his face illuminating Yun Tianque. "Yun Tianque, you claim that you were forced to cooperate under duress, but is there proof of that? As far as I know, you took the initiative to approach the Tumulus Pill God and Lan Sha at the Voidsky Realm, as many witnesses can attest to. You can't fool us. All you did here was change your mind when things got out of hand. Nobody believes that you were genuinely planning to cut ties with the celestial orderians."

"That's right!" the crowd shouted, glaring hatefully at Yun Tianque.

Unperturbed, Yun Tianque said, "Swordsage, I don't have any hard proof, but I do have witnesses who can show that we've stood with the Myriad Solar Sects from the very beginning!" They had been planning this from the very beginning. There was no way they would let anyone take away their divine herbs!

### **Chapter 1428 - Bloodstained Divine Tree**

"Witnesses?" The alliance was one more taken aback by an unexpected revelation. The seriousness in Yun Tianque's words seemed almost incongruous to them. They had thought that the second part of their expedition would be nothing more than a mission to punish defectors from the celestial orderians' side and Yun Tianque was probably just making things up to save himself. They could all feel their lips curving into a smile.

"Yun Tianque, don't tell me your witnesses include the janitors in your sect or the bugs on the divine tree," Wang Hong mocked, not that he was actually aware of the actual silver bugs scattered all over the continent. Everyone burst out laughing at the remark. As far as they were concerned, there was nothing that Yun Tianque could do to prove his innocence. There wasn't a need for any further argument. The only justification they needed was 'us' and 'them'.

Faced with such doubt, Yun Tianque didn't seem perturbed in the slightest. He turned behind him and said, "Everyone, over here."

A few people came to his side, namely Long Wanying, Yang Ce, and even Gujian Qingshuang! The alliance had no idea what it implied at all. Even the Wind Swordlord looked at Gujian Qingshuang with confusion. Those two were supposed to be sworn nemeses!

Long Wanying looked at the Northdipper Swordsage and the rest and said with a firm tone, "I can attest that the Supracloud Sanctuary's sect master has been in contact with me since the beginning of their

cooperation with the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean. He never wanted to stand on the opposing side, but he was in no position to refuse. That's why the Supracloud Sanctuary has done their best to not contribute to the conflicts surrounding the Azurecloud Divine Tree. Not to mention how they turned on Li Wushuang at a crucial moment to cut off her troops' escape route, which was a premeditated plan they had arranged in advance with the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect."

Long Wanying represented the rank two sect on the myriad sect rankings, which used to be the leader of the factions native to Orderia, so her words carried weight. This was especially the case as she wasn't a member of the Supracloud Sanctuary. They could even be considered enemies before that. There was no testimony that was more convincing than one given by an enemy!

"I can also attest to this. The Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary have been working together, compromising as needed, to drive our enemies from the continent," Gujian Qingshuang said. His words counted even more than Long Wanying's, especially considering the history his sect had with Yun Tianque's. It was more than enough for the Supracloud Sanctuary to have a generations-long nemesis attest to their innocence.

Now, everyone, the swordmage included, had been completely shocked into silence. This had developed far beyond their imagination. Many people seemed agitated and disgruntled.

Long Wanying directly addressed the swordmage. "Swordmage, this is a crucial matter. As Sect Master Yun had to keep his cooperation with us covert, he couldn't reveal that he was actually on our side all along before we successfully drove out the celestial orderians' servants. That's also why we didn't inform the Empyrean Sword Sect about this until now. However, this is a joyous occasion. Now, the wargodean and Blueblood Starocean fighters have been culled in great numbers, and the Supracloud Sanctuary managed to emerge unscathed. It's a stunning victory for the Myriad Solar Sects as a whole, one that came without requiring the blood of those of the continent to be spilled. There couldn't be a better outcome than this."

The narrative was that the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect and Azuresoul Palace had worked together to save the Supracloud Sanctuary from their predicament. It would be an astronomical task for the alliance to find a justification for exterminating them now, which was nothing short of a slap to the face of the swordmage and the other three first-rate sects. They had gleefully come to collect the divine herbs, only to be stopped at the last moment.

Frustrations began mounting. Even though the spoils from the two hundred thousand defeated enemies had already made them a huge profit, giving up on dominating more than half of the continent and the three billion divine herbs was almost impossible. Everyone turned to the Northdipper Swordmage and waited for his decision.

The starlight on his face flashed, pointing at Long Wanying as he chuckled, "I understand."

"What do you understand, Swordmage?" Lazuli Pavilion's Mu Qingqu asked.

"Yun Tianque probably agreed to give the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect a portion of their divine herbs and cede territory to the Azuresoul Palace so that they wouldn't be annihilated. What an impressive move. Long Wanying, Gujian Qingshuang, how dare the two of you take bribes from the enemy despite being part of the Myriad Solar Sects? Do you have no conscience?"

That was a masterful reframing of the situation. Faced with such a strong temptation, the alliance's fighters were all too willing to accept this twisted logic in favor of the witness testimonies.

"Long Wanying, Gujian Qingshuang, how could that alone be worth it? You've humiliated the Myriad Solar Sects by speaking on our enemy's behalf!" Wang Hong yelled.

Chaos began building up once more. If that accusation stuck, it would all be over. Just as a fight was about to break out, two more people appeared beside Yun Tianque, namely Tianming and Yu Ziqian, the Sky Palace disciples! The two youths should have been easily ignored, but their status as members of the Sky Palace was a completely different story, especially with the Northdipper Swordsage wanting to recruit them.

"Seniors, I have something to say," Tianming said. His appearance stood out too much, allowing people to instantly recognize him. The moment he appeared, the swordsage turned the lights on his face toward him in an eerie fashion. "I can assure you that no divine herbs will be given to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. There will also be no transfer of territory from the Supracloud Sanctuary to the Azuresoul Palace. If you all still insist on robbing the Supracloud Sanctuary of the divine herbs that they have rightful claim to by the edict of the Sky Palace, and even threaten to take their territory by means of war, I will report every detail of this conflict to the Sky Palace."

Tianming knew that the Sky Palace was an odd faction with really different priorities, but that didn't stop him from utilizing his status to the best of his ability. Both he and Yu Ziqian were crucial for keeping the three billion divine herbs. Before the divine herbs were harvested, both the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary could only passively react. The harvesting process took a long time, which allowed other parties a lot of opportunities to interfere. But once the divine herbs were collected in the sects, they could just activate their defensive formations and toughen up against any assault.

With the Supracloud Sanctuary even killing the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators that came their way, nobody could say anything against Yun Tianque's actions. Not to mention, everyone knew what really was happening. The six hundred thousand troops were well aware that they had come with the intention of committing robbery and were simply seeking justifications! But without a good justification, they would be going nowhere. Their alliance only represented a fraction of all of the Myriad Solar Sects, after all, and if word of this got out there would be a lot of resistance and discord. Not to mention, the Sky Palace disciples themselves had issued a warning.

"I know you've come for the divine herbs, but the Supracloud Sanctuary has made the correct decision from the very beginning. They haven't done anything that's gone against the interests of the Myriad Solar Sects as long as it was within their power to do so. If you allow your greed to influence you to the point where you can simply exterminate a sect and millions of lives, how are you different from the animals we just chased away?"

Tianming scrutinized all of them with his gaze. Though he was just a junior, he was defending the future of half of the entire continent from them. For the very first time, those of the Supracloud Sanctuary began gaining a good opinion of him. The alliance's troops were all speechless.

"Li Tianming, do your words represent yourself or the Sky Palace?" Wang Hong asked.

"Senior, who I represent makes no difference. If I have to represent someone it'd be the folks living here on this continent. We're thankful that the alliance helped chase away the outsiders that don't belong here, and we're also aware that your spoils have been substantial. As such, is it too much to ask you to spare the people of the continent and leave them with hope for the future? To you, the divine herbs would only amount to a small additional benefit on top of what you already have, but to the cultivators of this continent, these divine herbs represent their futures!"

Another bout of silence ensued. Nobody spoke for a long time, including the swordmage. Since time immemorial, war had always required a strong justification. Otherwise, those with might would be able to do anything to those without for no reason at all. Justification was so important that some belligerent factions had to go so far as to brainwash the conquered populations in order to quell their desire to revolt. Thanks to Tianming and the rest, the alliance had completely lost all the justifications that they'd originally had. There was no way the six hundred thousand troops could fight now.

"Everyone, the tens of millions of subjects of our sect are now within the formation. Their survival is now intertwined with the survival of our sect. If you still insist on eliminating us, know that all tens of millions of us will fight to our last breath! If you want to take the birthright of our descendants, you'll have to do it over our dead bodies. Without first killing tens of millions of people, you will not be allowed to take even a single divine herb!" Yun Tianque announced.

The hundred thousand elites behind him echoed, "We fight together! We die together!" They all glared at the alliance's army that outnumbered them by six times. However, they still had a formation which was powered by the combined might of tens of millions of people, every one of whom was fighting to protect their legacy. Their war cries were so loud that Tianming almost went deaf. Whether it be on Orderia or the Flameyellow Continent, the combined might of the common folk was a terrifying force to reckon with. Looking down on them and the Myriadfold Skycloud Formation would result in the alliance paying a heavy price!

From the very beginning, Tianming had believed that both Li Wushuang and the Northdipper Swordmage had greatly underestimated the potential power the common folk could channel through a formation. In a way, the sight here mirrored the battle at Tianming City. Almost immediately, the troops began averting their eyes.

"Let's retreat."

"It's pointless to continue."

"These people are insane. Trying to take from them would cost us our lives."

"We have no choice as long as they hide like cowards."

Such sentiments were now commonplace. There was an opportunistic alliance of convenience to begin with, as the authority of the swordmage had by no means been set in stone. Now that there was dissent, nothing anyone could say would be able to unite them. The Supracloud Sanctuary was safe, thanks to the two major sects on the Azurecloud Continent banding together. Tianming could feel that the swordmage and the other leaders' moods were down to a new low thanks to their failed plans.

The Supracloud Sanctuary has been dealt with. Next, we have to defend the divine herbs of the Azuresoul Palace too, and then the saplings after that. Right as the notion occurred to Tianming, the

divine tree's main body to the south of them peeked out through the clouds. Then, each and every part of the tree turned a ghastly red.

"What happened to the divine tree?"

It had happened without any fanfare apart from a strong smell of blood that permeated the air around them.

"The saplings!" The Northdipper Swordsage turned toward the bloodstained tree to the south and pointed. "Everyone, follow me!"

### **Chapter 1429 - Plague of Blood**

The alliance's army immediately left the Supracloud Sanctuary and headed south like a stray dog that picked up a delicious scent, temporarily resolving the crisis at the sect, perhaps even permanently. They had managed to keep the three billion divine herbs, proof that if the two sects were stubborn enough, they could keep more of their harvests for themselves.

"Everyone, continue staying on alert. Protect our homes and don't let our guard down without my order!" Yun Tianque said.

"Understood!"

The Myriadfold Skycloud Formation remained active. Tianming and the rest gathered and turned south to observe the sudden changes. In the distant horizon was a gigantic tree that spanned much of the continent, but now it had been dyed entirely red. The verdant, vigorous mother tree now looked covered in blood and gore. Tianming felt chills even from so far away. It was an eerie and foreboding change.

"What in the world is going on?" Long Wanying asked.

"I don't know. Nothing like this has happened to the divine tree before," Gujian Qingshuang said, subconsciously shuddering. Something in his blood was screaming at him.

"It feels a little unsettling," Yun Tianque said, feeling the same sensation from within his veins.

"Tianming?" Long Wanying gave his arm a short tug.

"Aunt Ying, I'm communicating with Yin Chen now."

"Alright." She nodded and kept waiting, worried that this change had resulted from someone else trying to destroy the saplings like Li Wushuang had done.

After some time, Tianming said, "Everyone, the thirty-five pairs of saplings are still untouched. After the alliance defeated our enemies, they immediately took over the sapling sites."

They were all relieved to hear that. At the very least, the saplings were still fine. "Then what's going on?" Long Wanying asked.

"It could've been caused by the war. Yin Chen said that a total of nearly a million lifebound beasts died in the two battles at Aix Lake. The carcasses of the beasts all piled up under the tree, whose roots sucked up all the blood and essence. I think the tree only changed once it reached its limit."



"Is it just a change in color? What about other aspects?"

"It isn't possible to tell for now. The alliance now has people heavily guarding all the sapling sites."

"It definitely isn't just a color change. I can feel that the divine tree has entered a state that's never been seen in history before. It's like the tree is angry and losing its temper in a fit of demonic rage. I believe we should stay away from it right now," Gujian Qingshuang said.

"Demonic rage?"

They all turned and looked south, still clearly feeling that eerie, numbing sensation. If the divine tree was sentient and had a will, it seemed like it was thirsting for blood and slaughter.

"Up to a third of all people on the continent live under the tree," Gujian Qingshuang said, frowning his brows. If something were to happen, they wouldn't be able to evacuate at all.

All Tianming could do was have Yin Chen continue monitoring the situation. With how huge the tree was, it almost seemed like the sky above the continent had turned red. Countless people came out of their houses and looked at the reddened world around them with fear.

"What's going on with the divine tree?"

"No idea...."

"It looks like a huge monster! Daddy, I'm scared!"

They quickly returned to their homes, but the shadow of the red tree was still visible through their windows. Even the plants in their homes had turned a demonic red as if they had also absorbed fresh blood.

Gradually, the huge red tree began to sway and dance like a hoard of demons. Countless people in the various cities and settlements ran and hid, their breathing growing more difficult by the moment. Amidst these changes, the only ones who still remained on the divine tree were those in the alliance's army.

Such terrifying occurrences kept intensifying. The tree looked like a gigantic bloody demon hundreds of thousands of meters tall. Tianming felt that his mouth was rather parched. At that moment, a transmission stone from Jiang Qingliu entered his hand.

It read, 'Everyone, I've been researching records of the divine tree and collecting information about the recent changes from the people. I found an explanation in a chronicle written a million years ago! The writer said that the Azurecloud Divine Tree is actually a unique, ancient lifeform that can be considered to be a plant-type cosmic wildbeast. It is a special lifeform that absorbs fundamental cosmic force and feeds it back to cultivators in its vicinity in a way similar to symbiotic cultivation. In a sense, it can connect with everyone near it.

'A lifeform like it naturally also has a way to procreate, as it's the key directive of any and all life! The tree has settled down and protected the lifeforms near it in hopes that they can protect its saplings when they're still weak. Last time, Li Wushuang destroyed a pair of saplings and incurred its wrath. That can be considered our fault for not fulfilling our responsibilities. Back then, we thought that the tree's anger was temporary and would calm down, but that wasn't the case! Losing saplings is the same as

losing children for it! However, it didn't throw a tantrum because the other saplings were still weak. Not that the saplings are nearing maturity, they're harder to destroy. The tree also happened to absorb a lot of blood, so the pent-up rage from the destroyed saplings is probably going to explode soon. To quote the chronicle, "The rage of the divine tree will fill the skies with blood as the plague spreads and culls all life".'

The others felt their eyelids uncontrollably twitching when they read that. Saplings that only sprouted once across millions of years should have been protected to the utmost. Unfortunately, the tree had lost a pair of them right at the start. As the covenant between the tree and the people living near it had been lost to time, Gujian Qingshuang and the rest were ignorant of it until now. Even so, this was just one account written by a distant forebear, so there could be other explanations. Regardless, it seemed to line up with what was happening now.

"The skies will be filled with blood as the plague spreads...." They mumbled the words and continued reading the message.

'The chronicle states that the only way to reverse this is to kill the perpetrator to quell the rage of the divine tree. I believe this to be none other than Li Wushuang. Naturally, I can't say for sure if that's true or not. The ties between the divine tree and our continent aren't nearly as simple as they seem.'

The message had left them speechless. Yun Tianque said, "It looks like the events more or less correspond to the records."

"All life will be culled?" That was the most terrifying part of the prophecy. There were still countless people on the continent that hadn't reached the Ascension stage. Those that could stay at the Supracloud Sanctuary were only the most elite among them.

"If Li Wushuang really did cause this, she deserves to die." Everyone's hearts shook when they looked at the state the divine tree was in.

"A plague, huh...." That was what gave Tianming pause. Yin Chen had told him that the plague had appeared near the thirty-five sapling sites.

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The Azurecloud Continent was located near the border that separated the celestial orderians' territory from the Myriad Solar Sects'. There was a long formation line that stretched from one end of the sun and looped back around from the other end. It stopped most people from easily entering the domain of the celestial orderians, but allowed for easy passage from the other side. The formation line passed through the seas north of the continent. Near the line was a charred, uninhabited island where not even Yin Chen had managed to reach.

Sounds of eerie burning could be heard there. Within an ancient and dark cave was Li Wushuang, kneeling on the ground and groaning in pain. Her beautiful appearance seemed to contort from her suffering, with veins even showing across her skin.

"Northdipper Swordsage... Wind Swordlord...." Her teeth were chattering as she leaned on the wall, right arm holding her left. She was completely covered in sweat and feeble like never before. Her skin even began to pale. "Big Brother...."

Her voice turned hoarse and sharp as she groaned in pain like someone suffering from a fever dream. A sizzling sound came from her left arm. When she looked down, she saw that her broken bane-ring was changing. It used to be shaped like a moon, but now it was a bloody mess. The blood around it began to swirl and move the flesh as it changed. "Big Brother... it hurts... it hurts!"

She tightly grabbed her wound, but couldn't stop the changes at all.

### **Chapter 1430 - Rage**

Normally, a destroyed bane-ring would leave nothing more than a scar behind once it recovered. However, her destroyed bane-ring was changing and pulsing, as if it was reconstructing itself. It still seemed capable of converting astralforce that gathered there into new totem ki.

"Aaah... aaaah!" Li Wushuang screamed uncontrollably in pain, her voice reverberating throughout the cave. If it weren't for the fact that nothing else lived on the island, she would have alerted everyone on it. The spectacle lasted a full two hours before her groans gradually trailed off.

She laid softly against the wall, sweating as if she was badly sick. Her right hand weakly slumped down, no longer clutching the destroyed bane-ring and revealing a bloody light that illuminated the cavern. The moon-shaped bane-ring was nowhere to be seen, replaced by a blood-colored face of a female ghoul with long hair and a long tongue. It looked like a completely new bane-ring.

Normally, totems of destroyed bane-rings would turn back into terra and not stay as totems, but the ghost-faced bane-ring looked just like her old totem. It even seemed to pulse with life. An eighth of Li Wushuang's hair seemed to have been dyed blood red to reflect the change. Even her left cheek seemed to twist slightly to bear a similar expression to the new bane-ring's face. Before, her beauty had been emphasized by her cold demeanor, but now something about her looks seemed lacking, almost ugly. It was like an eighth of her face had been charred.

She took out a mirror, her hands shaking, and shrieked when she saw her own reflection. Tears immediately began flowing. "No!"

She smashed the mirror right away, grabbing a shard and intent on piercing the new bane-ring with it. Right then, a blood-red figure emerged from it and turned into a gigantic totem. It was the beautiful ghoul, dressed in a red gown that emphasized its perfect figure. However, her face, hair, and tongue made quite a terrifying visage. Long, sharp claws stretched out from the sleeves of the gown.

"Ugh..." She looked at the totem, feeling a chill. Though she desperately wanted to cry, her tears didn't flow. She slumped slowly to the ground, kneeling, and the totem began to dissipate. She couldn't help it and hugged her head as she sobbed.

"No... I don't want this...."

Some time later, a golden transmission stone flew to her, emanating an aura that took the form of a blonde man. He smiled as he looked at her and said, "You're rising after a fall. This is a new life, Shuang'er. It's you, but perfected. You'll become the sun empress.... You must understand what your Big Brother has done for your sake. I'll never harm you."

"Leave me alone! You're doing it only for yourself, you mad, sadistic demon!" She smashed the transmission stone with her signature weapon, shattering it. However, the man's aura lingered for a while longer, smiling, until it completely dissipated.

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There was a sapling site near Magma Valley; it was the closest one to the Supracloud Sanctuary. The Northdipper Swordsage had stationed more than ten thousand swordpupils there. Right after they arrived, they began fortifying the surrounding area to make sure nothing could come or go. Countless beasts of all varieties, including stone swordbeasts, surrounded the area, making sure nobody approached. The same was the case with the other sapling sites. Even though the swordsage had run into trouble with attacking the Supracloud Sanctuary, he was determined to take the saplings.

"Stay alert. Let nobody approach the saplings. Kill anyone who does!"

"Yes!"

"I wonder if the swordsage has taken over the Supracloud Sanctuary yet..."

"We'll have lots of spoils to distribute... hahaha...."

"I killed two people today and got quite a lot already."

As they were excitedly chatting away, both they and their lifebound beasts discovered the change in the divine tree.

"What's going on?"

"The tree's leaves and branches all turned red?"

"Something is wrong! Stay alert!"

All of the swordpupils and their beasts reacted, witnessing the process of the tree turning a demonic red. Was it really the verdant tree of life from before? The entire process only took three breaths of time. Before they were even able to react, a bloody aura permeated through their surroundings, seemingly turning the entire place into a bloody purgatory. Even the burning sky above was nowhere to be seen, and what replaced the heat waves was a rare, chilling breeze.

"What in the world is going on?" They all looked at each other, perplexed.

"Look at the saplings!" someone cried out. Near the saplings where the bloody mist was at its densest, some bloody liquid seemed to surround the saplings and started sizzling. The saplings that seemed like they were hugging each other looked like they were coming alive. There was a bloody glow in their eyes. Hand in hand, they looked at the crowd, opened their mouths, and vomited streams of blood, turning the environment around them even redder than before.

"What the hell? Are these saplings conscious?"

Nothing made sense.

"Master, should we retreat further back? This is far too eerie. I have a bad feeling about this."

"The swordsage's orders were that we shouldn't leave the saplings at all."

"Understood!"

They continued standing guard. Eventually, the bloody mist was all around them. All of a sudden, a shriek rang out and a commotion began forming.

"Who's the one messing around and crying out?" chided a white-haired elder of the stoneword race.

"Granduncle, it's Zhuang. He looks like he's in pain."

"What?" The old man pushed apart the droves of people and saw a youth rolling around on the ground, his face sweaty and pale. "What's going on?" he asked as he helped him up.

"Aaaagh! My stomach! My stomach!"

The old man noticed something was amiss and removed the boy's armor and clothes. When his abdomen was revealed, the people around him couldn't help but cry out in shock and take a few steps back. Bloody, thumb-sized boils had formed around his abdomen, looking like bulging eyeballs. They began spreading throughout his body to his limbs, and even his head. When his face filled with boils, he was an ugly abomination. His eyes and mouth were squashed flat by the new growths of flesh. "Save me... save—aaagh!"

People watched as small, blood-colored saplings burst out from the boils before growing at a rapid pace, turning the poor fellow into a man-shaped tree. In an instant, the flesh and blood within him was drained, leaving nothing behind but a dry husk.

"Get back!" someone cried right before the youth exploded, spraying a bloody mist and chunks of his corpse on the people around him, causing them to vomit.

"What is this? Some kind of poison?"

"No idea.... It almost resembles an ability of a plant-type lifebound beast, but even those aren't nearly as terrifying, are they?"

"Who did it?"

"Could it be the divine tree?"

The guesses began stirring panic among them. What was even worse was that a few more people began shrieking in despair. It was happening far too quickly! Boils began spreading across their body before saplings sprouted from them, eventually causing them to explode into mists of blood in the span of a few short breaths!

"Move away! Get back!"

It looked like an infectious disease, a truly terrifying enemy that couldn't be seen or touched.

"Use astralforce to suppress it and protect yourself!"

Normally, astralforce would be enough to get rid of toxins in the air or blood. However, the chain reaction seemed to be happening too quickly for the cultivators to react in time. The mist was already all

around them, causing screams to ring out nonstop. Even those who tried using astralforce to protect themselves noticed boils begin forming, and despaired as they sprouted. It soon spread to lifebound beasts. One thousand-meter-tall beast's skin was covered in large, fist-sized boils, out of which bloody sprouts grew, resulting in a great explosion that caused blood and flesh to be showered all over the place. Terror and despair began spreading like a wildfire.

"Run!"

"The Azurecloud Divine Tree is venting its rage!"

Even though elite cultivators like them should have no issues surviving plagues, what had happened today completely rewrote what they knew. Not even the astralforce of lower-leveled solarians was able to stop this invisible killer that took care of them in a few short breaths. How could they not be afraid?