

## The Ages 191

### Chapter 191 - Qualifications to Enter the Li Mausoleum

"Matriarch, we didn't come here to cause trouble. Instead, we have important matters regarding the Li Saint Clan's Wind Bloodline to discuss with Li Wudi. It's a matter of utmost importance! I implore you, Matriarch, please tell Li Wudi about the matter immediately. Otherwise, the Apex Branch will have doomed the Wind Bloodline."

Only after Li Xuanhe finished pleading did the rest quiet down.

"You already dared to cause such a ruckus, so don't bother pretending anymore and just give it to me straight! With my wealth of life experience, I've already seen through the need for unnecessary pleasantries," Li Jingyu said with a smirk.

"Then forgive me for being direct. The informants we have in the Metal, Thunder, and Fire Bloodlines have received word of it already. In five days, members from those three bloodlines will force Li Wudi to pick a genius from among them to be the junior sect master!

"Matriarch, I'm sure some things don't need to be clearly spell out. Those of us of the Wind Bloodline have controlled the Li Saint Clan for ten thousand years, and throughout all that time, our prestigious legacy has never once been broken. But in the past millennium, our line has produced fewer and fewer talented descendants, causing our great clan to fall to these lows.

"But even so, our prestigious bloodline has never once been cut off! Matriarch, it's already bad enough that you only had one son. Those in your line number fewer and fewer as they struggle to survive past childhood. Not to mention, Li Wudi already had his body horribly ruined from what happened back then. And now, he's already in his forties. Who knows if he can even birth a male heir in this lifetime? After all, only men can inherit the lifebound beast of the bloodline!

"In five days, the other three bloodlines will convene a Sacred Assembly to appoint one of the descendants from their bloodlines as the new junior sect master! I'm sure you're aware of what that implies, Matriarch. In other words, the great and prestigious bloodline of the Li Saint Clan that's been passed down for ten millennia will finally be severed! The moment the new junior sect master is selected, the future legacy of the Grand-Orient Sect will be up to one of the other three bloodlines!

"What will become of those of us from the Wind Bloodline if that happens? Will we still reign over them? The position of sect master of Grand-Orient will never return to the Wind Bloodline, will it? Even though the current sect master is the most ridiculed in the entire history of the sect, he still came from a historic line of a prestigious family! The greatest pride and glory of the sect!

"That's why every one of us from the Seven Starry Wind Branches are unwilling to let the position of the junior sect master go just like that, thus losing the position of the Grand-Orient sect master to the other bloodlines! We have to stand out and defend the glory of the Wind Bloodline!"

Li Xuanhe's longwinded rant instigated a huge reaction among those present!

Li Jingyu felt her anger melt and chuckled. "So, how do you intend to defend our pride?" For all the posturing and grandstanding, Li Xuanhe had his own interests in mind in the end. No matter how

ridiculous the current sect master of the Grand-Orient Clan was, it was still a position that many would vie for. For instance, it came with the right to enter the Mausoleum!

Only the sect master and junior sect master were allowed to enter the final resting place of the great ancestors of the Li Saint Clan, an ancient order given by their founding ancestor. Who would dare go against it? No matter how far the Li Saint Clan had fallen, the Li Mausoleum was eternal.

Upon hearing the question, Li Xuanhe seemed even more agitated. "To ensure the position of junior sect master remains within the Wind Bloodline, those of us of the Seven Starry Wind Branches are willing to contribute! The seven of us are willing to let Li Wudi adopt our talented sons, who we've raised with care since their birth! For the sake of the dignity of the Wind Bloodline, we are willing to make this sacrifice. Congratulations, Matriarch. You'll finally have a grandson of your own. The seven of us swear that we would no longer consider whoever is appointed junior sect master as our own son! We can only keep it if Li Wudi elects one of them to the position!"

He was already at the point of tears. It was as if they had already lost their sons for good, despite the fact that there was really no way to change the blood ties. Even if their sons were to call Li Wudi their father, they would only be doing it for the sake of grabbing the junior sect master position.

Just as others were praising Li Xuanhe for his long speech, an annoyed voice rang out, "Wow, how touching. I almost cried myself a river."

Everyone turned to the voice and saw the youth with dyed hair that Li Jingyu had brought back! That youth had a rather noteworthy appearance. His left hand was scaly, black, and clawed, while his hair was a shiny, attractive platinum.

"Impudence! Matriarch, which family is that bastard from? How dare he mock us in the Kunpeng Sacred Hall?!" Li Tianyu of the Delta Ursae Majoris Branch snapped.

Li Jingyu chuckled, "Him?" She pulled Li Tianming over with her other hand clutching Li Qingyu and gave him a satisfied look. Who wouldn't be happy to have a big, chubby-wubby grandson like him?

She turned to Li Xuanhe and the rest and laughed. "So much for your grand designs, eh? You think your degenerate spawns deserve to be my grandchildren? Not one of the seven could catch my eye. I think you should keep your sons to yourselves and take them home, not bring them here to embarrass their fathers. Not one of those seven boys can compare to my granddaughter, Qingyu! Yet you dare to plot for the position of junior sect master? Dream on!"

Her laughter was so sharp it hurt their ears to listen to it.

"Matriarch, are you saying you're willing to let the position of junior sect master flow to the other three bloodlines?!"

"How could you, Matriarch?!"

"How is that an action befitting one from the Li Saint Clan?"

One after another, they jumped out to criticize her with flushed faces and furious rage. It was all the same. Li Tianming had seen it all; it seemed that no matter where he was, shameless people were without exception, the same.

Just as they were getting more and more rowdy with their complaints, Li Jingyu raised Li Tianming's hand and said sternly, "My son Li Wudi had unmatched talent in his youth, and has a bloodline of four incarnations! At ten, he reached Unity. At 17, he reached the peak of Unity and was hailed as the number one genius of the Grand-Orient Clan! The first one in half a millennium! However, he, in his naive youth, suffered from the ploys of others. Had that not been the case, how would scum like you dare call his name with such disrespect?!"

She seemed rather pained as she uttered those words. Once, she was proud of her son. Yet now that she was in her twilight years, she was the one who had to stand up to protect her son, granddaughter, and the rest of her family. Li Tianming could see the shadow of Wei Jing in Li Jingyu. She was just as enduring, just as giving, and just as respectable! That sight was yet another sign that he had chosen rightly when he'd come to the Grand-Orient Sect.

"Matriarch, we all know how glorious Li Wudi was in his youth. You don't have to bring this up to suppress us. Face the facts: he is crippled. What I'd like to know, instead, is what your intentions are in surrendering the junior sect master position to the other three bloodlines."

"My intentions? I haven't even finished speaking yet. Let me tell you that my son was also rather handsome in his youth. Did you think he only had the one daughter, Li Qingyu? I'm afraid you're mistaken on that one. Before he wedded Mu He, my son traveled for three years to train! During that time, he had a few encounters with other women, three of whom were wedded to him! However, he did them a great wrong and didn't acknowledge them as proper wives. This time around, I ventured out to look for one of those women, Wei Jing, who had given birth to his son before he married Mu He!

"That son is the one beside me, Li Tianming. He's only sixteen, one year older than Qingyu, and was named by my son himself! Originally, he didn't want to disturb his son's life and growth. Yet you lot insisted on going overboard, so my son had me fetch his flesh and blood back here. From today onward, Li Tianming is the junior sect master of the clan, and the Li Saint Clan's junior clan leader! That's why you can just forget about getting your hands on this position. Forget you lot, not even the three bloodlines will be able to challenge this!"

All of the Seven Starry Wind Branch members stared at Li Tianming, dumbfounded. Who would believe he was Li Wudi's illegitimate son that was only brought back at the ripe age of sixteen? Even Li Tianming found it hard to believe. He had guessed that Li Jingyu would pull something like this during the ride on the Rage-sea Kunpeng. Otherwise, he would be just as flabbergasted as the rest were.

Wasn't I going to join as an adopted son? Why am I an illegitimate son all of a sudden?!

Then again, it was much easier to swallow a direct descendant of Li Wudi becoming the junior sect master, rather than an adopted son. This script was written by none other than Li Jingyu. The truth was Li Wudi had never been to Vermillion Bird. Not to mention that Li Tianming was already twenty, not sixteen, though not many would dispute his age based on his looks. There were, after all, thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds with bulky physiques and full beards. However, his identity as Li Wudi's son was a matter of doubt and dispute.

In the end, they had no proof but Li Jingyu's word for it.

"Matriarch, you can't be joking around, could you? Why would you bring an outsider back just to mess with us? Even if you could force this past us, would it really be accepted by the other three bloodlines?" Li Xuanhe said as he gave Li Tianming a thorough look, immediately noting that he wasn't even at Unity. How could someone like that be from their prestigious bloodline?

"Aren't you the ones trying to bluff the other three bloodlines by getting my son to adopt yours?" Li Jingyu retorted.

"That's different. All it takes is for Li Wudi to acknowledge it. We already agreed to this. No matter who you pick, we swear to defend the glory of the Wind Bloodline to our deaths, and keep our new junior sect master secure in his post. However, we won't stand by if you try to hoodwink us like this. We'll see how your meager family of three faces off against the other three bloodlines' pressure!"

In other words, if Li Jingyu chose to adopt one of their sons instead, they would have the Wind Bloodline's backing even if the claim was false. After all, the three bloodlines wouldn't know who within the Wind Bloodline was adopted or not. At least there was some merit to their plan.

"That's right! How could a Spiritsource trash trick us, to say nothing more of the other three bloodlines?"

"This has got to be a joke."

"Where did you get that boy to act for you? Matriarch, how much are you paying him?"

"Young man, I'll pay you double to get out of my sight."

"You're not even at Unity. Don't embarrass yourself, alright?"

The ridicule flowed without pause, followed by mocking laughter. However, Li Jingyu joined in the laughter.

"Matriarch, what are you laughing at?" Li Xuanhe asked.

"I'm laughing at your shortsightedness."

### **Chapter 192 - I Alone Will Fight You All!**

"My grandson Tianming has lacked proper guidance in the past sixteen years, having had to train in a backwater nation, so naturally his level isn't that high. After all, he doesn't know how wide the outside world can truly be, and that restricted his advancement. He didn't have any good cultivation techniques, which turned out to be quite a huge handicap that weighed down his natural talent... However!"

Li Jingyu's tone suddenly grew tense. "By the time you all know how truly talented and powerful my grandson is, I bet everyone here will kneel and shiver before him!"

She had kept her misgivings and hatred to herself for so many years. Back then, she had seen her son fall from the skies with her own eyes, never to truly rise back to his former heights! Yet such a heaven-defying 'grandson' had suddenly appeared before her!

Even so, her emotional speech merely triggered the others' laughter.

"Matriarch, please let me inspect his talent."

"Oh, no need to wait. I can't wait to kneel to him right here and now!"

"Matriarch, please hurry his cultivation up! I'm afraid my knees are already giving way! I might finish kneeling before he makes it!"

"Hahahaha!"

Seniors and juniors alike burst into laughter. There wasn't a shred of respect at all! Li Tianming felt his fuse burning as he watched the old woman forced to bear all that ridicule. However, all he did was unfurl his hand and slowly walk towards the crowd.

"Mutts, make sure you take a good look!" He gave all of them a sweep. Now, the aura and atmosphere he gave off wasn't that of the Spiritsource realm, nor did he appear to be an actor one bit. It only took one yell for him to shut Li Xuanhe and the rest up. They squinted and scrutinized him. How could a mere Spiritsource beastmaster call those of the great Seven Starry Wind Branches mere mutts? Provoked, their rage flared.

But at that moment, Li Tianming pulled up the sleeve covering his right arm, revealing the rings on it one after another. Everyone in the Li Saint Clan paid heavy attention to Lifebane rings. In most cases, the rings wouldn't change after they appeared and would stay with one for the rest of their life! They were representative, unalterable marks.

Most began counting them one after another, and the sharper-eyed among them could already tell something was off. They counted the rings again and again, as if there was something horribly wrong. Three bane-rings signified that someone would become a genius worthy of the Li Saint Clan's name. Four bane-rings was a sign of hope for the clan's revival! However, Li Tianming had more than that.

In the clan's history, only the first person to break the curse of the Lifesbane got five bane-rings, and that was the number of rings on Li Tianming's arm!

"He has five bane-rings!" Li Jingyu stated the obvious.

Everyone widened their eyes and stared at Li Tianming in a stupor, their legs already quaking. Some were even on the brink of kneeling.

"Five bane-rings? Impossible! This can't be real!"

"Only the founding ancestor has five!"

"Everyone, go take a closer look! Did he draw the bane-rings himself?"

"That's right! His hair is probably dyed too!"

Amidst the chattering crowd, the head of the seven branches, Li Xuanhe, took one step forward and immediately appeared before Li Tianming. His palm shook as he picked up Tianming's arm and gave it a close look. The harder he squinted, the more he shivered.

"Alpha Ursae Majoris Branch Head, are they fake?" the other leaders scrambled to ask.

"I... I can't tell!" Li Xuanhe took three steps back and glared fiercely at Li Tianming.

"There's definitely a problem here. If he has five bane-rings, he wouldn't have only amounted to this little no matter how bad his techniques were!"

"That's right. I'm sure all of us know what having five bane-rings means."

"After passing it down for so many generations, even Li Wudi's son couldn't possibly have five bane-rings!"

"There must be a trick, Matriarch! Did you somehow make five rings appear on his arm through means unknown to us?!"

They were freaking out from the fact that Li Tianming had five bane-rings alone. What if they found out that he had ten bane-rings in total? It would only be even harder to believe then. Having five bane-rings alone was unprecedented.

The founding ancestor himself only had five! How could anyone have more than him?

Their disbelief was fully within Li Jingyu's expectations. After all, Li Tianming was only at the Spiritsource stage. Even if he really were sixteen, he would only be average. No matter how bad someone with five bane-rings was, they wouldn't be that bad.

However, Li Tianming knew the key to convincing them: now, they didn't really seem to doubt his identity as Li Wudi's son.

"These people really are hard to please! They won't believe me even after I showed them!" Li Jingyu snapped in anger.

"Granny, don't get mad over a bunch of shortsighted fools," Li Qingyu consoled.

"That's right. However, their constant prattling is really getting on my nerves."

At that moment, Li Tianming turned back and said, "Then should I chase them away?"

"Can you do that?" Li Jingyu felt a headache brewing.

Li Qingyu didn't really believe he could, either. Those people were almost infamous for being hard to deal with.

Li Tianming merely smiled. He turned to them and said, "Everyone, you all only know that I'm sixteen. What you're unaware of, however, is that I only started cultivating at the age of fifteen. I have only spent five months cultivating. I wonder what you all have to say about the fact that I started from zero and made it to the eighth Spiritsource stage in a mere five months."

Those in the crowd turned to each other at the sound of his words. In actual fact, Li Tianming wasn't really lying, just omitting some facts. He had in fact only started less than five months ago—started his second attempt, that is.

"So if I claim that I started training yesterday and reached the second stage of Unity, does that mean I have six bane-rings?" said a blue-robed youth from the crowd. He stood beside Li Chenhong; he was probably his son.

The head of the Beta Ursae Majoris Branch was going to have Li Wudi adopt him, Li Kunxu, a beastmaster at the second stage of Unity at fifteen years old, not that much older than Chen Yao! However, this youth's spirit and willpower weren't one bit inferior to Lin Xiaoting's. His gaze was rather domineering.

"You're at the second stage of Unity?" Li Tianming asked.

"That's right, and I only have two bane-rings. So, how could you expect me to believe you have five if you're still at the eighth stage of Spiritsource at sixteen?" Li Kunxu smirked.

None of them believed it either even after seeing it for themselves, and for good reason.

"Alright, then it's an easy matter to settle. I will challenge all of you who aren't older than me! If I can beat you all, will you believe my bane-rings are real, and that I'm Li Wudi's son?"

His words sent ripples through the crowd. There were already many among them younger than sixteen who achieved the first stage of Unity, Li Kunxu being one of them. How could someone at the eighth stage of Spiritsource beat someone four levels above him? It was a fool's errand!

"Let's start with you, the noisy one." Li Tianming pointed at Li Kunxu.

"Me?" Li Kunxu broke out in frantic laughter and sought his father's opinion.

Li Chenhong narrowed his eyes with doubt. "Li Tianming, did you just say you want to challenge everyone younger than sixteen to prove your talent as someone with five bane-rings?"

"That's right."

"You're only at the eighth stage of Spiritsource, but you might be faced with many first or second stage Unity beastmasters. Are you sure you want to do this?"

"I am."

"What if you fail?"

"I would rather discuss what happens if I succeed first. Will the Seven Starry Branches acknowledge my talent as someone with five bane-rings and Li Wudi's son? Will you acknowledge me as the junior sect master?"

Was he really going to call Li Wudi his dad? Probably not, but he would at least be his godfather. But even he knew that the position of junior sect master came with many conveniences, and would make his cultivation path much easier in the future. He absolutely had to become the junior sect master!

Not to mention, he rather liked Li Jingyu and Li Qingyu. Since they were his allies, it would be no big deal for them to help each other out. As for whether he truly was Li Wudi's son, that was something only the others really cared about. As far as he was concerned, he was an honored guest. If he got along well with Li Wudi, he wouldn't really mind acknowledging him as his godfather.

The seven branch heads discussed the matter for some time. Finally, Li Xuanhe smiled and said, "If you really can defeat our sons who are four to five levels above you, we'll accept your claims and acknowledge your talent. Only someone who has five bane-rings should be capable of such a feat."

Additionally, only the Apex Bloodline can possibly have a descendant with five bane-rings at such a critical juncture! We will also accept you as Li Wudi's son. In fact, when the other three bloodlines come, we'll protect you!"

Everyone agreed with Li Xuanhe on that matter.

"Very well," Li Tianming said, smiling.

This matter was going to be really easy to settle. However, nobody knew where he found the courage to make such bold challenges. Li Xuanhe and the others were already smirking. They were going to follow up with the real kicker.

"Li Tianming, should you fail, we will not acknowledge you to have five bane-rings, nor as Li Wudi's son. After all, your stage of cultivation is far too poor! If you become the junior sect master, the other three bloodlines won't be happy with it either. In that case, we would rather just have Li Wudi adopt one of our sons instead." As he said that, Li Xuanhe shot Li Jingyu a glance. He needed her to agree with those terms! In other words, if Li Tianming failed, one of their sons would become the junior sect master!

If Li Tianming wanted their support, it came with strings attached as well. However, it didn't seem like a good deal to Li Jingyu. She found them troublesome and annoying. As far as she was concerned, it didn't matter if these people didn't believe her. At the end of the day, only the three other bloodlines mattered.

Letting Li Wudi take one of their sons as his own was a huge joke!

Though, Li Jingyu didn't expect Li Tianming to speak before she got the chance to.

"No problem," he agreed with a smile. "Let's make it easier for you. Have the seven sons of yours come at me one by one. Anyone who can defeat me will become the junior sect master. Don't hold back on me. I'll show you ignorant fools what a real possessor of five bane-rings is really like."

His words immediately shut them all up. By the time they snapped out of their stupor, the so-called sixteen-year-old had already left Kunpeng Sacred Hall!

### **Chapter 193 - I'll Cook Your Void Kunpeng**

After leaving the Kunpeng Sacred Hall, Li Tianming found himself in the mountains where the Grand-Orient Sect was located. Before him was a picturesque view of the natural landscape. At the foot of the hills was a stream, within which swam all sorts of aquatic life.

Thanks to the spiritual energy that enveloped the sect, even the marine life there grew strong and full of life. Fish up to a meter in size could be seen all over; they were a great source of food for the lifebound beasts of the sect members.

The Grand-Orient Sect spanned a huge area, so the lifebound beasts could roam freely without restriction. Out in the distance, one could see countless gigantic beasts walking, soaring, and swimming about. Some even got along with one another, while more exotic beasts, such as the insects, crawled in their little corners.



All kinds of wondrous lifebound beasts were there for all to behold in awe, and most of them weren't even recorded in the chronicles of Vermillion Bird. One such beast was the signature lifebound beast of the Li Saint Clan, the Kunpeng.

As far as Tianming was concerned, dual-species beasts like these were few and far between. Beasts like that were far more complex than normal dual-type beasts like Blizzard Dragons.

"The Kunpeng is both dual-species and-dual type. Not to mention, it's no ordinary dual-type beast. Each of its elemental types correspond to its species. When in the form of the Kun as it swims in water, it's water-type, and the beast ki within the spiritsources will be converted to water-type beast ki.

"That's why the Li Saint Clan's techniques are made specifically for descendants of the clan to facilitate the unique elemental switching property. I'd initially thought that techniques were mostly monotype. Only after coming to the Grand-Orient Sect did I find out about something so inconceivable."

Though, back then, Tianming had seen a dual cultivator of wind and snow: Yueling Ji. She must have had a unique and powerful cultivation technique for that purpose as well. But at the end of the day, her attributes of wind and snow didn't really contradict each other much, and could reside in the same spiritsources. She also only needed one lifebound beast to use both elements.

Mu Yang's Ink Qilin was also a dual-type beast of earth and water. Those two types mingled well and seldom caused backlash, unlike Tianming's lightning and fire that were both just as intense as the other. However, among the Li Saint Clan, spiritsources where water beast ki could be converted to fire beast ki could exist!

"While they might all be water-types in the Kun form, the beasts can be one of four types as a Peng, namely, wind, metal, lightning, or fire. Those four types are the basis that formed the four bloodlines of the Li Saint Clan, with the Wind Bloodline leading the clan. All four bloodlines are proficient in the water element, and differ only in their second element. For instance, those of the Wind Bloodline excel at water and wind, while the Metal Bloodline excels in metal and water, and so on."

Before they arrived, Li Jingyu had already given Tianming a briefing on the clan. Given the unique nature of the clan, there was no need for him to give the excuse that his two lifebound beasts were contracted using blood pacts any longer.

Twin beastmasters were inherently different from normal beastmasters, after all. They were considered to have rather unstable systems, so their lifebound beasts usually had the same basic type. Tianming had asked Jingyu about this matter before, as he noticed that she hadn't found his two lifebound beasts being of different types all that surprising.

She said, "Actually, in the history of symbiotic cultivation, countless systems and subsystems have existed. There have been instances of twin beastmasters having lifebound beasts with different types. They're usually referred to as unique twin beastmasters. With the right techniques, unique twin beastmasters are far stronger.

"To allow these unique beastmasters to cultivate their types in a balanced manner, it's possible to develop a cultivation technique for twin beastmasters based on dual-type techniques, like those of the Li Saint Clan, for instance. However, these techniques are split into three parts. The first is for the beastmaster themselves, while the second and third are for the different lifebound beasts.

"That way, twin beastmasters with different types can also cultivate and let two different types of beast ki coexist in the spirit source. Even so, differences in strength between the unique twin beastmaster's lifebound beasts still exist. As such, while they have the advantage of having more elemental types, their lifebound beast's beast ki will have lower stamina. Tianming, for you to ask me a basic question like that.... Does that mean you don't have such a unique cultivation technique?" she asked curiously.

"Of course not. How else would I cultivate?" he said with a laugh.

"The technique you're using at Spirit Source must be quite average. There should be a Unity technique in the clan you can use to cultivate both the lightning and fire types at the same time. Granny will get you one when the time comes. After all, you're my cute widdle grandson. You deserve nothing but the best techniques!"

"Ah.... Thanks a bunch for that..." he responded as cold sweat trickled down his forehead.

In fact, he really didn't need something like that; the Aeternal Infernal Codex and Genesis Chaos Codex were terrifying enough on their own. Not to mention, he didn't need to combine the infernal source and lightning source at all. They each had their own individual strengths, and were strongest on their own!

At the very least, after hearing the explanation, he no longer needed to feel the need to explain his lifebound beasts having different types to others in the future. He could pass as a unique twin beastmaster.

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When Li Tianming left, his first opponent, Li Kunxu, had followed behind him, along with others who wanted to relish in some schadenfreude at Tianming's expense.

"Kunxu, don't strike too hard. Make sure you don't cripple the sect master's son. If both the sect master and his son are crippled, others will only come to mock our clan," Li Chenhong said.

Everyone sighed and shook their heads. It was a disgrace for the whole clan!

"Father, don't worry. I'll definitely not cripple the genius with five bane-rings. However, since he decided to bite off more than he can chew, I will knock a few of his teeth out. It should be fine, right?"

"No problem. That'll teach him to be more careful with his bites." Li Chenhong smiled and shot a provocative glance at Li Jingyu.

At that moment, Li Kunxu whistled. Immediately after, a gigantic brown-colored Peng descended from the skies. It was even larger than Twelve-winged Goldrocs! This was a Hurricane Kunpeng, a low-tier eight-star lifebound beast! Most Kunpengs started off as imperial beasts that could create windstorms with just a single flap of their wings.

Raging winds caused Tianming's hair to flap uncontrollably. It almost made him look more dashing, with his black arm and white hair. He retrieved his Grand Thunderflare Sword from his spatial ring.

"Li Tianming! Have your lifebound beasts come out! Let me see your Void Kunpeng!"

Those of the Apex Branch of the Li Saint Clan had Void Kunpengs; they were said to be saint beasts of legend that were beyond eight stars! In the past ten thousand years, the eldest sons of the Apex Branch

would usually have Void Kunpengs as lifebound beasts. Those who didn't would usually perform worse than those who did. As for those that didn't even have kunpengs, they would be weaker than seventy percent of all Li Saint Clan members.

With such a long history, the clan had definitely gotten new blood mixed into their lineage, resulting in not all of their descendants having kunpeng-type lifebound beasts. Statistically, there was a seventy percent chance for the eldest son of the Apex Branch to have a saint beast Void Kunpeng, as was the case with Li Wudi.

Void Kunpengs had always been passed down to male heirs, rather than female ones, and only the eldest male heirs at that. That was the reason males had always held the position as clan leader. It was said that beastmasters with eight-star saint beasts and beyond had the talent to reach the saint realm alongside their lifebound beast in their cultivation!

Perhaps the heritability of a saint beast had caused the Apex Branch to have much more difficulty giving birth to offspring. If the eldest male heir of the branch wasn't born with a Void Kunpeng as a lifebound beast, it was a sign of abysmal talent! That was the reason those of the Wind Bloodline wanted to see Tianming fight and see for themselves whether Li Wudi's son had a Void Kunpeng.

If he did, his identity was pretty much certain. Tianming was older than Qingyu, so he should be the eldest son. Everyone's burning gazes settled on him.

"For a son of Li Wudi to have five bane-rings, you should at least have a Void Kunpeng, right?" Li Kunxu said with a smirk.

Having holes stared into his body, Tianming chuckled and pointed at the little chick on his shoulder. "Are you blind? This is my Void Kunpeng."

"Hey, I'm not void!" the chick snapped, but nobody heard it over the laughter and angry shouts. Li Kunxu, for instance, was one of those letting out an outburst, for Tianming had basically insulted and made light of their clan! Was he mentally challenged? There was no other explanation for why he would call a pet chicken a Void Kunpeng!

"Very well. I shall cook your Void Kunpeng today. Go!" Kunxu charged along with his lifebound beast with blinding speed.

Tianming was already losing his desire to banter with him. Second stage of Unity, huh? He shot Kunxu a glance. Currently, he was wielding a long, silver whip, and standing on the back of the Hurricane Kunpeng. He could also see his unity field and the eight nexuses!

The field was like a domain, within which strong winds blew and tore branches and leaves from trees. Within the field, each strike from the beastmaster and beast would be infused with the spiritual energy of the surroundings!

Whiiiiir!

The whip snapped toward Tianming like a venomous snake, accompanied by wind blades generated by the Hurricane Kunpeng's wing flaps. The enhancement afforded by the field greatly strengthened the skill!

"Li Tianming is already trying to get me cooked on a daily basis! Wait your turn!" the chick snapped angrily. It wasn't the first time it had been underestimated because of its size and appearance, and it was even more susceptible to mocking than Tianming was. Its rage exploded.

A suit of burning armor enveloped Tianming as feathery armour formed around the chick. The blazing wargod and warchick finally showed themselves!

"You aren't even wind type, and your trash lifebound beast is only seven stars. Aren't you ashamed to claim you come from the Apex Branch?"

Li Kunxu couldn't help but laugh. His opponent was trashier than he thought! He was afraid he would kill Tianming with one whip strike alone.

The whip continued swiping toward Tianming's mouth at high speed.

"I'll make sure all your molars fall out!" Anyone could tell he was in danger. However, he was armored and had his black arm!

Right before the strike landed, Tianming stretched his left hand out and grabbed the whip. All of a sudden, a beast-like strength tugged at the grade-six bestial weapon, Gale Whip, and Li Kunxu almost lost his grip on it. The power of the Aeternal Infernal Body and Genesis Chaos Body made Tianming far stronger than many lifebound beasts, and he would only get stronger from now on.

With both beast kis and the innate power from his body, Tianming tugged! The whip immediately snapped straight with tension.

"Scram!"

Li Kunxu would never have expected someone to be that foolish. He doubled down and used his battle art, Asura Whipping. His kunpeng followed up with a claw attack that moved similarly to his partner's battle art. Unity battle arts were powerful fusions of martial arts and beast arts that boasted great coordination between man and beast.

But at this moment, the chick opened its beak and sprayed fire! A fire phoenix landed on the Gale Whip. The infernal flame burned away at the whip, and even Li Kunxu.

"Put it out!" A gust of wind rushed out from the unity field to scatter the flames. The unity field had borrowed a spiritsource skill. Even though it came from his beast, it was even more powerful, as it was unleashed by the field itself.

However, little did Li Kunxu expect the infernal flames to not be put out, but instead flare up even stronger.

"Come here!" Right as the infernal flames landed, Tianming suddenly exerted a powerful pull. The whip left Li Kunxu's grip and he was swung smashing toward the ground.

"So this is what the second stage of Unity amounts to? Truly, your skills are beyond peerless to fall flat on the ground so gracefully. Ten points for the landing." Tianming's merciless mocking laughter rang out.

"Come, let me see how powerful you are in your kun form." Unexpectedly, Tianming went into the water on his own accord. Imagine a fire-type beastmaster going into the river to fight an opponent in kun form!

"You're gonna be in trouble!" Li Kunxu sped toward Tianming from where he'd been smashed, his beast alongside. At that moment, Tianming watched as the brown-colored peng transformed before his eyes into a large fish that dove into the river with a huge splash!

When it next appeared, it opened its large fishy maw and attempted to bite Tianming. Li Kunxu swerved for a moment and his Unity field changed from Hurricane Field to Torrential Field. Within the new field, the river's flow was more erratic, and Kunxu gained the ability to control water.

When he struck, the roiling waves generated a huge blast. He had completely exerted the full potential of the second stage of Unity.

"You overestimate yourself!" Li Kunxu didn't understand how Tianming had managed to overpower him earlier, so he choked it up to a fluke.

"Oh, really? You're only still fighting because I let you. I wanted to see how kungpengs transform. Now that I have, you can buzz right off from whence you came!" When he finished, Tianming and the chick's gazes met.

"Brother, go! Beat them up!" Tianming took but a single step, and shot forward thirty whole meters and struck out with the Grand Thunderflare Sword!

#### **Chapter 194 - Forget Using a Sword Before Me!**

One sword strike alone was enough to hit both the giant fish and Li Kunxu. At that moment, the Hurricane Kungpeng used its spiritsource ability and caused a body of water to erupt. Tianming shot through the river and infused his sword with his two beast kis, mixing them up and sending the sword slashing at the kungpeng.

"Get out of my sight!"

Li Kunxu used Asura Whipping again to block Tianming's ethereal strike. Right at that moment, a silhouette whooshed past.

Demise of Man, Spectral Dance! This time, the strike came from the little chick's wing. Li Kunxu's attention was completely focused on Tianming, as he hadn't thought that the little chick had any other abilities apart from that flame it breathed. Yet, the chick's sword strike stabbed towards his face.

Blood splattered in an instant.

The chick pulled a tooth out before darting back.

"You want to cook and eat me? We'll see how you do it without teeth!" The entire crowd was dumbstruck at the unexpected turn of events. Li Kunxu screamed from the agony of having suffered a tooth extracted through a hole in his face. The tooth was extracted in an instant, but the pain only set in after a delay. Right as he screamed, Tianming followed up with another strike at the kungpeng!

Demise of Man, Soul-Extinction! His sheer speed and power as he executed a heavenly-ranked battle art was truly terrifying. The Hurricane Kunpeng unleashed three skills at once to try to stop Tianming, but it was all to no avail. The first strike pierced into its mouth, and a twist of the sword filled it with blood. It cried in pain and dove back into the water, haggardly escaping.

"Aaaaagh!" Li Kunxu was still screaming in pain; he even teared up. The chick came once more and struck its wing on his face!

The second stage Unity youth was sent spiraling down by a puny little chick, crashing straight into Kunpeng Sacred Hall.

"Say you'll cook me again and I'll smash all your teeth!" the chick cried with its wings on its waist, laughing heartily. Power was truly intoxicating.

How could Li Kunxu manage to block the Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven? Tianming could fight at the level of the first stage of Unity with his explosive beast ki alone. It was almost as if he had the enhancement of a unity field himself! Coupled with his Aeternal Infernal Body and Genesis Chaos Body, as well as Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven, Li Kunxu stood no chance.

Back at the Kunpeng Sacred Hall, Li Chenhong was completely stupefied when he caught his precious son. His tall and handsome son was now bloody and shriveled up with one tooth less!

"It hurts, Dad! It hurts!" Tears of pain and regret fell as a result of the tooth extraction. "Dad, avenge me!"

Li Kunxu tried biting down, but could no longer feel the missing tooth on the right side of his mouth.

How could Li Chenhong possibly avenge his son? Currently, everyone's gazes were focused on the youth near the river. He thrust his Grand Thunderflare Sword into the ground and looked ahead.

"That is the eighth stage of Spiritsource?"

"It didn't look like he and his beast used a Unity battle art just now. In fact, it seemed like a Spiritsource battle art. But why does it feel so much like Heavenly Will?"

"Somebody must've simplified a heavenly-ranked battle art for him! The one who did that must be a genius!"

"It can't be. I doubt anybody in the whole of the clan can execute even a simplified Heavenly Will battle art at Spiritsource."

The discussions continued on. The more they tried to think it through, the more dumbfounded they became.

"Impossible! He doesn't even have a kunpeng lifebound beast! He's obviously an outsider the Matriarch found! It's likely he isn't really one of the clan!" Li Chenhong said.

"How could he have Lifesbane if he's not one of us?" Li Xuanhe argued.

"Didn't you say yourself that it could've been faked by a method unknown to us?" Li Chenhong retorted.

Li Xuanhe was at a loss for words, and furrowed his brows without responding.

"He is indeed at Spiritsource. What specific stage he's at isn't important. The fact is that he managed to defeat Li Kunxu using such a magnificent sword art. More importantly, his lifebound beast also has a similar talent. The only explanation for that is his Lifesbane! Only that can explain why his lifebound beast could possibly learn the battle art and comprehend the heavenly will as well!"

None of them regarded him with a mocking stare. They completely ignored Li Kunxu as they struggled to come up with an explanation. After all, he had only lost a tooth, but wasn't otherwise badly hurt. Everyone in the Wind Bloodline shot Tianming a complex look.

"I guess he does have five bane-rings after all. He really has only cultivated for half a year, and is really Li Wudi's son?"

"Since he has five bane-rings, how can he possibly not have inherited the Void Kunpeng? Not to mention, his lifebound beast is a mere seven-star chick."

"The better question would be if this chick is also a pentabane."

"Actually, some of the former sect masters from the Apex Branch didn't have Void Kupengs either. That means that while the bloodline changes, it isn't really severed. Maybe this brat is similar in that regard?"

As their discussions went on, Li Xuanhe said, "Enough bullcrap. The point is, I still don't buy it. Do any of your sons want to fight? If not, I'll have Linghe do it! He's one of the two among the younger generation to have three bane-rings, and he's at the third stage of Unity. I'm sure nobody would dispute he's the strongest among the youths here, right? So why don't we test him against Tianming? If he's not as genuine as he purports, his flaws will show when he runs into a stronger opponent. All you have to do is watch."

When Li Xuanhe was done, everyone looked coldly at him.

"In other words, you want to make Linghe the junior sect master if he defeats Li Tianming, right?"

"Well, you could always send your sons to fight him! I doubt their capabilities are that different from Li Kunxu's," Li Xuanhe said.

"Then we'll have Linghe go first!" Li Tianyu said. Sending his own son now was a fool's errand, after all. It would be better to have Li Linghe go first while the rest of us watch from the sidelines. The reason Li Xuanhe was so proactive was because his son stood an eighty percent chance of being picked from the group of seven. The rest were just there to try their luck, since the one Li Wudi hated most was Li Xuanhe. That might be a factor in why Xuanhe's son might not be picked.

However, seeing that Tianming had mastered a simplified Heavenly Will battle art made them feel like their sons wouldn't stand a chance, especially if his bane-rings were the real deal!

"Linghe! Go fight!" Li Xuanhe ordered.

"Yes, Father!"

After waiting for so long, his chance was finally here. Li Linghe, as Xuanhe's son, was the young scion of the Alpha Ursae Majoris Branch. He was the only other person in the Wind Bloodline besides Li Qingyu to have three bane-rings, and was at the third Unity stage at the young age of fifteen!

When the white-robed youth stepped forward, Tianming could immediately sense how different he was from Li Kunxu. Li Qingyu, despite being of a similar age, was at the fourth stage of Unity, slightly higher than Li Linghe. Even so, he still radiated a similar aura to her.

Regardless, an opponent of that rank was sure to be a tough one. Given Tianming's current power, he might have quite a hard time, even with both his lifebound beasts working together. However, he didn't want to waste too much time. Instead, he wanted to get his position by crushing his opponent in one go! So, he sought out Jiang Feiling from the crowd.

Since he had brought Ling'er, an existence so mysterious and terrifying, to the Grand-Orient Sect, there was no reason why he shouldn't use her to gain an edge over his opponents.

"Everyone, please wait a moment."

He came over, grabbed Feiling's hand, and entered Kunpeng Sacred Hall.

"Li Tianming, are you trying to kill me with suspense by hiding and refusing to leave like Li Wudi?" Li Linghe said in a cool, sharp voice. But the moment he finished, Tianming came back out.

However, the beauty he took into the hall with him was nowhere to be seen, much to the dismay of the Wind Bloodline youths who were trying to steal another glance at her.

Who could ever possibly imagine that she had dispersed and attached herself to Tianming? This time, the Spiritual Attachment felt even more pleasant than before. Of her ten sealed abilities, four had already been awakened.

Tianming's current core objective was to retrieve the five seals they had lost; he remembered each and every one of them clearly. And now, he was about to vent his dissatisfaction with Heaven's Elysium toward Li Linghe. After all, he wasn't as terrifying as Lady Long. In fact, she was completely out of his league. But as Tianming's opponent, he was more than capable.

"Li Linghe is second to none but Li Qingyu among our younger generation! I refuse to believe an eighth-stage Spiritsource like Li Tianming stands a chance. If he really can win, I'll accept that he is Li Wudi's son, as well as his claim of having five bane-rings."

"We don't need you to say that! Only the founding ancestor has had five bane-rings in the clan's entire history! Only someone on his level can possibly survive such odds!"

"Enough!" Li Xuanhe snapped as the discussion got heated. It somehow irked him to hear it.

"Linghe, it's time to change your fate. I trust you know what you should do."

"Dad, just watch. I'll give this arrogant jester a sound beating."

An aqua-blue longsword appeared in Li Linghe's hand. Before he jumped into the river, he pointed it at Tianming.

"Forget about using a sword before me!" After his proclamation, he stood on the surface of the river, radiating his sword intent.



"Forget?" Tianming chuckled. Given the level of talent on display, most of those in the Wind Bloodline believed this would be a tough battle, but were still quite confident Li Linghe would obtain final victory and gain the honor of defending the reputation of the Wind Bloodline's younger generation! He was what most of the young ones aspired to become.

At that moment, a titanic black fish, boasting a thick layer of scales, jumped out of the river. Not only that, many parts of its body, such as its back, cheeks, mouth, and tail had black spikes, making it look almost like a hedgehog.

When it opened its mouth, one could see dense rows of sharp teeth. It was a full-blown carnivore, a mid-tier eight-star beast on the same level as Mu Yang's Ink Qilin! In Vermillion Bird, there was only one beast comparable to it, yet here, even the juniors possessed beasts on this level.

This beast was called the Devilwind Kundrake!

### **Chapter 195 - Rampaging Demon Li Wudi**

The Devilwind Kundrake also had a peng form, and few saint beasts could actually match it! At this moment, Li Linghe was wielding his Flowstream Sword and standing on the kundrake. The moment the kundrake roared, the river shuddered and a huge body of water began to roll into a big wave. The roar was deep and ancient, almost like a whale's mysterious song.

The kundrake dove straight into the waves and caused a huge splash as Li Linghe danced about with his sword, earning him the cheers and applause of the audience. The moment he struck, the river before him made way for a huge stream of water-type sword ki that shot toward Tianming.

He had studied the blade for years, so the praises some seniors had for a talentless hack like Tianming greatly displeased him. He didn't fit what a sword-wielder should look like: just and righteous! That was exactly what Li Linghe was like. He carried himself with such an aura and bearing, and his sword strike carried his will!

"Foul sc.u.m, begone!"

The seniors were awed by the strike. But right at that moment, Tianming quietly pierced his sword into the river.

Rumble!

The river didn't shake—no, it was the earth that was shaking!

Demise of Earth, Earth-Quaker! The strong earthquake caused the waves to shake and rise up even higher. In the next instant, a strand of Grand Thunderflare Sword ki surged, and Earth-Quaker broke through Li Linghe's Flowstream Sword Ki.

"Forget using a sword before you, you said?" Tianming smirked. Little did they know that he had risen a stage higher with Spiritual Attachment! To the current Tianming, Li Linghe was only as powerful as Li Kunxu from before! Sometimes, he wondered if the real monster was himself or Jiang Feiling.

With her Spiritual Attachment, his aura soared. After his Earth-Quaker, he followed up with Hell-Shaker. He flew into the skies and spread his wings; they could be formless or visible. Nobody expected him to

be so agile in the air, but that wasn't the crucial point. Tianming had executed Hell-Shaker by slashing downwards as he was falling.

It took only a single slash! Li Linghe's rage was burning. He countered with his Heaven-defying Flowstream Mantra as he soared skywards. At the moment of the mantra's execution, countless spikes from the Devilwind Kundrake shot out and merged with the storm of wind and water that was coursing towards Tianming.

Numerous clangs rang out as something deflected those spikes. It was as if there was a formless wall before Tianming; it was none other than Feiling's Spatial Wall! But as Feiling hadn't mastered the technique yet, the wall fell apart just as Tianming's slash collided with Li Linghe's!

Twang! Boom!

Hell-Shaker, as its name implied, was able to send reverberations through the entirety of hell. Li Linghe coughed out a mouthful of blood, shrieked in pain, then fell straight toward his kundrake. Had his beast not evaded in time, Li Linghe would've found himself impaled by its spikes. He was actually defeated!

He landed on the back of the kundrake and suffered serious injuries, immediately losing consciousness and slumping against the kundrake's body. His grip loosened and the Flowstream Sword fell into the river. It took only two moves—Li Linghe and his beast hadn't even had a chance to show off in that timeframe—for Li Tianming to completely crush his opponent. It was complete domination in a battle where an eighth-stage Spiritsource beastmaster fought against a third-stage Unity beastmaster with three bane-rings!

Seeing Li Linghe coughing out blood and fainting, everyone from the Wind Bloodline was at loss for words.

"Thank goodness you passed out. I can't imagine how humiliating it must be to be defeated in a mere two moves by someone you judged to be unworthy of the sword," Tianming chuckled. He had to admit that Li Linghe was pretty decent. If he didn't have Feiling's support, he might have had to fight with his chick and cat in tow, and use Apocalyptic-Will.

However, Spiritual Attachment made it much easier. That was why he absolutely had to bring Feiling out with him. Even with her five sealed abilities stolen, she was still far too precious.

"Gentlemen, the Devilwind Kundrake still remains. Should I continue fighting?" he asked when he saw the beast still roaring towards him.

In fact, victory had already been decided. The Devilwind Kundrake was undoubtedly strong, but it could do naught but growl without being able to fight back. Its beastmaster had lost too quickly! As for the kundrake itself, even it didn't know if it should continue the onslaught, especially with how relaxed Tianming was; not to mention the evil glances the chick was giving it.

"Stop the fight!" Li Xuanhe said. He rushed out and cradled his son with a horrid expression on his face.

But Tianming wasn't going to let him off so easily.

"Li Xuanhe, let me ask you now whether my five bane-rings or his three are more impressive. Are they really tattooed on, as you suggested earlier? Do you still think my hair is dyed? Do you think I'm

unworthy of becoming the junior sect master?" One question after another hit where it hurt without mercy. By the end of Tianming's rebuke, it was as if he were shoving his face straight against Li Xuanhe's own.

Li Xuanhe used his beast ki to revitalize Li Linghe, healing his body in the meantime. He kept his head lowered without answering Tianming.

"How about the others, then?" Tianming said as he turned to them. "Li Linghe has been defeated. Are there any other challengers?"

All the sons of the various branch heads took a few steps back. They were terrified enough of Li Linghe already, to say nothing of someone who could defeat him in a mere two blows.

"Li Chenhong, Li Tianyu, and the other branch heads, do you acknowledge that I have five bane-rings now? If not, feel free to come up with an explanation as to how someone like me at the eighth stage of Spiritsource can dominate Li Linghe, as I have, and why I can comprehend and use a simplified heavenly-ranked technique. If you can come up with one, I'll take your word for it."

Tianming shot his gaze across the lot of them, who stared back with gritted teeth. They were beyond frustrated, yet they had no answer to his questions. They knew better than anyone that only someone with five bane-rings could possibly achieve such a feat. It didn't help that Feiling's terrifying boost to his power was something they weren't aware of.

Seeing them speechless and awkward, Li Jingyu was overjoyed. "Now, does anyone still doubt this is my grandson? I won't deny that he doesn't have a kunpeng, but his lifebound beasts also share his five bane-rings! For him to have those rings, he is unquestionably a descendant of the Apex Branch. Who else but my son, with his four bane-rings, could give rise to Tianming? He might not have a Void Kunpeng now, but who's to say his children won't?"

"While his lifebound beast came from his maternal side and is of a lesser breed, it can always evolve into a saint beast now that he's here in the Grand-Orient Sect! So, who's still displeased with making him the junior sect master?"

Nobody could come out with a retort to her words. Lifebound beasts had inherent potential for evolution, after all, and saint beasts weren't all that precious in and of themselves. Beasts with five bane-rings were the real treasure! With a beast that could execute a simplified heavenly-ranked technique, who would care about whether it was a Void Kunpeng? What if Tianming's descendents all had five bane-rings? There was no answer from the crowd; they were completely struck dumb. Only Li Chenhong managed to force out, "How can we tell if this chick is really a pentabane?"

"Well, I'll show you my tickle pits then," said the chick as it raised its left wing, before Tianming abruptly pressed it down.

"Can't you tell left from right? Idiot!" He was so terrified tears were already forming. The bane-rings were on his right hand, yet the chick tried to show the marks on its left wing, almost letting slip that he was a decabane!

"Huh? Isn't this right?" said the chick as it looked to its left wing.

"I can't even...." Tianming awkwardly held down its left wing and raised its right to show the crowd. There were five black dots on it!

"I'll have to paint the dots on your left wing yellow when we get back!" Tianming conveyed telepathically. With how birdbrained Ying Huo was, there was no saying when he'd let it slip. Being a pentabane had already caused so much commotion, to say nothing of what would happen if he were discovered to be a decabane. It was best to keep at least half of his talent hidden.

After they saw the bane-marks on the chick, they promptly shut up. At least as long as Tianming was here, they had no chance of getting Li Wudi to adopt their son.

"If there's nothing more, you should all leave," Jingyu said, face full of smiles. Despite the time this whole charade had wasted, she was feeling amazing. The gaze she shot at her precious grandson was full of love. The more she looked at him, the more she liked him!

However, even now, someone was trying to ruin the mood: Li Xuanhe. His son had just regained consciousness and was looking at Tianming with a pale face and grit teeth. Li Xuanhe knew that the loss had traumatized his son. He turned to Jingyu and said, "It's pointless even if you convince us to accept him as the junior sect master. We never had the right to decide the affairs of the Apex Branch in the first place. What you really need is for the other three bloodlines to acknowledge it! If you want to use challenges like these to prove Li Tianming's claim, let's see if he can take on the youths from the other bloodlines! Those of the Wind Bloodline are at the bottom tier. You can't imagine how far ahead the rest are from us!"

He really went all out without holding back. His stance was that those of the Seven Starry Branches would no longer stand behind the Apex Branch, leaving them to face the three bloodlines themselves, completely ignoring his initial promise before the battle took place.

It was one thing for him to not stand behind the Apex Branch. For him to not outright support the other bloodlines when his son was so harshly beaten was already a mercy to the Apex Branch.

"No, you're wrong. They didn't just suddenly race past the Seven Starry Branches. Instead, it's you who couldn't manage to keep up with them, resulting in the current gap!" Jingyu said with a snide chuckle. All of them in the fallen sect had hardsh.i.p.s in their fight for survival.

Li Xuanhe merely laughed. He looked at his son and felt all the more pity for him. In the end, he saw Li Qingyu. "By the way, five days from now, Li Xuanyi from the Metal Bloodline will definitely be coming to discuss marriage matters between his son, Li Jincan, and Qingyu. She's about to turn sixteen in a few days, after all. According to Li Wudi and Li Jincan's bet, Qingyu will be wedded to his son once she comes of age!

"Li Wudi really was a fool to have made that bet. He had the sect elders bear witness to the bet, only to lose so horribly himself! Li Xuanyi will definitely use the council of elders to pressure you to honor the bet. He really lucked out this time. To think that his trashy, fat and ugly son could get a beautiful genius like Qingyu as his wife. Qingyu, you're even more talented than Linghe, my own son. It's a shame your father is such a fool! Enjoy your tragic marriage!" When he finished his tirade, Xuanhe turned and left with the rest of his bloodline. What came next no longer had anything to do with him! The others only

shook their heads and left, all of them looking at Qingyu, fully knowing how much of a shame the marriage was.

The council of elders' rulings were absolute, so this could no longer be changed. While Qingyu herself still looked calm, Tianming noted that she was tightly clenching her fists in her long sleeves. Her frail body shuddered slightly.

"Don't be afraid, my granddaughter. If they try taking you, I will stop them even if it costs my life!"

Tianming watched on in silence. He had heard from Jingyu that the council of elders was the highest authority in the Grand-Orient Sect. The elders from the various lines of the sect within the council held absolute control. Five days later, the other three bloodlines would come. Whether Tianming could claim the position of junior sect master still depended on how that encounter turned out.

### **Chapter 196 - Get My Son All of Them!**

After the rest of the people left, only Tianming, Jingyu and Qingyu remained in Kunpeng Sacred Hall. The little chick and the awakened black cat were off fishing in the river. The aquatic creatures of the area would surely have nightmares of those two in the days to come. Jiang Feiling ended the Spiritual Attachment and left Tianming's body.

"Tianming, even I have never seen anything like Ling'er's ability. She's definitely really precious to you. You'd better treat her well, since she went so far as to leave home to come with you. I'm really satisfied with my granddaughter-in-law, truly!" Jingyu said.

None of them were willing to address the matter of Qingyu's marriage for now. Feiling, at being called 'granddaughter-in-law', blushed profusely.

"Granny, Big Brother treats me well," she said bashfully.

Tianming froze. Even though he hadn't called Jingyu his grandma yet, Feiling had beat him to the punch. It was no wonder she was so lovable.

"Good, very good," Jingyu said with her eyes glowing.

"Will it get troublesome for us five days from now?" Tianming sternly asked.

"Well, it'll no doubt be a little annoying. Those from the other three bloodlines are much harder to deal with than Li Linghe, and it'll take some effort before you lot can settle down here in peace. While the junior sect master position isn't that big a deal in the Grand-Orient Sect, those of the Li Saint Clan still pine for it. After all, millennia ago, that position represented the heir of the sect itself," Jingyu said with a sigh.

For the position of heir to fall to a point where nobody really cared much about it was a stark contrast from what he had known in Vermillion Bird. Either way, Tianming was going to settle down in the sect. He was quite interested in the sect itself; after all, Fatepath Peak was but a small place.

Right at that moment, a figure appeared in the hall, stumbling forwards towards them. "Tianming, my son, come, let daddy look at you! You turned sixteen in a flash! Daddy really failed you!"

Tianming turned to look at the person. He saw a man struggling to walk straight bumbling towards him with an anxious look. His hair was so messy it looked like he hadn't taken a bath for three whole months. All kinds of things stuck to his beard, including some still-evaporating alcohol. He held a jar of strong-smelling wine in one hand, but the smell on the man himself was even stronger than pure alcohol vapor. While his face was flushed from the alcohol, Tianming could see some black streaks underneath his skin, akin to miasma.

The black miasma crawled about like worms through his flesh. Tianming didn't need an introduction to know that this drunkard was none other than the current sect master, Li Wudi.

"Ohh! My beautiful daughter got even prettier! Come, have a drink with daddy," he said as he stumbled over with a stupid smile on his face.

Qingyu merely gave him a glance and said, "Granny, I'm leaving first." She immediately turned to leave, as if she didn't want to say a word to Li Wudi.

"Ling'er, help me ask Qingyu about her marriage," Tianming whispered.

"Okay."

He, Feiling, and Qingyu would be living in Kunpeng Sacred Hall from now on. Feiling was only a few years older than Qingyu, so she could probably console her somewhat and they were sure to become friends. With their departure, only Tianming, Jingyu and Li Wudi were left.

"My son, you've finally seen your dad after such a long time. I bet you're overwhelmed. Aren't you excited?"

The smell of alcohol wafted nonstop.

"Darn it, don't tell me you didn't take a bath the whole time I was away!" Jingyu said, sighing and shaking her head.

"Bathing? It's a waste of time, of life! Why would I take time away from my beloved drinking party with our ancestors?" he said, caught between a chuckle and stutter.

Looking at her pathetic son, Jingyu felt really troubled, but there was naught she could do. What in the world had the former top genius of the Grand-Orient Sect experienced to become such a hated sect master?

Li Wudi's unfocused gaze fell on Tianming, as if he was checking him out.

"Good! Come, let me see your five bane-rings." He tossed the jar to Tianming and approached him, casually raising Tianming's right arm and exposing it to the sunlight. "Wow, it's so cool! I feel the true power within! It's much cooler than my four bane-rings!" he said with awe.

Tianming's expression darkened. Was he going to become this man's adopted son and address him as father in public?

"Just address him using his whole name. Everyone in the sect does that anyway," Jingyu said.

What? So just call him Li Wudi? He was still a senior, so Tianming wanted to at least show some respect.

At that moment, Li Wudi let go of his arm and ruffled around in his clothes for a good long moment. Then, he took out a black ball-shaped object and said, "My son, I am really happy with how you turned out, so I'm giving this Kunpeng Sacred Seal to you! I've got your back from now on. The whole sect is my turf. You can do whatever you want, even beat up anyone you see! See a girl you like? Take her right there and there. Dad will establish a harem for you and let you enjoy all the luxuries life has to offer. If you like cultivation, go find your grandma. Manna, spirit ore, spirit herbs, bestial weapons, get my son all of them!" He drank as he spoke, then collapsed on the ground, completely out cold.

Jingyu couldn't bear to see him like that and picked him up. Tianming noted that she didn't blame him at all for the sloppiness. Instead, her eyes were filled with hurt and regret. Normally, any mother would wish their child to aspire to be more.

"Let me do it," Tianming said, helping her lift him up.

"Help me take him back then."

"Alright."

Tianming carried him into Kunpeng Sacred Hall. It was a large hall, where their ancestors had been laid to rest. After he put Li Wudi down and left him to his sleep, Tianming saw that Jingyu was still staring at her son with a daze.

"He gave you the Kunpeng Sacred Seal." She seemed a little surprised.

"What is it?" asked Tianming as he toyed around with the black object in his hand. It looked to be made of an odd material. It seemed like it could be jade and metal at the same time, yet it was soft to the touch.

"It's a seal formed from the condensed blood of the clan's ancestors. It contains traces of the blood of the clan, all the way from the founding ancestor to my husband. Blood essence, if you will."

Her husband was Li Wudi's father, and he had long passed away in Li Wudi's youth. Those of the Li Saint Clan's Apex Branch seldom lived long lives.

"So, it's the condensed blood of countless ancestors of the clan?" Tianming seemed a little taken aback. To be honest, he found the burden of carrying it too heavy. He looked at the object and felt the accumulated will of countless heaven-defying experts. It was a legacy of the entire bloodline, something everyone yearned for! Only the greatest of clans would have an heirloom like that. Who would've thought that it had been hidden in Li Wudi's pockets, soaking up all the alcohol smell.

"That's right." The gaze Jingyu shot the seal was one of awe.

"Is the Kunpeng Sacred Seal good for anything?" Tianming curiously asked.

"This is the symbol of the sect master and junior sect master. The seal has been passed down since the ancient days of the Li Saint Clan. There are two of them, each infused in the blood of the sect master and junior sect master, respectively. Someone without the blood of the Li Saint Clan won't be able to assimilate it," she said solemnly.

"Will assimilating it increase my strength?" Tianming asked.

"No, it won't. But you need to have it on you for you to be allowed entry into the Li Mausoleum to pay respect to the ancestors."

"In other words, as long as one can assimilate it, they'll be recognized as the junior sect master without doubt, right?" Tianming asked.

"That's right."

"So are there fortunes inside the mausoleum?"

"Nope, but the others in the clan believe there is. However, they don't possess the blood of the Li Saint Clan, so they can't enter even if they have the Kunpeng Sacred Seal. If there were fortunes inside, our sect wouldn't have deteriorated for the past millennia."

"So the whole point of condensing the blood of the ancestors is just for identification?"

"That's right. That's why the three bloodlines are scrambling to go inside and take a look. After all, they never believe whatever we tell them."

"But I'm quite distantly related to the Li Saint Clan. Can I really assimilate this seal?"

"Distant or not, you're a pentabane like the founding ancestor. There is a good chance it'll work."

"Then, can't I just become the junior sect master now by taking the seal in and destroying the plans of the other three bloodlines?"

"Theoretically it should work out that way, but I wouldn't encourage you to do it before convincing the rest first."

"Why?"

"Because once it's assimilated, the seal will only come back out when you die, with the only difference being a drop of your blood will have been added to the blood essence."

"So you're saying if I assimilate it without convincing them, they might kill me to retrieve the seal?" After all, the three bloodlines were targeting the position of the junior sect master and, by extension, the seal.

"That's what I expect will happen, but as long as I'm here, nobody can kill you. However, assimilating it will bring you beyond a point of no return. If the other three bloodlines aren't convinced, you'll be in a precarious position!" Jingyu's words were like an oath to him.

"I see." He had already made up his mind. He smiled and asked, "So, how do I get started?"

"Make a cut at the part of your skin where the bane-rings are. The seal will enter your blood through the cut."

The moment she finished speaking, Tianming retrieved the Blazing Dragon Fang from his spatial ring and made a cut across his five bane-rings.

## **Chapter 197 - Aeonian Ancestral Blood**

"What are you doing?" Li Jingyu said, looking at him with shock.



"Grandma, since I came here with the intent of becoming the junior sect master, I don't need a way out. Leaving me a way to escape would only mean risking the possibility of them taking the Kunpeng Sacred Seal from me. I don't want to leave that to chance. Don't worry, since you promised I won't be killed, I will do everything to not disappoint you." Tianming had made his decision. The ten bane-rings in his blood seemed to tell him that the seal wasn't as simple as a mere means of identifying the junior sect master. And if he were afraid of dying, he wouldn't be here in the first place.

He clutched the seal and felt it resonate with his body. In that instant, he was fully convinced he was a member of the Li Saint Clan, even if he wasn't Li Wudi's son or a direct descendant of the Apex Branch. Even so, his ancestors had definitely descended from that line, and he, by extension, did too. There was no way he would risk having the seal taken away from him just because he wasn't sure he could assimilate it. His instincts told him that it was a treasure beyond any other and he needed to assimilate it as soon as possible!

So, he made his choice.

When he told Jingyu about his decision, he pressed the seal against his bane-rings and it immediately began sizzling. It was as if the bloodline of his countless ancestors was flowing into his body.

"Tianming!"

Jingyu never would've expected him to be so daring.

"Grandma, I like your personality. Since I call you my grandma, I acknowledge myself to be a member of the Li Saint Clan. I also won't deny that I want to see how far I can go here as the junior sect master, and wonder how much being here will help my cultivation. My mother taught me to always repay the favors we get. You helped me save Ling'er, so I'm eternally grateful to you. We may not be really related, but I mean it when I call you Grandma. By the whims of fate, I've become entangled with your family. So, from now on, I'll do my best to fight for this family. That's why I don't need a way out. I'm only going to struggle with the seal. As long as I won't die, I fear nothing else," he earnestly said.

He was grateful to Jingyu, and wanted to repay her in some way. He found her to be a pleasant character, so he didn't hide his own ambitions either. It was a fact he would be getting lots of support cultivating here, the seal being one such example. He could tell it was something precious on first glance.

Additionally, he would definitely need her protection anyway in this large sect. Since everything had gone well so far, there wasn't much else to consider. He would fight!

His words touched Jingyu, causing her eyes to redden. "Good... You're my chubby wubby grandson alright! Brilliant! Granny has always wanted a grandson like you!"

At that moment, all of the blood in the seal had entered Tianming's body, causing some change in his five bane-rings. It was only a minor change, yet it felt really significant. The rings themselves seemed drawn by an ink brush. The ink droplets scattered nearby, looking like countless oscillating stars. The greatest change was within his decabane body, but he wasn't too sure what was changing within himself. It was as if his old decabane body didn't have any core or soul. But now, after assimilating the ancestral blood, he felt something. His current self was the combined quintessence of the Li Saint Clan's excellence. Each and every one of his ancestors' wills seemed to flow through his blood, as if they lived

on through him! His blood boiled with vigor, and he knew that it wasn't a superficial change. In terms of talent, his decabane body already afforded him full stars.

This time, it was a complete, qualitative transformation right from his very core! From a genius, he became the condensation of all the essence of his ancestors' own Lifesbane physiques. It was almost certain that there was no such historical precedent when others had assimilated the seal.

Tianming was sure he would be able to discover even more benefits the seal conferred upon him. He was a grateful person, and Li Jingyu had already risked much to ensure Jiang Feiling's safety by antagonizing Yueling Long. Li Wudi had given him such a great gift on their first meeting. Since he now had the qualifications to be the junior sect master, he would also have to bear the burdens that came with the position. After all, he was indeed a descendant of the clan. From that moment on, he would take root in the Kunpeng Sacred Hall.

"How do you feel?"

"Splendid."

"I see the fight in you. You're a boy with spunk... I like it." Jingyu chuckled as she patted his shoulders.

He joined in the laughter. From now on, she was his grandmother. While they weren't related by blood, it mattered not, so long as their bonds were true. After all, he'd never had a grandmother of his own that loved to spoil him.

"Mu He! Mu He!" All of a sudden, Li Wudi cried out from his room. Just as Tianming was about to check it out, Jingyu stopped him.

"Don't. He's dreaming." Her voice sounded as if her heart was cracking.

"Who's Mu He?" Tianming asked. He was quite curious about Li Wudi, the tetrabane who used to be the top genius of the sect. He used to be the greatest sect master, and the hope of the Li Saint Clan's revival!

"Mu He was his wife and Qingyu's mother. Tianming, even though Li Wudi seemed frivolous in his youth, he's only ever had one person in his heart," Jingyu sighed as she recalled the matters of old.

"How did he end up like that?"

Li Wudi was the greatest thing weighing down on Jingyu. Seeing the old woman's shaky gaze, he knew that she had suffered just as much as Wei Jing had. The day that Tianming returned from Ignispolis and collapsed in front of her, he had seen the expression on her face, as if her heart was crumbling. There was no doubt that Li Jingyu had experienced the same thing. That was why she never faulted him for wasting himself away.

She grit her teeth and said, "It's all in the past. If anyone is to blame, it would be him. He was too arrogant and treasured relationships too much. In fact, I was also at fault for not teaching him to be wary of others. Tianming, there are some things I have to tell you about."

"Grandma, please do."

"This is the most important warning I can give you, so you don't repeat Li Wudi's mistakes. Listen well: in the past millennium, the rate at which our clan fell from grace in the Grand-Orient Realm is staggering.

The biggest reason for that is our long legacy. The dilution of our bloodline has led to our descendants having fewer and fewer bane-rings. That's the core reason for our clan's fall—we rely on talent too much. The moment that talent goes away, our foundations will crumble. I don't need to bring up our glory days too much. Basically, our clan controlled the Grand-Orient Sect. Due to our Lifesbane, the leading position of the sect was inherited through our bloodline.

"Thousands of years ago, our descendants were all unbelievably powerful without exception. Thanks to the strict traditions we observed, we rarely had those who would go against the clan. Not to mention, in every generation, even the second or third son could have Void Kunpengs as lifebound beasts. But in the past millennium, the Grand-Orient Sect began deteriorating as our powerful descendants dwindled in number. However, there are many of those in the sect who used to serve the Li Saint Clan. Their power grew, and they eventually surpassed our clan's. They came to form the council of elders to control the sect. They didn't break the tradition of inheritance, but made sure that our clan would no longer hold any power in the sect. We were relegated to the sideline and excluded from the spotlight. Nowadays, the council of elders has risen even more, while we continue withering away."

Tianming felt the history of the clan was a great shame. They used to dominate the Grand-Orient Realm for millennia, yet they had fallen so far in a mere thousand years. As for the Apex Branch, it would soon end with Li Wudi's generation.

"Tianming, do you know what I'm saying after hearing all that?"

"I do."

"Then tell me what you picked up from that."

"You told me about the history of the council of elders and the clan, so I know what you're trying to say. To the council, the Li Saint Clan's days of glory are over. So, the new Grand-Orient Sect doesn't need any geniuses from the clan. You all, on the other hand, want to restore the Li Saint Clan by getting a new sect master that can wrest back control of the sect. There'll definitely be someone who'll come to extinguish this possibility to stop it from happening. That's why the clan has fallen so far, it's due to lack of talent."

In other words, the council of elders definitely had something to do with Li Wudi's fall.

### **Chapter 198 - Yuwen Taiji's Venomdrake Spike**

At the mention of Li Wudi, Tianming thought about himself.

"You meant to say that once word that I am a pentabane gets out, my future path will be a thorny one. Others won't oppose me openly, since the Grand-Orient Sect is built on the foundations set by the founding ancestor of the clan. Messing with me will only invite mockery from others. However, I have to be wary of hidden attacks and not let anyone have a grip on my weakness. Otherwise, it'll be over for me. Is that about right?" He had already guessed most of it from Li Wudi's current state and what he had heard from Li Jingyu.

"You're much smarter than Li Wudi was when he was young. Back then, he was talented and accomplished, so he was filled with vigor and made sworn brothers all over the place..." Jingyu sighed.

Her heart ached at the memory. She turned to her sleeping son, looking at him with reddened eyes.

"He called Yuwen Taiji—son of the council member, Yuwen Fengtian—his brother, and pledged he would go through life and death with him. Yuwen Taiji seemed polite, reserved, and unambitious. He was my son's playmate since they were young, and Yuwen Fengtian also came to help us out often after finding out about my son's talent. There had been no geniuses in the Li Saint Clan for a long time, so I didn't have my guard up against them at all. Just like that, the two pledged to be sworn brothers and cultivated together for some five years. My son told Yuwen Taiji everything without holding anything back. In fact, he probably spent more time at his house than our home!"

It sounded like they used to have an unbreakable fraternal bond. That was something Tianming valued, too, like his relationship with Midas before, and now with Ying Huo and Meow Meow. So, he could understand the nature of Li Wudi and Yuwen Taiji's relationship.

"All I can say is that those of the Yuwen family are superb actors. They're far too patient! Even though Yuwen Taiji's talent couldn't compare to my son's, he managed to get him to pledge their lives to each other! It was a long time back when my son got married, the year when Qingyu was born. The council of elders held a competition for the geniuses at the Abyssal Battlefield. During the competition, Yuwen Taiji exploited my son's trust and thrust his bestial weapon, Venomdrake Spike, into my son's heart! You don't know how terrifying the spike truly is. Once it's in, it can never be pulled out. Those who try will end up dead! However, without pulling it out, one must endure the torture of the spike forever! The Venomdrake Spike came in a pair—one for my son, and another for his lifebound beast. Thanks to the agony from being pierced, my son couldn't cultivate at all and his level has since deteriorated to this point!" Jingyu's fists were tightly clenched as her body tensed. She was shaking with anger and tears filled the corners of her eyes. It must have been hard for her to be greeted by the sight of her son returning from the Abyssal Battlefield.

"Did Yuwen Taiji not get punished for it?" Tianming forced himself to ask.

The four or five years Yuwen Taiji spent to cultivate his relationship with Li Wudi was all for that one moment. He was far too cruel and harsh! As far as Tianming was concerned, people who weaponized emotions and feelings were the lowest of the low!

"No! The Venomdrake Spike is the signature bestial weapon of Su Yan, from Heaven's Elysium. Nobody else has it. So, the only possible culprit was Su Yan. After all, nobody else in the Grand-Orient Sect could rival my son, not even Yuwen Taiji! Only my son knows that it was his trusted brother who backstabbed him when he let his guard down! That kind of betrayal was a great blow to his mental state. What's worse is Yuwen Taiji had already made plans with some others for an alibi. When my son accused him of that, he said Su Yan was masquerading as him! Without any proof, my son's testimony alone was useless. He was set up. Even if the council of elders wanted to do something about it, they were powerless. Not to mention, most of those in the council don't want my son to bring the Li Saint Clan back to power and wrest control of the Grand-Orient Sect from them. There was nothing a widow like me could do about it. Nobody cared what I had to say, and my son was already crippled. Even though there were some friends of my husband on the council of elders and were there thanks to the clan's support, they couldn't have helped us even if they wanted to. This is the truth: the Yuwen family were the culprits, yet they didn't suffer any consequences."

It was a true shame. In that situation, nothing could be said or done about it. It was something Tianming was really familiar with. When he returned from Ignispolis, he told many people the truth, but only Wei

Jing really believed him. Who else would bother? It was already too late for him, anyway. No doubt Li Jingyu's mental state was similar to Wei Jing's back then.

"Yuwen Fengtian and Yuwen Taiji... those sly, venomous, heartless bastards! All these years, my son suffered the pain from the Venomdrake Spike and spending his days barely alive. Did you know why Yuwen Taiji didn't kill my son at the Abyssal Battlefield and left him alive to endure the torture? It's because he secretly fancied my daughter-in-law, Mu He. He hated Wudi, so he wanted to torture him and see him fall from grace all to sate his desires! However, Mu He had never given him the time of day. Yuwen Taiji came to my Fatepath Peak to pretend to visit my son, but his actual goal was to take Mu He away. Mu He and I resisted with much effort. In the end, she couldn't take it anymore and abandoned Qingyu when she was three, and took her own life.

"Qingyu was only three! She had to see her mother collapse right before her eyes! It was Yuwen Taiji who forced Mu He to choose death! I really want to avenge them. But nowadays, he's no longer the same man who orchestrated his insidious plan like a snake. Now, he's the strongest in the Grand-Orient Sect, whereas I'm already old and incapable of avenging my son. This is the greatest regret I have in my life!" All the hate she endured caused her to lose sleep at night.

"Tianming, it's not that I expect you to do anything about this by telling you all this. At the end of the day, the grudges of my family have nothing to do with you. I brought you here with the sole intention of letting you reach your full potential. I'm telling you this just to warn you to always be careful, no matter what heights you reach in the future. Nowadays, they've long forgotten Fatepath Peak and the Li Saint Clan, so you'll be safe here. What happens within the clan will no longer affect the sect. All else aside, our clan still has our dignity. Even if others wish us ill, they won't openly harm us. They also value their reputation, after all, and their family is now the hope of the Grand-Orient Sect.

"Back when Yuwen Taiji forced Mu He to commit suicide, he was harshly criticized by many in the council of elders, and even punished for it. Even if he's the strongest in the sect now, he's still not out of the council's grasp. While those on the council don't wish for our clan to be restored, they still care about their reputation. The whole Grand-Orient Realm pays attention to them, after all. Most wise folk out there know the true conspiracy behind my son's downfall. Back then, the reputation of the council of elders took a huge, foundational hit and caused the sect to grow more chaotic.

"You, on the other hand, are a pentabane. There's no issue with you training and growing in the sect. There are still those in the council who remember what the Li Saint Clan has done for them, and will protect you. Even so, always keep your guard out! The hardest strikes to avoid are those you don't see coming! Who would've guessed a sworn brother of five years would plot to cripple you?"

It was as if Jingyu had let out all the tears she had saved up over the years. She finally rubbed her face dry when she finished.

"Child, this has nothing to do with you. The debt we're owed is not yours to claim. All you have to do is to fulfill your full pentabane potential. Don't waste it. I'll introduce you to the council members who are still on good terms with us soon. As long as you can show your worth, I believe they'll protect you. There are good people out there too. It's just that this time around, my son was set up and the evidence was masterfully forged. They couldn't do anything about it. Even if they tried to help, the nature of the Venomdrake Spike made it so my son couldn't be saved.

"As for Mu He, she'd already suffered a huge blow from my son's downfall in the first place. Yuwen Taiji didn't want her dead, he was just tactless and pushed her to her breaking point. The council of elders punished him with two years of seclusion after her death. Yet who would've expected him to improve so much during his seclusion. Nowadays, he could simply just take the position of sect master from my son." She breathed a long sigh when she finished.

It was all in the past, but it would never truly be forgotten. Tianming bit his lip in frustration. Everyone in the family, from the older to the younger generation, was suffering. That was especially the case for Qingyu. She shouldn't have had to experience all that at her age. All Tianming could do was vow to do what he could for this family. At the very least, he had to return the favor of her saving Feiling, bringing him here, and being granted the Kunpeng Sacred Seal.

Li Wudi slowly awakened and reached out for his wine jar to take another drink.

"Oh? You took that thingy into your body?" he said, looking at Tianming with shock.

"That's right," Tianming replied with a nod. Now, he was officially the junior sect master.

"Beautifully done. Now, you can enter the Li Mausoleum with me!" Li Wudi said with a smile.

"Alright." Tianming himself was quite curious what the mausoleum of such a great clan would look like.

Li Wudi crawled upright and put his arm around Tianming's shoulders, covering him in a strong, alcoholic musk.

"Come, kiddo, daddy will bring you to the mausoleum! Are you ready? We'll go sing and dance for our ancestors."

### **Chapter 199 - Bloodbane Barrier**

"Sister-in-law, you and Brother Tianming can stay in this room. The light is brighter here and there's a great view of nature outside."

Within Kunpeng Sacred Hall, two top beauties walked shoulder to shoulder and chatted along the way. Qingyu was the more quiet and reserved type. But even though it was their first time meeting, they got along quite well.

"Qingyu, we're about the same age, so just call me Ling'er."

The sun's illumination scattered under their skin and took on a slight reddish hue.

"Alright, Ling'er," Qingyu said, smiling giddily. All these years, she had grown up alone without a playmate. Yet now, Kunpeng Sacred Hall seemed like it would be rather merry.

"Ling'er truly looks amazing. I don't think I've seen someone as beautiful as you in the whole sect," Qingyu said with some dejectedness. Though, she was only fifteen and looked the part. In two years, though, she was sure to mature into a stunning looker in her own right.

"You're really pretty too, you know," Feiling said. "Wait, it kinda feels wrong to praise each other like that...."

They blinked at each other and burst out laughing. Their smiles were so natural and pure they seemed like a refreshing breeze.

"Why is there only one room?" Feiling asked.

"Don't you live together with Brother Tianming?"

"Of course not. We haven't even known each other for that long. Since you live there, should I come stay with you?"

Qingyu was at a loss for words. All her life she'd had to spend her nights alone. She had never imagined such a girl would turn up in her life like that.

"Qingyu, I've slept with Qing'er all my life. I'll no doubt feel lonely if I have to start sleeping alone, so please?" she asked expectantly, tugging her hand.

"Of course." Qingyu hurriedly nodded.

"Wonderful."

Just like that, Tianming's dream of cuddling with her in their sleep was ruined. Next, Qingyu showed her around Fatepath Peak and Kunpeng Sacred Hall.

Feiling felt a little worn out, so the two sat down on a nearby rock.

"Qingyu, here's a riddle for you. Guess the word: Mr Wang and Mr Bai sit on a rock."

"Jade?"

"Wow, you're so smart!" Feiling exclaimed. Qingyu couldn't help but laugh. Was this how it felt to have friends? The riddle wasn't hard at all, yet the joy she felt when she solved it was pure bliss. Her laughter couldn't sound more innocent and pure.

Qingyu bit her lip and lowered her head.

"Qingyu, I heard your grandfather promised your hand in marriage to someone you don't like, right?" Feiling lifted Qingyu's hand up lightly and placed it against her chest to give her some warmth.

"Yes..." she said weakly, nodding.

"Why?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it's because they brought up my mother. Father got angry and wanted to punish them, hence the bet. But he ended up losing. Back then, he had the council of elders bear witness to the bet. This all happened ten years ago when my mother had just passed. Father had a really short fuse back then." Tears began flowing as she recounted the events.

"Do you hate him because of this?" Feiling pressed.

Nobody had talked to Qingyu about this matter before. "No, Ling'er. I understand what he's going through. Granny said that this is just life sometimes. It doesn't always work out the way we want, and we shouldn't give up on ourselves or resent those around us for it. We must continue to fight to our last breath. Only after we've tried our best can we die without regrets," she said with grit teeth.

Her marriage had already been decided. The son of Li Xuanyi, the head of the Metal Bloodline, had been born a fool with no potential. Not to mention, all he did was eat and sleep.

"If they really move forward with the marriage and use the council to pressure us, what should we do?"

"I don't know. I just don't want to involve Granny and Father in this. If I really have to get married to him, I'll disfigure myself by burning off my face. Let's see if they'll still take me then," she said resolutely. There wasn't even a hint of a joke in her words. She already knew what she would do if the marriage was to proceed.

"No, you can't do that!" Feiling clutched her palm even tighter. It only made it harder for Qingyu to follow through with her resolution.

"Ling'er, it's fine. So what if I'm disfigured? As long as I'm alive, I'll be able to make those who wronged me pay a heavy price one day!" Though she had her head down, her eyes were actually looking toward the Grand-Orient Sect like a young, wild beast.

"Even if I end up in tatters, I will never forget how she fell right in front of my eyes!" Her tears began flowing harder. She couldn't hold it in any longer and sobbed, hugging Feiling tightly.

In the fifteen years of her life, she'd never had a friend. She didn't even know how to vent the festering displeasure she felt. It had accumulated for all this time, and she felt her internal organs rotting from the filth. It was almost as if she was a living zombie. The bloody sights she witnessed... At the age of one, she saw her father being dragged back, covered in blood. She was still too young to comprehend what had happened. At three, she saw her mother's final, pained struggle. It was burned deep into her mind. The flower bouquet she held in her hand fell, and from then on, she only held weapons, until today, when Feiling came.

She cried as Feiling patted her shoulder and stroked her back. It suddenly felt much better.

"Thank you, Ling'er." Qingyu wiped her tears and forced a smile. After all, she should never give up!

"Should I tell you about him?" Feiling suddenly volunteered.

"Who? Brother Tianming?"

"Yes. He once fell to rock bottom, yet fate left him alive."

"I see." She listened intently as Feiling continued until she reached the part where Tianming killed Lin Xiaoting. Li Qingyu was there, after all, and had seen it for herself.

"Qingyu, never throw everything away in desperation. We haven't lost. Big Brother loves it here and likes you all. The blood of the Li Saint Clan flows in him, and he's willing to become one of you. So, you won't be fighting alone from now on. That's his path of cultivation. He repays favors and grudges all the same. Not only were you nice to him, you even saved me. I'm sure he'll help you when you're in trouble. So, let's go through this together, alright?" Feiling stretched out her hand.

"Okay." Qingyu felt a sudden burst of confidence.

"Let's play a game. Do you know XXXX? The winner will get to scribble on the loser's face!" Feiling said.



"Huh?"

"Oh, you're so gonna lose." Feiling was brimming with confidence, seeing that Qingyu didn't seem to have any experience playing the game. Just like that, they played for a good part of the day. In the end, Feiling herself got scribbled all over.

"No way, Qingyu, you must be cheating! You must be!"

"Come on, I won fair and square. Don't run! One more time!"

"This can't be happening!"

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It was time to enter the Li Mausoleum. Tianming called the yellow chick and black cat back to him. When he left, he saw Feiling and Qingyu playing together in the distance and couldn't help but chuckle to himself. Li Wudi laughed also.

"What's so funny?"

"My daughter-in-law sure is beautiful. She seems wasted on you, like a rose planted in a pile of dung," he teased.

"Darn you."

By the time the chick and cat each took their place on Tianming's shoulders, Li Wudi burst out laughing again.

"These are your lifebound beasts?"

"What's wrong with them?"

"Well, they look like fine cooking ingredients. Maybe some chicken poppers with cat jerky. But then, cat meat tastes pretty sour...."

What a shameless fellow....

At the very least, the chick and cat seemed to love the place based on how excited they seemed. Tens of thousands of beasts were free to roam the wide landscape; it was far less restrictive than Ignispolis. After they finally returned, it was time to enter the mausoleum!

"Sigh... these darned ancestors are really heavy drinkers. Now that you're here, I'm sure my wine stores will be emptied even further...." Li Wudi seemed a little pained as they traveled.

"Are the ancestors still alive?" Tianming asked with wonder.

"Of course not. Just... some people are avid drinkers even in death and won't grant you any boons if you don't make a good offering of fine wine! What a bunch of greedy crooks!" he spat. He protected each jar of wine like he did his own life.

No boons without offerings? Tianming decided it was probably Li Wudi's madness talking. What kind of person would call their own ancestors crooks? If it weren't for his curiosity at what the mausoleum held, Tianming would be too embarrassed to be seen with someone like him!

The Li Mausoleum was at the back of Fatepath Peak. That was why the Li Saint Clan chose to retreat there after they lost control over the clan to the council of elders. Fatepath Peak was, in a sense, the entrance to their ancestral mausoleum.

Entering the rear mountain, Tianming felt nothing but endless bloody miasma in front of him. He looked up and saw a blood-colored barrier surrounded by a bloody mist that constantly shifted into gigantic kunpengs that observed the visitors.

Whoosh!

A sharp howling assailed them nonstop. Tianming knew that this was the heavenly pattern barrier that protected the mausoleum. Heavenly pattern barriers were formations, of sorts, created from the arcane energies that could only be comprehended at the Heavenly Will stage. They were closely related to the patterns on manna, spirit ores, and spirit herbs.

This was one of the many applications of heavenly pattern barriers. Different barriers also had really different properties. The one that Jin Yixuan had used couldn't even be compared to the one before them that spanned what seemed like half the world. The blood around the barrier almost seemed to dance.

"The Li Saint Clan holds the highest regard for their ancestors. This is the heavenly pattern barrier that's been deployed since the days of the founding ancestor: the Bloodbane Barrier. Each ancestor of ours will have to use all the power they have left before they die to reinforce the barrier. As of now, Bloodbane Barrier is still number one in the entire Grand-Orient Realm. Only those with the Li Saint Clan's blood in their veins and the Kunpeng Sacred Seal, basically you and me, can enter. Anyone else will be instantly killed. Currently, no one can possibly endure the might of the barrier."

Li Wudi looked up at the barrier with reverence and awe as he explained. Tianming didn't expect to see such a serious side to him.

"Come! Let's go visit the crooks!" he said all of a sudden as he cracked a smile. His seriousness hadn't even lasted three breaths.

Tianming had his beasts return to the lifebound space before stepping through the barrier with Li Wudi. After they entered, the bloody mist receded and revealed a path leading inward.

1. The character for Wang is 王, Bai is 白, and rock is 石. The character for jade is 碧, a combination of the three, so the word play here makes sense once you know the Chinese characters involved.

## **Chapter 200 - Founding Ancestor Li Shenxiao**

"I wonder if Ling'er can come inside with me using Spiritual Attachment...."

The Bloodbane Barrier was more terrifying the deeper they went. However, there wouldn't be a point in bringing her in if it was just a mere grave. But given that it was defended by a barrier of such caliber, there was no way it was normal.

It was a fact that many of the Li Saint Clan's sect masters and junior sect masters had entered the mausoleum since the days of the founding ancestor, and it was plain to see that they didn't get much from it. Some even monitored those who entered, only to see them leave after a short time. As such, no

faction was too interested in what was beyond the barrier even after the Li Saint Clan fell. Not to mention, even if they had the Kunpeng Sacred Seal, they wouldn't be able to enter. The seal was only one of the two prerequisites for entry, while the other was being a descendant of the Li Saint Clan—and usually those with at least two bane-rings.

Historically, there had been no instance of those with no bane-rings succeeding at assimilating the seal. Just like that, the mysterious mausoleum that many yearned to enter soon faded from the collective consciousness. Only those of the Li Saint Clan still wanted to go in and see what was in it for themselves.

Tianming advanced through the bloody mist for thirty breaths. The deeper he went, the thicker the color of blood in the air grew. Finally, he arrived. All of a sudden, he saw a wide expanse in the sky when the mist fully dissipated.

He scanned the mausoleum and saw the space within the barrier. At the very edges of it were countless mountains whose peaks shot high, like titans holding up a sky dotted with blood-colored clouds. The Bloodbane Barrier sealed a spherical space within, including even the ground, so digging under the barrier wouldn't work. The tallest mountain within pierced the clouds and directly contacted the underside of the barrier dome. Behind this mountain were many more, but the number was hard to count thanks to the bloody mist.

"The first mountain is called Shenxiao Mountain, named after our founding ancestor, Li Shenxiao. It's his tombstone. He was the first to be afflicted with Lifesbane. Back then, there was no way to cure it. However, his terrifying willpower allowed him to cultivate with his Lifesbane-ridden body and last fifty years without dying! In the end, he finally found the technique to cure it. His body returned to how it was when he was fifteen, and from then on, he soared through the ranks and defeated countless champions. After that, he founded the Grand-Orient Sect in the chaotic Grand-Orient Realm and dominated the realm, ushering in an era of stability. Not only was he the strongest man in the whole realm back then, but to this very day, he hasn't been surpassed by any others in the sect—it was even rumored that he broke through the Emyrean Saint Realm!"

The founding ancestor was also Tianming's ancestor. It seemed that this amazing forebear was the figure the whole clan aspired to become. His legends were still sung throughout the whole of the Grand-Orient Realm. Lifesbane started with him, and was also broken by him.

"Come, I'll take you to this old crook's tombstone to drink. He really is a huge drinker. He drank up most of my stock!" he hatefully spat, talking about the founding ancestor really casually before Tianming, as if he were really his son.

They walked across the desolate land to Shenxiao Mountain. At the foot of the mountain, Tianming saw a giant, seated beast that exuded the same kind of black aura as Li Wudi. It was a black kunpeng at its last breath, looking incredibly thin and old. When Li Wudi came, it struggled to open its eyes to look, then closed them and breathed out some black miasma. It was clear that this was the lifebound beast that had its heart pierced with a Venomdrake Spike like Li Wudi.

"Tianming, my son, behold. This is the legendary lifebound beast of our bloodline: the Voided Kunpeng," Li Wudi joked.

"Isn't it the Void Kunpeng?"

"Well, more or less. Not only is it void, it's also wounded." He couldn't help himself and chuckled.

Tianming gave the Void Kunpeng another look. It was said that these were natural-born saint beasts—lifebound beasts with eight or nine stars. However, this Void Kunpeng didn't look the least bit saintly. It paled in comparison to Li Jingyu's Rage-Sea Kunpeng, having to constantly endure the torture and struggling to even live, just like Li Wudi.

Since coming to the sect, Tianming had heard too many descriptors with the word 'saint' in them. There was the Void Kunpeng, a saint beast, the Venomdrake Spike, a saint bestial weapon, as well as the Empyrean Saint Realm.

"Senior Li, isn't the saint realm just another realm? Or are there distinct levels?" Tianming asked.

Jingyu had said he could simply address Li Wudi with his full name, but that didn't feel too polite.

"Of course there are levels. In the mortal realm, there are four levels of cultivation, namely, Beast Vein, Spiritsource, Unity, and Heavenly Will. Beyond the mortal realm is the saint realm, where one strives for eternal youth! Those who reach that realm fight to extend their lifespans and make themselves immortal. It's a path of chasing after the will of the heavens, and even ascending into godhood! The saint realm is the first step one takes to leave the mortal realm behind for the path of gods. There are three main stages in the saint realm. The first is the Earth Saint Realm; those at that level are called earth saints. The second stage is when one rises into the skies once they transcend the earth: the Sky Saint Realm. Those at that level are called sky saints. Most people believe the Sky Saint Realm is the limit of cultivation, but they don't know there's a third stage beyond even that—the Empyrean Saint Realm! Those who attain it are called empyrean saints and they stand at the very apex of all!"

So, the four stages of cultivation I know are only within the mortal realm. The saint realm is beyond mortals' reach and has three stages, earth, sky, and empyrean!

In other words, the founding ancestor was indeed rather terrifying to be able to reach the Empyrean Saint Realm. He must've been the most illustrious figure in the past millennia of the Grand-Orient Realm, and was quite possibly the one and only person to reach that stage.

"The cultivation at the saint realm is much more complicated than you can imagine. You should just focus on reaching Unity and comprehending the Heavenly Will for now. The Heavenly Will stage is the foundation of the saint realm, as well as the key to reaching it," Li Wudi rambled on.

Tianming made sure to commit those words to memory. He was only at the eighth stage of Spiritsource for now, so there was still quite a way before he would touch the legendary saint realm. But he did know that one prerequisite to reach it was having a saint beast. As for the saint bestial weapon, Venomdrake Spike, it was probably made of the best materials one could get hold of.

It didn't take long before they had ascended to the midpoint of the mountain.

"People often say that the Li Saint Clan was cursed by the gods, but I don't think that's the case. Son, look here." Li Wudi was truly quite shameless. Even though Tianming had made it a point to call him senior, the drunk man had been calling him son the whole time. Tianming looked at where he was pointing, but could only see mountains stretching up into the cloudy sky. Each of them looked like a blood-covered titan, and the remains of each ancestor rested at their peaks.

"At the peak of that mountain is the tomb of our second ancestor, Li Xinghe. He was the son of Li Shenxiao, a tetrabane. However, his bane-rings were blood-colored bane-rings, which gave him the ability Bloodmorph. Li Xinghe had always been a difficult son, and had fought with the founding ancestor before. The details aren't very well known, but he repented in the end and changed. According to the annals of the clan, Li Xinghe had killed 13,900 people. He was a cruel man," Li Wudi said with a sigh. Tianming looked at the burning peak of that mountain and felt pride. It was as if he felt the destiny of his bloodline! As Li Wudi introduced ancestors one after another, Tianming felt more and more proud to be a member of the clan. They were far too glorious, being a line of countless precedent-setting experts.

"Blood-colored bane-rings?" Tianming's own ten bane-rings were black, as normal ones were. He didn't know that blood-colored bane-rings existed.

"Look at this mountain. This is the tomb of the third ancestor, Li Shendao, another pentabane! His bane-rings were black, but not located on his arm. Rather, they were located on his abdomen, over his dantian. This gave him frightening cultivating talent. Rumor has it that he was even more powerful than Li Xinghe, and just a step shy of achieving the Empyrean Saint Realm.

"This one is where our fourth ancestor, Li Shenfeng, rests. He's the younger brother of Li Shendao and was famed for his lifebound beast, the Skyvoid Kunpeng. In the early days of the Grand-Orient Realm, godly treasures were produced in the realm, drawing many foreign invaders to it. It was Li Shendao and Li Shenfeng that killed all of them! Li Shenfeng had green bane-rings and had incredible speed, as swift as wind!

"This is the fifth ancestor, Li Daoyun...."

"This is the sixth ancestor, Li Xingchen...."

Li Wudi introduced each and every ancestor in detail. Since he didn't seem to be getting tired of it, Tianming patiently listened. It was plain to see that the ancestors made Li Wudi proud; Tianming himself felt proud because of them as well. Ever since he'd gotten Lifesbane and assimilated the seal, he could feel the passion and resonance in his own blood. Within him flowed the same blood that had flowed in the veins of these great ancestors! The essence of Li Shenxiao, Li Xinghe, Li Shendao, Li Shenfeng, and the other ancestors flowed within him. Despite being separated by the sands of time, they were one! How could anyone not be proud of having such incredible forebears? This was pride of his lineage—each and every drop of his blood boiled with glory! Without noticing, he was so touched he teared up. Who wouldn't after witnessing their once-glorious clan falling to this point?

Now, they had a pathetic sect master and a junior sect master that hadn't even secured his position. Not only that, but the Apex Branch's lineage was severed!

"It's all a matter of the past, so there's no need to feel torn over it. Things come and go, rise and fall. Such is life. I introduced them to you not because I wanted you to feel bad about them, but because each one of them left behind a fortune that normal people can't find. And now, I'm going to hand their fortunes to you," Li Wudi said, then smirked.

"Fortunes?" Tianming froze. How could there be anything from the ancestors left after tens of thousands of years?