

## The Ages 201

### Chapter 201 - I Have Seen Demons and Gods!

Even if there were any treasures, they should've all been taken by then. Not to mention, wasn't Li Wudi crippled? Why did Tianming feel that he was a completely different person in the mausoleum?

He finally spotted the difference—Li Wudi seemed so much more confident now. Though his body seemed to be in just as bad a state as before, his gaze and mindset were completely different.

"Tianming, I don't have a son of my own, but I'm quite satisfied with you. I saw you defeat Li Linghe, and can tell you know what you're doing. You're a talent on my level. Based on your good bone structure, the shape of the back of your head and pelvis, I can tell you have a talent for cultivation! Since fate has brought us together as father and son, I shall give you some pointers. From now on, you'll train here in the ancestral grounds. As your father, I will slowly unveil the astounding depths of the Li Saint Clan to you. Behold, mere mortal! Be prepared to shudder at our might!" Li Wudi cackled like a madman.

"Are you high?" Seeing the man prance around like a three-year-old, Tianming felt a headache festering. He didn't seem like a man who bore a grudge at all. His belly was even rather round from all the meat and wine he'd consumed, being about the size of a pregnant woman in her sixth trimester. How could someone like him have any pointers for him? Tianming simply didn't believe it.

"So, you doubt me, eh?" Li Wudi said with a smirk. "Prepare to be blown away! I look forward to seeing your expression."

"Alright, stop putting on airs."

As they squabbled, they finally reached the peak. Shenxiao Mountain was quite high, and Tianming had initially doubted that the half-dead Li Wudi would be able to make it to the top. Yet not only did he make it, he even seemed more lively than ever. Right after he reached the peak, he yelled, "Li Shenxiao you old crook! You said I have no son? I'll show you! My son is more amazing than you can even imagine!"

He was bragging again, but this time to a tombstone. It was painted black and looked like a normal boulder. On it were the words: Here Lies Li Shenxiao. It had cracked from its age and seemed like it would crumble at any moment. Countless dark-red ants crawled all over it. It was run-down and old, completely different from what Tianming had imagined. It was the founding ancestor's tombstone, so it should be grand, shouldn't it?

"This is it?" Tianming asked.

"Kneel and pay your respects," Li Wudi said.

Tianming nodded and knelt. "Founding Ancestor, your descendant Li Tianming pays his respects!"

"Prostrate yourself to the founding ancestor."

"Understood." Li Tianming kowtowed thrice to the tombstone.

"Now, piss on the tombstone."

"Huh?" The whiplash shocked him speechless.

"This old crook has a refined taste, you see... he loves virgin pee," Li Wudi said with a chuckle.

"Haha, enough messing with you. Son, I'll show you how sly this old crook really is!" Li Wudi's expression turned dark, as if he was filled with discontent. He took out a large jar of wine from his spatial ring.

"Old crook, drink up! Drink till you die!" He poured the wine all over the tombstone.

Tianming watched with his mouth agape as the tombstone was splattered with the wine, causing the entire area to smell of alcohol vapor. The wine smelled like it was brewed from top tier spirit herbs, yet it was spilled all over the ground just like that. Why would he bother doing that?

After he poured it all out, Li Wudi raged on. "Oh, Li Shenxiao, you... you stinking crook! Stop toying with me! I brought my son here, but you still won't give me face? Fine! I'll make sure you die drinking! Oh, wait, you're already dead."

He proceeded to pour another jar of wine as he sighed, "Come on, drink a little, my old ancestor. I don't have much left...."

Tianming watched the show and wondered what sort of shenanigans Li Wudi was up to. Just as he was about to leave, having had enough of the madman, Li Shenxiao's tombstone suddenly exploded with brightness so eye-piercing that it almost blinded Tianming.

Rumble!

The mountain itself shook. In an instant, the run-down tombstone was renewed and looked pure white, like it was made of the most precious spirit stones! It was so blindingly white that it oozed spiritual energy.

Tianming couldn't even begin to describe it; to him, it felt like the spiritual energy that radiated from the tombstone was ten thousand times as strong as that of the Flameyellow Rock! The Flameyellow Rock, with its black heavenly patterns, was ranked eighth tier. However, Tianming could spot white heavenly patterns on the tombstone, a whole eighty-one of them. Those eighty-one heavenly patterns made the tombstone breathtaking to behold.

"White heavenly patterns.... They're saintly heavenly patterns. Do you know what eighty-one saintly heavenly patterns mean?" Li Wudi asked with a smile.

"Nope." It was the first time Tianming had seen anything like it.

"It's fine, you'll find out in time. For now, all you need to know is how terrifying this is."

"Understood."

"So, my son, feeling gobsmacked yet?"

Tianming stared at him with shock. His expression was a feast for the old man's eyes.

"The founding ancestor's tombstone changes like this if you pour wine on it?" Tianming couldn't believe what he was saying; it was far too childish!

"What else? You think it'll change if you meditate here or kowtow thirty thousand times?"

"How did you find out about this?" Tianming figured that many of the founding ancestors didn't know about it either. After all, who would dare splash wine over the founding ancestor's tombstone, not to mention pouring more than one jar of wine over it? The most any sane person would pour was a few cups!

"Well, it's simple... I've been drinking here for almost fifteen years now... haha...."

"Did anyone do this aside from you?"

"None, as far as I'm aware."

In other words, he was the first to cause such a change in the founding ancestor's tombstone using this method that nobody could've figured out.

"This tombstone was made by the founding ancestor himself. Nobody else in the ten-thousand-year history of the Grand-Orient Realm has the craftsmanship to inscribe eighty-one saintly heavenly patterns onto spirit ores. In fact, it's not just this tombstone that can be activated by splashing wine. The other top ancestors will also reveal their secrets in the same manner. In other words, they're alcoholics—even in death!"

Tianming looked at Li Shenxiao's tombstone, still shaken. The spiritual energy was too dense. He couldn't imagine how terrifying it would be for him to cultivate next to it with his decabane body.

"Is it okay for you to tell me a revelation of this magnitude just like that?" Tianming didn't really dare to believe it. After all, they had been perfect strangers until a short while ago.

"What else would I do? Tianming, the world is huge. Since you of all people came to become the junior sect master, it means we're bound by fate. Fate is the ultimate law of the world, and sometimes, we just need one glance to know what we need to do. Perhaps you think I'm not fit to be your foster father. But I knew from the first time I saw you that you were worthy," Li Wudi said with a casual smile. However, it sounded a little weird.... Those lines somehow sounded more suitable for a man wooing a woman. But Tianming couldn't discount the fact that most of Li Wudi's favor for him came from the fact that he was a pentabane. After all, the only other person to have that kind of constitution was the founding ancestor himself! In other words, it meant he had the potential to at least become a sky saint.

"I never thought you were unfit," Tianming said.

"So you'll acknowledge it then?"

"Not yet. I'll see how you act, I guess. Who would just call a random person their father right after meeting them?"

"Haha, you're an interesting sort." Li Wudi waved when he stopped laughing. "Go now. Let these old crooks protect you. Let's see if your fate is intertwined with theirs. After all, the two of you are the only pentabanes in the clan's entire history."

"Me?"

Tianming looked at the glowing tombstone, seeming a little perturbed by it; it was the founding ancestor's, after all. But when he thought more about it, it made sense. It was like Li Wudi had said: it was all fate. Since they were fated to meet, he shouldn't hesitate any longer. He just had to follow his heart. Without thinking too much, he approached Li Shenxiao's tombstone.

"It feels great!" The yellow chick laid down on his shoulder and bathed in the blinding light, feeling really good about how it looked. Right after that, Tianming touched the tombstone. In that instant, all eighty-one saintly heavenly patterns gathered at his arm.

At that moment, he felt he grasped the entire world! He began channeling the Aeternal Infernal Codex and Genesis Chaos Codex. Coupled with his decabane body and the tombstone, Tianming had become the most fearsome cultivation monster in the whole world!

He let himself wander through his thoughts one more time. It was clear that becoming the junior sect master and adopted son of Li Wudi would mean he'd have to face even fiercer challenges down the road, challenges that could cost him his life. However, it was worth it. For all the treasures he received and the good the Li Saint Clan had shown him, he would definitely return their kindness manyfold.

Li Wudi had already brought him here and showed him his greatest discovery, so Tianming decided he would fight his way through all the dangers coming his way! What was that to a hot-blooded young man? Lady Long, Yuwen Taiji, Yuwen Fengtian, the council of elders, other geniuses and experts... what was so scary about them?

Tianming as he was now had the support of the first ancestor on his side; the same ancestor that protected and brought the clan to glory!

Not to mention, Li Wudi had said that the other ancestors were alcoholics, too. Who knew what kind of wonders he'd discover by splashing wine on their tombstones? He looked forward to all of it! The Li Saint Clan gifted him a sense of pride, and the achievements of his ancestors caused his blood to boil with excitement.

Perhaps it was due to the blood of his ancestors completely assimilating into his, but from then on, he would be more ambitious than anyone else to propagate the glory of the clan. He would bring it back to its former glory! His clan was now in a sorry state, and reviving it was no doubt a magnificent endeavor.

At that moment, unnoticed by Tianming, Li Wudi shed a tear. His gaze calmed, and he pulled open his robes. Near his heart was the black Venomdrake Spike. It pierced through and emerged from his back. Countless black miasmas swam across his body like black snakes.

Li Wudi placed his palm at the dragon head of the spike and gave it a light pull. At that moment, the ground shook, the mountains rumbled, and the winds howled. Everything in the Bloodbane Barrier cried and shook, and the countless giant beasts formed from the bloody mist fled in panic.

All the tombstones of the ancestors were quaking as silhouettes formed in front of them, all of them casting their gazes on Li Wudi.

"It's been fourteen years!" Li Wudi said with a maniacal smile. "For fourteen years, I've been cultivating at the brink of death! I've stepped on the line between life and death countless times! I crossed the

Yellow Springs and the Bridge of Helplessness! I have seen demons and gods!" He turned his head toward the Grand-Orient Sect.

"Yuwen Taiji! The moment I pull out this spike is the moment your whole family will be reduced to dust! You had me live a life of suffering for fourteen years, yet you didn't know that I didn't fear death. I bet you also didn't know that I was engaging in vein-severing cultivation!

"Rising from the ashes of death, one life for nine deaths... that is the true nature of Lifesbane that nobody is aware of! The affliction of the Li Saint Clan depends on no heaven, prays to no god, and fears no demon! All we believe in is our will and spirit! Our desire to change fate! Just you wait.... On the day that I return, the whole Grand-Orient Realm will kneel before me! The Li Saint Clan will one day rise again! Let's see who is the true hegemon of the Grand-Orient Realm!"

The figures of countless ancestors gathered around him. Tianming was too awed by the arcane mysteries of the saintly heavenly barriers to notice what was occurring behind him.

"Mu He, legends say that gods can revive the dead. I failed you in this life, so, I will become a god. Don't go too far on the path to the Yellow Springs. You must wait for me. The time will soon come... Mu He, you must wait for me!" A hint of kindness softened his savage expression.

At that moment, Tianming's attention was completely focused on the tombstone and he didn't feel the shocking change that was occurring in the mausoleum.

## **Chapter 202 - Regal Chaosfiend**

Tianming had once felt that the Flameyellow Rock had its own will. And now, he felt every single one of the eighty-one saintly heavenly patterns pulsating lively, like they were sapient. Countless mysteries of the arcane were contained within in the form of limitless condensed spiritual energy. The moment he touched the tombstone, the eighty-one patterns were like spiritual bodies that seeped into Tianming's body through his arm.

How terrifying. The spiritual energy in them is too intense. Each of the patterns seemed to have enough spiritual energy to fill an ocean. If even one pattern's energy flooded into his body, he could be torn apart from the raging powers! However, the eighty-one heavenly patterns merely gently permeated every corner of his being. Tianming was now shining as blindingly as the tombstone itself.

I feel like I'm surrounded by an endless ocean of spiritual energy.... The feeling was like nothing he'd ever experienced. However, why wasn't he being torn apart? He guessed it was because the ancestral blood had filled his own body. The combined power of the ancestors of the Li Saint Clan helped Tianming control the saintly heavenly patterns on the tombstone of Li Shenxiao. With them helping regulate the flow, Tianming felt safer than ever, as if he was being blessed by the ancestors themselves and enjoying their gifts.

While Li Wudi might not know that Tianming was a decabane, he definitely knew that the blood essence was circulating within his body. The tumultuous storm of spiritual energy continued intensifying; the effects of being surrounded by an endless spiritual energy storm was far better than using any spirit medicine or pills. This was proof that he was making endless progress. It only took him revealing himself as a pentabane for Li Wudi to bring him into the ancestral mausoleum to show him these benefits. Who in their right mind wouldn't cherish talent of that caliber?

The saintly patterns continued flowing in Tianming's body, as well as the chick's and cat's.

"This is great!" chirped Ying Huo as it continued converting the spiritual energy into beast ki using the Aeternal Infernal Codex. Its little yellow feathers danced wildly in the storm, revealing the small pink horn on its head.

As for the black cat, it jumped about, trying to pounce on the saintly heavenly patterns on Tianming's body, only to leave a number of scratches over him and miss the patterns entirely. Tianming was at a loss for what to do. Ever since he'd gotten the lazy cat, he was covered in scratches.

"You'd better cultivate seriously!"

"Myaaa!"

After a short round of discipline, the cat finally stopped. It had already refined the saint beast War-Soul and developed a horrifying new spiritsource ability that Ying Huo didn't have. Even with a saint beast War-Soul, the probability of a new spiritsource ability being developed was no more than five percent. Most of it could be attributed to unlocking of the bindings of its Genesis Chaos Thunderfiend bloodline. In other words, the old saint beast War-Soul, the Devil-Monarch Wildsoul, was no more, replaced instead by the Regalfiend Wildsoul.

Now, the cat was a Genesis Chaos Thunderfiend no more. Instead, it was now the Regal Chaosfiend! It was so powerful that Tianming had decided he wouldn't pester it about cultivating bestial arts anymore and let it fight with brute force in the future.

Each of the saintly heavenly patterns was like a sea of spiritual energy, rapidly fueling Tianming's progress. Within his dantian, his infernalsource and lightningsource grew stronger at a horrifying rate. His ten bane-rings and two primordial arts, coupled with the tombstone, made it so that his rate of progress was second to none in the entire Grand-Orient Realm! It was too early for Lady Long to claim to be the fastest rising star ever in the entire realm.

His infernalsource rumbled like a truly hellish realm as boundless magma flowed and shook within, while his lightningsource was covered in billions of black lightning bolts like a chaotic overcharged battery. Tianming, the white-haired devil, forged his way forward for four whole days.

The infernalsource and lightningsource in his body finally achieved full capacity.

"Finally, I've reached the ninth Spiritsource level." Now, he had finally caught up to the top genius of Ignispolis. However, his true combat capabilities were far beyond Spiritsource. It was only after he stabilized his foundations and ended his first round of cultivation that the tombstone began darkening. By the time Tianming opened his eyes again, his surroundings were dead silent.

The mountains behind Shenxiao Mountain were covered in bloody mist once more, having calmed down. It was as if nothing had happened.

Tianming turned back, only to see Li Wudi with three jars of wine beside him. He was flat on the ground with his limbs splayed, exposing his round belly and snoring away. He almost seemed to be spending his days too leisurely. Not one bit did anything in his appearance suggest he was a person who held a deep, lifelong grudge.

Tianming estimated the time he had been in here and reckoned the three other bloodlines from the clan would be arriving tomorrow outside the mausoleum.

"Senior Li, shall we go out? The three bloodlines will be here tomorrow. I have directly assimilated the seal, so I believe they won't just keep quiet and not make a commotion out of it."

Li Wudi drowsily opened his eyes. "Huh? Oh, go out yourself. Don't disturb my rest," he mumbled.

"Are you coming tomorrow?" His question fell on deaf ears; Li Wudi had fallen asleep once more. Tianming figured he wouldn't be of much use anyway, having been crippled by the Venomdrake Spike.

"Guess I can only count on myself."

As the descendant of the ancestors that had cared for him so much, he felt not an ounce of fear. He had risen from the ashes at Ignispolis despite all odds. But here in the Grand-Orient Sect, he was bound to blow through all obstacles during his meteoric rise. So, he descended Shexiao Mountain alone. When he reached the bottom, he saw the Void Kunpeng once more.

This was a legendary saint beast. It was asleep just like Li Wudi, seeming weaker than ever. He wondered how powerful it would be at top form; after all, even the Devil-Monarch Wildsoul was a spiritsource ability that awakened in a saint beast. Naturally, saint beasts with awakened spiritsource abilities weren't lifebound beasts, but rather wildbeasts. Wildbeasts that were on the same level as saint beasts were called demon beasts.

The Regal fiend Wildsoul was actually an awakened spiritsource ability of demon beasts. However, the cat was no longer a Genesis Chaos Thunderfiend, but a Regal Chaosfiend. This kind of change was akin to the process by which Jadedfire Armor morphed into Infernal Armor.

Tianming hastened his steps and left the Li Mausoleum. The moment his figure disappeared into the bloody mist, Li Wudi, who was supposedly deep asleep at the peak of Shexiao Mountain, suddenly curved his mouth into a smile.

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That night, in the Grand-Orient Mountains, one could see countless lights in the direction of the main sect mountain peak. There were still countless lifebound beasts roaming the landscape, their fanciful colors a sight to behold. Tens of thousands of beasts of all kinds of species and attributes were everywhere. Only the very best disciples in the seven hundred plus nations neighboring the Grand-Orient Realm could come to the sect to train.

These nations weren't at all on the same scale as Vermillion Bird. The cultivators in some of them were easily tens of times better than those in Vermillion Bird, being able to take on ten nations their size. Not to mention, the Grand-Orient Realm itself was a place filled with dense spiritual energy and populated by tens of thousands of beastmaster clans. They all relied on legacies passed down through their bloodlines and spread their influence one generation after another. Even for them, they would have to travel really far to reach the sect, overcoming countless obstacles along the way.

Heaven's Elysium, on the other hand, was even more impressive. The main reason they set up Heaven's Sanctums in all the nations was so that they would be the first to detect rising stars and recruit them; Lin Xiaoting was one such example. That put them in a much better position than the aloof Grand-Orient

Sect, which only accepted those that made an effort to come join their ranks. This was the real reason the disparity between the two factions continued widening. Most of the top talents were taken in by Heaven's Elysium first.

Tonight was a calm night like no other. When Tianming left the mausoleum, Feiling and Qingyu were chatting under the moonlight.

"Big Brother, did you know that I managed to achieve sixty percent synchronization when I attached to Qingyu?" Feiling smiled and exposed all her teeth; the curved up corners of her lips only made her seem more endearing.

"Wow, that's impressive!" Tianming approached them with a smile.

"Good evening, Brother Tianming." Qingyu stiffened, having felt the change in Tianming's aura.

"Miss Qingyu," he said as he approached. Ever since their first meeting, Tianming had a good impression of Qingyu. He could sense the careful upbringing afforded to her by a prestigious clan. While she seemed gentle, she was tough and brave and a fine lass indeed.

"Please just call me by my name." She had heard all kinds of tales about him from Feiling, up to the battle with Lin Xiaoting. She was already quite familiar with this 'big brother' of hers.

"Brother Tianming, did you make a breakthrough?" Qingyu asked.

"That's right."

"Back then, you managed to defeat Li Linghe with Ling'er's Spiritual Attachment. I believe that even I wouldn't be your match now," she said humbly.

"Don't feel bad about it. I'm already twenty, and you're only fifteen and filled with potential. I'm the one who has to catch up to all of you," he consoled.

"That's right. Brother Tianming is a pentabane. The only reason your stage isn't high is because it hasn't been too long since you restarted your cultivation," Qingyu said.

Tianming recalled that she had lost her mother when she was only three. It was a truly tragic tale.

"Just call me Big Brother. I don't have a sister of my own, so I'll regard you as such from now on."

He recalled that he used to treat Li Xuejiao as his own sister back in Flamehaven. But now he knew for a fact that he wasn't related to her by blood. Not only that, he had cut ties to the family already, so they were no longer siblings at all. As for the Wei family, Wei Lingxuan was merely his cousin sister. They hadn't exactly started off on a good note, considering the first thing he did was teach her a lesson.

As for Feiling, while she called him 'Big Brother', she was more his lover than anything.

"Big Brother...."

Tianming speechlessly looked at her. Given his straightforward personality, he wasn't quite ready to hear a sweet, quiet girl like her call him her big brother.



"You've already gotten a grandmother, and now you've got a sister. Yet you still insist on calling Li Wudi your senior. You really don't want to be his son, eh?" the chick teased.

"Shut up!" Tianming awkwardly retorted. Ying Huo was right; it was acceptable for him to call Jingyu his grandmother, and Qingyu his sister, but calling Li Wudi his dad was something he couldn't quite swallow. He had decided he would continue to call him senior. Perhaps he would use his name, once they were closer. If that really didn't work out, he would just call him foster father.

"Big Brother, can I hug your lifebound beast?" Qingyu asked after mustering her courage, now that they were on familiar terms.

Before Tianming could reply, the chick leapt at her.

"Come. Hug me however you like!" It opened both its wings, its expression drunk with pride for how it managed to charm her.

"I was talking about Meow Meow..."

"What?!" The little chick was dumbfounded.

The world was cruel.

### **Chapter 203 - How Dare You, Matriarch!**

The little chick felt burned. It was one thing to be ignored by Mu Wan; he didn't think he'd even be left out in favor of the cat here. His jealousy for Meow Meow grew.

Currently, Meow Meow was nestling in Qingyu's bosom and napping comfortably without the slightest care in the world. Women were nothing for it but a different mount where it could comfortably nap. The two girls were stroking its soft fur and discussing how cute it was, completely oblivious to the brewing storm.

Tianming merely smiled. To him, the storm was just another fact of life. What was life without risks and challenges? All he had to do was face them bravely! There was no need to sigh or worry before the storm came. With a sword in his heart, he feared no death.

Actually, the girls were rather fond of Ying Huo, too. It didn't take long before they were laughing at its little antics. Tianming smiled like a doting father, looking at the girl he loved, his new sworn sister, and his two brothers. He felt like his responsibilities were only continuing to grow heavier.

From now on, I'm a member of the Apex Branch and the junior sect master. This will be my second home. He would fight for it, both for his sake and theirs!

If he wasn't strong enough, how would he fulfill his boastful claim of going to Heaven's Elysium, taking Lady Long's head, and retrieving Feiling's five seals? If he didn't fight, how would he repay Li Jingyu and Li Wudi for the generous help they had given him? If he didn't struggle, how would he ever be able to show his face to the Li Saint Clan's ancestors again?

He would live as a member of the clan, and he would die as one. Only cowards would run and cultivate in hiding. Truly powerful people should fearlessly face the storms and find the true path of defying fate as they thread the line between life and death!

As the rest were playing around, Tianming stood in the corner and took out the gift Mu Yang had given him before he left for the clan. He hadn't managed to find time to give it a look before now. He put the box on the ground, but before he opened it, he could already feel a terrifying aura coming from it.

There was a note on the box left by Mu Yang. It read, "Tianming, one doesn't yearn for life on the path of cultivation, but rather mastery over their arts, not doing anything against their conscience, and repaying favors and grudges. From now on, you must be staunch and resolute; you can't just do as you like. A righteous man will eradicate all the evils in the world in pursuit of his personal justice! Only those who walk the right path will gain endless strength."

Tianming took those teachings to heart. "Uncle Yang, I will never disappoint you."

A man had to be righteous and resolute. Mu Yang felt the need to highlight that, as he had sent him a demonic weapon. Demonic weapons weren't taboo, but one had to be able to control the evil within, or risk being drowned by it.

The letter continued, "This weapon is called Archfiend. I found it by chance in the Abyssal Battlefield. I'm not certain whether it's a seventh-grade bestial weapon; it could be far stronger. The heavenly patterns on it are rather chaotic, and there's some variance in its strength. At least, there are some black heavenly patterns hidden within. This is a savage tool made for killing. I hope you'll be able to maintain control over the innate malefic force without letting it distort your path."

Archfiend? Tianming remembered its name well. He kept the note in his spatial ring, resolving himself to treasure it well. He also kept the only feather he had to remember Midas by; it was something he would take to his grave. After putting the note away, he opened the box.

The moment he set his eyes on Archfiend, he felt dazed and strongly discomfited. It was just like the first time he had looked at the third eye on his arm. In the box, hundreds of bloody eyes could be seen, all smashed together! He felt his mind being torn apart when the eyes turned to look at him in unison as the box was opened. It was nothing short of a nightmarish sight.

This was the gift Mu Yang handed him during his departure from Vermillion Bird? He couldn't have personally plucked the eyeballs off other people to make it, right? It would take at least a hundred people for that many eyes! Was Mu Yang insane!?

It took quite a while for Tianming's mind to clear. He looked at the weapon with his third eye this time, only to notice that he'd been mistaken. In the box wasn't hundreds of bloody eyeballs, but rather a chain weapon. It was black, and about twenty meters in length, much longer than the Blazing Dragon Chainblade. Each individual chain was round and black, but they weren't smooth. Instead, each of the circles had seven or eight spikes protruding out of them, with the longest of them measuring five centimeters in length. There was a total of a few hundred spikes across the whole chain, giving it a rather dense silhouette. It was hard to imagine what kind of damage it would deal once it was pulled after completely coiling around the enemy.

It was no wonder it was named Archfiend.

It seemed much more threatening than the Blazing Dragon Chainblade, but the black spikes weren't what took the cake. Instead, each of the chain circles were empty in the middle, where a black miasma trapped quite a bit of fresh blood. The blood that flowed within each of the links made each one look

like a bloody spiky eyeball, the reason behind the initial optical illusion Tianming had experienced. It took him quite a while to get used to how it looked.

A seventh-grade bestial weapon, huh.... He believed it was much stronger than that. I already have Bewildering Eye and Soulless Seven Howls, which can affect my enemies' mental states quite strongly. Coupled with Archfiend, the effects will only compound and become more terrifying. That combination was an external distraction to the enemy, divorced from beast ki. Coupled with the support Feiling gave him in combat, Tianming believed that he had more than enough tools in his non-beast-ki arsenal.

That night, he decided to familiarize himself with Archfiend. In the darkness, black and crimson flashes intersected. The weapon that looked like skewered eyeballs danced about unhindered. The twirling chain looked like a venomous snake.

Whap!

With a mere tug, a whole boulder was reduced to powder.

At the very tip of Archfiend was a sharp spike, about half a meter long. At its thickest point, it had a diameter of one centimeter, while its tip was thin as a needle. It wouldn't be a problem for it to pierce straight through a body in an instant. Having used swords for a while, Tianming felt really refreshed to use a chain again.

He wielded both the righteous and straight in one hand and the crooked and evil in the other. Archfiend couldn't control him; he controlled Archfiend. All he had to do was wait for the three bloodlines to come to him!

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Day broke, and Fatepath Peak was getting rather busy.

"Granny." Outside Kunpeng Sacred Hall stood Tianming and Qingyu. As for Feiling, she was already attached to him. Spiritual Attachment didn't feel any more uncomfortable than usual, so she was happy as long as they could be close to each other no matter what form she took. Sometimes, she would link hearts with Tianming and understand him better. At other times, she would show up in front of him to let him see her real, flesh-and-blood self. After all, she was someone as beautifully moving as Lady Long.

Currently, Tianming still didn't want to reveal Feiling's ability to the rest. Most people might think she was a mere mortal, his possession even. But they were ignorant of her true power, not to mention her potential for even more growth. The four unsealed abilities could still become stronger!

Now, Tianming needed her to help him fight. Those from the other three bloodlines must have come to take the Kunpeng Sacred Seal for themselves, which was no different than wanting to kill him.

"Tianming, I went to the sect yesterday and spoke to the council Elder, Ye Qing, about you being a pentabane. He said he would come here and see for himself. You are really brave to have sealed off your path of retreat by assimilating the seal. I wonder if you know how you should resolve this situation today," Jingyu said.

"I know. I have to prove my identity as a pentabane to Elder Ye Qing. As long as I do that, I'll be safe."

"That's right. Currently, none of the members of the Li Saint Clan can enter the council of elders. That's why the three bloodlines will have to obey whatever Elder Ye Qing says."

Tianming nodded. Someone from the council of elders still being willing to help the Li Saint Clan was the best news he'd heard so far. As Jingyu had said, there were heroes and crooks alike in this world, and the aforementioned elder was probably the former. For someone to be able to join the council of elders meant that he was an impressive character indeed. However, Tianming hadn't seen him so far. Perhaps he was the kind of person who observed from afar, rather than showing himself in person.

"Tianming, just like before, you only have to show your natural talent. Only by proving yourself as a pentabane will you be able to retain the position of junior sect master. There's quite a number of capable youths among the three bloodlines. If you go all out fighting them, it won't be worth it if you get hurt yourself," Jingyu advised.

Tianming nodded. She was worried about him, at the end of the day, and worried that his opponents wouldn't show him any mercy. Since Tianming had embarked on the most extreme path, he would either succeed in keeping the seal for himself, or face death. The enemy was sure to not show him mercy. Having just received the blessing of Li Shenzhao's tombstone, how could he allow himself to die here? He still hadn't checked out the other ancestors' tombstones yet.

Just then, those from the Li Saint Clan's other three bloodlines were mostly there already. Yet not a single one from the Seven Starry Wind Branches were present. They had really left Li Jingyu alone to face off the youths of the three bloodlines. Each of those bloodlines easily had two or three times the number of people of the Seven Starry Wind Branches. In total, they had ten times as many talented young beastmasters—and this was the Li Saint Clan in their fallen state!

The three bloodlines were the Metal, Fire, and Lightning Bloodlines. Each and every one of them had separate branches—usually around seven—each with their own branch heads. Among them, the Metal Bloodline was considered the second most powerful branch in the clan. Their leader was the second patriarch, and that position was now held by the leader of the Metal Bloodline, Li Xuanyi. The patriarch of the whole clan was obviously Li Wudi.

The head of the Fire Bloodline was called the third patriarch, and the head of the Lightning Bloodline was the fourth patriarch.

All four bloodlines of the Li Saint Clan had, in total, four patriarchs and twenty-eight branch heads. Ten thousand years ago, each of those people would be amazing figures. But now, not a single one of them was in the council of elders. So far, the Metal Bloodline was the one that had managed to preserve themselves the best.

Ever since Li Wudi gave up on managing the clan, the affairs and disputes were all handled by Second Patriarch Li Xuanyi, so he held the most sway among them. He seemed middle-aged and was clad in a gold robe. His hair was neatly tied up, without the slightest flaw. There seemed to be a golden glow coming from his eyes that colored his skin a slight golden sheen. His sharp gaze made him seem really domineering, so much so that most of the younger generation couldn't help but shudder in his presence. It was said that Li Xuanyi was the strongest person in the entire Li Saint Clan, being someone who had ventured into the Saint Realm. His existence was the last bastion of prestige for the clan.

It was said that he alone had carried the clan in recent days, and without him, the clan would be even worse off. That was why the third and fourth patriarchs followed his lead. This time, Li Xuanyi came with the other two patriarchs, and the rest. It didn't take long before they were all right before Li Jingyu. They obviously wanted to intimidate Jingyu and the rest with their staggering numbers.

However, even Qingyu was unmoved. It was a fool's errand to try making them budge using lowbrow tactics like these. However, their gazes seemed to suggest that what would happen next was sure to be chaotic.

"How dare you, Matriarch!" the third patriarch, Li Yansheng, yelled the moment he arrived.

#### **Chapter 204 - Dissatisfied? Feel Free to Come Get Beat Up!**

This man was two meters in height with a full beard. His hairs stood high as he let his rage shoot through the skies and his cry caused the beasts in the area to scatter in fear. In an instant, everyone turned to look at Li Jingyu with malice in their hearts.

"Li Jingyu, we of the three bloodlines wanted to hold a Sacred Assembly to decide who would become the junior sect master. But who could've known that you'd do something so foolish, you sick sadist!" Fourth Patriarch Li Yunting said. Though he seemed like a tall and lanky gentleman, his words were sharp and ruthless.

"Then tell me. What have I done that's so foolish?" Jingyu was completely unmoved by the fierce youths. It was far from the worst she'd ever had to face. She shielded Tianming and Qingyu behind her and stared back ferociously, though those on the other side didn't back down despite the chill they felt down their spines.

"You just picked up an outsider and called him Li Wudi's son, then announced he'd be the junior sect master. Tell me, how else should I describe this but foolish?" Li Yansheng said in a deep voice. The others from his Fire Bloodline shot burning glares at Jingyu, who felt a little daunted by the pressure. Given her age, there were times when her will couldn't match her intent.

"Li Wudi has no son of his own. He doesn't seem like he'll last much longer. So, picking the junior sect master is a matter of utmost importance for our clan! While we were discussing a fitting candidate among ourselves, you selfishly appointed your own! Not only is that foolish, it's childish! Matriarch, you don't have the authority to do so."

Many others joined in the complaints.

"You lot? Discussing who should be the junior sect master? What a joke. That position has always been passed down in the Apex Branch. Since when did that have anything to do with the three bloodlines?" Jingyu spat.

"Matriarch, we're in uncharted waters. The present situation has no precedent—Li Wudi has no legitimate heir. From now on, the Li Saint Clan will no longer have an Apex Branch. Our clan will abandon this hereditary farce and pick a leader that can truly lead us out of this crisis!" Li Xuanyi said without warning. He sounded calm and unhurried, but every word of his was designed to impress and earn him much admiration. Those of the Saint Realm were indeed different! Tianming could clearly tell

that his aura and demeanor were in a whole different league than the rest. That was no mortal; that was a saint! No wonder people often said those who became saints transcended mortality.

"The second patriarch is correct. The Apex Branch has fallen, so it's time you moved out of the way. Even the Wind Bloodline isn't here. All the Apex Branch has left is Li Qingyu, but she's not a male heir. Eventually, the Li Saint Clan will no longer have an Apex Branch."

They made it sound so inconsequential. Those in their generation had only heard about the glory of their ancestors from hearsay and rumors, so how could they truly understand the magnitude of the achievements the Apex Branch had forged in their glory days? Tianming felt truly sorry for the clan's present state; the Apex Branch had once been the top hegemony, yet had fallen so low. It turned out that even they couldn't stand the test of time.

"Matriarch, hand the Kunpeng Sacred Seal to us. As long as we pass it down to a talented descendant, there's still hope for our clan to rise again." Li Xuanyi sounded calm and easygoing, but he applied his full saintly pressure to Jingyu.

"You really know how to sell something. Everyone knows that you're talking about your son, Li Xuanchen. After all, he's the most talented one in our clan and is the disciple of Yuwen Taiji! So you intend to forcefully take the seal for your son? Third Patriarch, Fourth Patriarch, do you agree with him as well?" Jingyu said with a cold smirk.

"What's there to disagree about? Even if my son can't compete with Li Xuanchen this time, there's still a chance our grandsons and descendants down the line can," said Li Yansheng.

"That's right. But if the seal stays with the Apex Branch, we'll have no chance at all," said Li Yunting.

"Li Jingyu! Hand us the Kunpeng Sacred Seal!"

"Admit your loss! The Apex Branch is no more! It's over for Li Wudi!"

"Don't just make the bogus claim that some outsider is a pentabane!"

The crowd didn't hesitate to lay the heat on Jingyu. They slowly approached with their eyes widened in rage. The old woman hopelessly shook her head and sighed, yet the restless crowd cared nothing for her advanced age.

"Who said my claim was bogus?" At that moment, Tianming stepped out and glared back at the experts of the clan. "Did those of the Seven Starry Wind Branches not tell you how I defeated Li Linghe?"

Everyone stopped in their tracks in surprise. However, the older ones among them had been waiting for this moment. They had wanted to see the so-called sixteen-year-old Spirit Source who defeated Li Linghe, who was at the third level of Unity. Now that he was forced out, this matter would be easily settled.

Li Xuanyi waved and everyone stopped advancing. He looked at Tianming for a moment and smiled. "Young man, we're not as foolish as those from the Seven Starry Wind Branches. We won't be easily fooled by them. Whether you're the son of Li Wudi, a descendant of the Apex Branch or a pentabane, I'm sure you know the truth just like we do. Don't test your luck and go against us for a small benefit like that. The consequences of lying to us are horrible, no matter who you may be."

His words oozed merciless threat. He looked straight into Tianming's eyes when he made his proclamation. Almost everyone was shocked to hear him speak in such a tone.

Would Tianming really risk his life for the mere position of junior sect master? However, Tianming was far from the sort to be scared by mere words.

"Second Patriarch, let me then reemphasize three things: first, I am Li Wudi's son. As for whether I'm a descendant of the Apex Branch, I don't have to prove it to you. You'll just have to take my word for it. Second, if you're not convinced I'm a pentabane, I'll accept your son's challenge. I've only cultivated for half a year and am still at Spiritsource. I'd like to see what stage you trashy lot are at after tens of years of training. And third, listen up!"

He raised his voice all of a sudden, as if he was challenging the heavens. This was his pride as a member of the Apex Branch, fueled by the blood essence of the countless ancestors before him! All he had to do was to fight to prove himself, not fight to the death. There was no need to fear victory or loss. Those who knew better could easily see the truth, so he would show it to them! Elder Ye Qing was his only chance. Tianming had to keep his position as junior sect master and fully convince those misfits. Only then could he continue training in the mausoleum. Otherwise, Jingyu would never know peace from their constant bickering.

"I have already assimilated the Kunpeng Sacred Seal in my body! I have also entered Li Mausoleum to pay my respects to the ancestors! Dissatisfied? Feel free to come get beat up!"

The moment the words left his mouth, the thousands of members of the three bloodlines were flabbergasted. What gall! He actually dared to risk everything and assimilate the seal?! What kind of confidence did he have? How could a mere outsider have that kind of courage?

"Nonsense!" Li Xuanyi said, his gaze seething. He hadn't expected Tianming to not only not fear his pressure, but also talk back. And worst of all, he dared make that kind of reckless proclamation!

"Outsider... aren't you afraid we'll kill you to retrieve the seal?" Li Xuanyi asked.

"Second Patriarch, dare I ask if you're doing this out of self interest? You want to take it for your own son, do you not? What proof do you have that I'm not Li Wudi's son? You don't. But I can. Only those from the Apex Branch can have five bane-rings like the founding ancestor! I am a pentabane, just like him! All you have to do is to send your sons out to fight me!"

Tianming knew their children were far stronger than Li Linghe, but so what? It's not like he had to win. The stronger they were, the brighter he would shine. If a Spiritsource beastmaster could hold off opponents of their level, him being a pentabane would be the only explanation. The youths from the three bloodlines were no doubt riled up by the humiliating challenge they'd just been issued.

"Dad, I'll show him the price he'll have to pay for impersonating someone from the Apex Branch!" said a black-clad girl who stepped out from behind Third Patriarch Li Yansheng. Being about Qingyu's age, she had a pair of fiery eyes that was just as explosive as her apparent temper. Pride was practically etched deep in her face.

Tianming recognized her. He didn't just waste his time waiting for them to arrive. Last night, he had already learned quite a lot about the youths of the three bloodlines from Qingyu, including this girl. She

was called Li Chiling. Just like Qingyu, she was a tribane and at the fourth level of Unity! She and Qingyu were the most talented girls below the age of eighteen in the whole clan.

They'd fought each other countless times since their childhood, and both had wins and losses. In other words, Li Chiling was no doubt far stronger than Li Linghe. A talent like her might not stand out as much in the Grand-Orient Sect, but she would no doubt be a once-in-a-myriad-years genius in Vermillion Bird!

Qingyu hated Li Chiling deeply, as she often humiliated her by bringing up her late mother. Countless times, she had shamed Qingyu by boasting about her parents and mocking hers for being pathetic. Her pride had haunted Qingyu for much of her childhood years. While Qingyu didn't say much, Tianming could immediately tell the kind of person she was with one look.

"Come!" Tianming said. It was simple and straightforward. He stood against the backdrop of the mountains before a fiery young girl. He felt this battle wouldn't last long, especially with Feiling attached to him.

"Vile crook, return from whence you came. No, you dared to put your taint on the blood essence of our ancestors. Death is the only fitting punishment for someone like you!" She summoned her lifebound beast and immediately struck!

#### **Chapter 205 - Playing with Fire In Front of Me?**

Li Chiling, a tribane, definitely had a lifebound beast of at least eight stars or above. She was from the Fire Bloodline of the Li Saint Clan, which was said to be the most amazing of the four bloodlines. The reason for that was their secondary element, fire, which was the polar opposite to the water element shared by all members of the clan.

The ancestors actually managed to invent a technique that fused the energies of fire and water into the same spirit source, which was nothing short of a miracle. Not to mention, the technique could even allow for conversion between the two elements. The cornerstone of the Li Saint Clan's domination in the realm was their dual-species and dual-type properties. For them to be able to come up with a technique to take advantage of those qualities was a sign of how mighty the ancestors truly were. It wasn't an overstatement to say that the current generations were merely riding off their ancestors' coattails.

Whoosh!

All of a sudden, a bright, fiery-red roc descended from the sky. The flaming roc spread its wings and made it seem like the clouds themselves were on fire. The Grand-Orient Sect had lots of space for the lifebound beasts to roam freely; that was the largest difference between the sect and Ignispolis, whose streets were so small that lifebound beasts were forbidden from being let out.

This beast was a Crimsonflame Azuresea Kunpeng, and was on the same level as the Ink Qilin. The kunpeng came swooping down. Amidst the dancing flames, Li Chiling's gaze looked ever more prideful. She held peak-quality sixth-grade bestial weapons in each hand. The blade in her right hand was savage and fierce. It was named the Crimsonflame Sunderer, and was specifically made to cleave apart gigantic lifebound beasts. In her left hand was a blue shield, the surface of which undulated like waves. It was as if a lake was sitting on its face: the Ninefold Aquashield! With sword and shield in hand, she truly seemed imposing, like her father Li Yansheng.



"Li Tianming, die!" She came at him with the intent to kill, for it was only by ending Tianming's life that she would be able to retrieve the Kunpeng Sacred Seal. That was the only chance the three bloodlines had for getting the position of junior sect master. As the common adage went, 'blades don't have eyes'. Death as a result of battle was considered a natural consequence of one's own negligence, rather than the opponent's fault. Before the fighter and kunpeng arrived, the flames had already reached Tianming.

"Playing with fire in front of me?" the chick chirped snidely. Fwoosh! Its terrifying Infernal Armor slobbered onto Tianming like sludge. He was now covered in feathery armor, and looked like the personification of a war god. Beside him, on the other hand, was a flaming war chicken.

"Do you want to let Meow Meow out to fight?" the chick asked.

"Let it sleep a little longer." Tianming looked at the incoming Li Chiling with a burning gaze. "Showing my talent as a pentabane, huh?"

A pentabane was mythologized so heavily because these people hadn't actually seen a real one in action. But even a pentabane couldn't fight someone so many levels beyond them. Tianming's main edge was in his huge spirit sources and beast-ki capacity, thanks to being a twin beastmaster. He also had a strong body, a simplified Heavenly Will technique, the Bewildering Eye, and Feiling. With the compounded advantages he had, only then could he stand a chance against Li Chiling. It wasn't due to him being a pentabane alone; that merely stood for talent in cultivation. But since they had been brought up on the myth of Li Shenxiao, the legendary pentabane, Tianming wouldn't shy away from taking advantage of it. It was the perfect cover for his true monstrous talent!

"Go!" They attacked at the same time. Boom! The Crimsonflame Azuresea Kunpeng flared up. When it flapped its wings, countless balls of fire descended like meteors. That was its spirit source ability: Crimsonflame Meteor!

Countless meteors shot toward Tianming and the chick. However, they merely soared straight for the clouds. Tianming even rammed straight into one of the meteors, his armor causing the projectile to shatter entirely.

"How could that be possible?!" Li Chiling stared with her mouth agape.

"Crimsonflame Field!" She activated a double Unity field with her lifebound beast, within which their energies circulated. The eight spirit sources voraciously devoured the spiritual energy in the surroundings and focused it in their attacks.

That was one of the major advantages offered by a Unity field—they could tap into the spiritual energy in the natural environment, and within the field, beastmaster and beast could coordinate even better; the beastmaster would fight with battle arts and bestial weapons while the lifebound beast used its spirit source abilities and tougher body to fight. They made up for each other's weaknesses for ultimate synchronicity.

Within the completed Crimsonflame Field, the kunpeng stood as the vanguard. Tianming still didn't have his own Unity field, so this was a feat he couldn't accomplish. Even so, before absolute power, those were mere parlor tricks! All of a sudden, the chick shot forward with blinding speed using Infernal Blaze, shattering all the meteors in its way.

Whoosh!

At the same time, the roc turned into a large fish! But how could the fish remain flying? By temporarily suspending its fall by flapping its gills at horrifying speeds, of course.

Bam!

All of a sudden, countless icicles shot out from the fish toward the chick's Infernal Blaze. But there was no chance mere water could put those flames out. With an audible sizzle, the icicles instantly evaporated.

"Out of the way!"

Li Chiling was once again flabbergasted, having been separated from her beast by a streak of Infernal Blaze. As the distance between her and her lifebound beast widened, the effectiveness of their Unity field diminished. Though they tried to get back together, Tianming wasn't about to let that happen.

"Go!" Before an audience of near a thousand people, a mere Spiritsource beastmaster actually managed to force back a beastmaster at the fourth level of Unity. Little did they know that Tianming had actually reached the peak of Spiritsource during his breakthrough five days before.

Without Feiling, there was a chance Tianming could lose, but that wasn't the case now. Li Chiling was desperately trying to reunite with her Crimsonflame Azuresea Kunpeng, only to seemingly ram into a wall of air, breaking her nose in the process. She was dumbfounded; she couldn't see anything in her way, so how could she have run into something? There was no way she could know it was actually Feiling's Spatial Wall ability.

Not only was Li Chiling ignorant of that fact, even Li Xuanyi couldn't tell what was going on. Spatial abilities were far beyond mortal comprehension. That drove Li Chiling to her edge; she had been forced apart from her beast for good after running into the wall.

"You're courting death!" she yelled as she soared once more with her sword and shield.

"Come. Granddaddy Chickie here will take you on," Ying Huo said.

Li Chiling almost burst out laughing. How could a small fry of a beast like that take her on? It only had seven stars in its eyes! Was that really a Void Kunpeng? Without a second thought, she used a Unity battle art and slashed away.

"Too slow! Too many openings! That's a stupid move!" the chick spat, then slashed its feathers and claws like they were swords, executing Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven.

Demise of Man, Spectral-Dance and Soul-Extinction! Demise of Earth, Earth-Quaker and Hell-Shaker! Those four strikes forced Li Chiling to block with her Ninefold Aquashield. Her Unity battle art was completely suppressed, and Hell-Shaker sent her flying back thirty whole meters.

"This can't be! It's impossible!" Li Chiling's face paled and she shivered. A few cuts manifested on her body and oozed blood.

The crowd immediately broke into a commotion. Those of the clan had only seen lifebound beasts fight with brute force, relying on their physiques and spiritsource abilities. Those distilled, impractical bestial arts were easily forgotten in actual battle.

Lifebound beasts had limited intelligence, after all, so they fared much worse in comprehending complicated Heavenly Will techniques, which was why most opted to fight with their bodies and spiritsource abilities.

Seeing a little chick at Spiritsource managing to execute a simplified Heavenly Will technique to force back a beastmaster at the fourth level of Unity was nothing short of a miracle. This was no mere chick; it was practically human! Even lifebound beasts at the Unity stage wouldn't be able to pull off such advanced sword techniques!

The little chick caused a huge commotion among the audience. But soon, its limelight was stolen by Tianming. While the chick was forcing Li Chiling back after the Unity field was shattered, Tianming engaged in a melee with the kunpeng, taking on the role of a lifebound beast himself! It was a glaring contrast. Some would even be tempted to believe Ying Huo when he joked that Tianming was his mount after seeing this.

Tianming had caught up to the Crimsonflame Azuresea Kunpeng. With the chick's Infernal Armor and his flame immunity, there was no need to fear the fire-type spiritsource abilities of the kunpeng. He only needed to use brute force to fight it.

Wham!

He used Three-Spring Heavy Strike to pummel the kunpeng. Did this human not fear fire?! In a fit of rage, the kunpeng morphed into its kun form once more and dove deep into a river, its home turf!

"Think you can run?" Tianming spread his Celestial Wings and flapped; the flap was so quick that it caused a windstorm!

All of a sudden, the kunpeng suddenly stopped in mid-air. It was the Spatial Wall again! However, the force of its fall shattered the wall this time. While the beast wasn't hurt, the impact did stun it. Tianming took that opportunity to rush in front of the kunpeng.

Bewildering Eye! The eye in the middle of his left palm blinked, causing the great beast to shriek in agony. Perhaps because it had been single for far too long, it immediately fell for the eye's seductive charm!

Lifebound beasts were gendered and could engage in lovemaking, even though they weren't able to procreate that way. That was the key differentiator between them and wildbeasts. The ability to make love also gave them libidos, which was why the Bewildering Eye worked on them.

In the next instant, Archfiend emerged! Tianming wanted to test out the kind of power a grade-seven bestial weapon could wield. All of a sudden, hundreds of bloody eyes appeared, all of them sporting black spikes.

"What kind of sinister weapon is that?"

"Its mental impact is far too powerful!"

"Wait, how can Tianming fly on his own? Don't tell me it's a pentabane ability?"

They discussed the Spatial Wall and Celestial Wings as well. Everything they couldn't understand, they attributed to Tianming being a pentabane. After all, the wings weren't visible to others.

Even in the Li Saint Clan, they were shocked to see the weapon Mu Yang had gifted Tianming!

Whoosh!

As the Bewildering Eye took effect, Archfiend shot out. Soulless Seven Howls was unleashed three consecutive times on the kunpeng! With each strike, its skin parted to reveal battered, bloody flesh underneath. The weapon was far too powerful; it was purely made for slaughter!

### **Chapter 206 - The Rampaging Black Ca**

Archfiend was about thirty meters in length, which was enough for Tianming to attack even larger lifebound beasts. By now, the bloody eyeballs had surrounded the black fish. With countless audible squishes, the spikes on the eyeballs pierced into the beast's flesh, all the while gazing straight into the eyes of the kun.

The great fish shrieked in pain, but that wasn't the worst part. The worst part was the fear Archfiend struck into its mind by secreting its black miasma into the beast through the wounds it wrought.

The moment the kun fell into the river, it dyed it red. The beast, in its frenzy, pulled Tianming into the river with it. The moment he was submerged, his armor caused the river water to sizzle and evaporate into steam. Like a fisherman struggling with an overly large catch, he was pulled into the water after his hook caught the monster.

"Come out!" Tianming tugged on Archfiend and ripped the kun straight out of the river. swinging it around in the air then bringing it bashing toward the ground. In an instant, a web of cracks spread from the thirty-meter-wide crater left at the point of impact. Blood seeped out and filled it, marking the complete defeat of the Crimsonflame Azuresea Kunpeng. All it could do now was flop and twitch.

"Wow, I sure caught a big one!" All of a sudden, Tianming appeared before the experts of the three bloodlines. He smirked, then gave his formless, invisible wings a flap. When cloaked, nobody could notice Spiritual Attachment at all. Tianming made sure to hide Feiling well. In the next moment, he rushed to Ying Huo.

The chick had no Spiritual Attachment, so it appeared to be slightly weaker compared to Tianming, who also had an additional lightning source. However, it still managed to hold its ground against Li Chiling using its sword techniques, pushing her to the edge of desperation.

All of a sudden, a bloody chain descended from the skies. Li Chiling hurriedly backed off and raised her shield to block, only for the chain to bend and strike her anyway. The spikes tore through her thighs in an instant.

"Aagh!" she cried. It was only then that she saw Tianming before her; the white-haired youth was flying in mid air!

"A pentabane!" She finally felt fear. Everything she'd witnessed had completely convinced her. Right after that, Tianming's horrifying bestial claw clutched her neck. The bloody claw almost seemed to tear into her flesh, endlessly terrorizing her with the threat of death.

"Do you yield?" Tianming asked.

"I yield! I yield!" she squeaked in fear.

"Good. Mess with Qingyu again and I'll cut your tongue out. I am a man of my word. You're free to test if that's true."

"I would never dare." Tears of humiliation trickled down her face. It was over. The moment Tianming retrieved Archfiend, she slumped onto the ground with her face pale with fear.

"Climb your way back!"

"I will! I will!" she said and obediently clawed her way back to her father. Li Yansheng's eyes were seething with rage. Had it not been for Li Xuanyi stopping him, he would have stepped forward with the intent to kill.

"Third Patriarch, are you still dissatisfied after seeing me win fair and square? Should that be the case, feel free to send your other children to fight me. I'll beat as many down as you can send." Naturally, Tianming was aware that Li Chiling was the best of his children.

All Li Yansheng could do was stomach his rage and keep silent. How could a fourth-level Unity beastmaster lose to a Spiritsource beastmaster? Not only that, his lifebound beast could even execute a simplified Heavenly Will technique! The chick had made significant progress in the past few days, so it could finally use the whole set of Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven attacks.

Those from the three bloodlines couldn't do much else but be awed. It was a fair battle in every sense of the word, and had left no room for dissatisfaction with the results. While they could have argued the previous case when Tianming had defeated a third-level Unity beastmaster, and disputed that evidence of his pentabane status, there was no way to do so now. There was no other explanation for his lifebound beast being able to do what it did, nor for a Spiritsource beastmaster to be able to defeat someone at the fourth level of Unity.

Tianming turned back and saw Qingyu smile at him. It seemed that she'd completely acknowledged him, given that he had stood up for her. As for Jingyu, she was just as shocked as the rest, but her bafflement soon devolved into hearty laughter.

"Did you see that? That's my grandson! Amazing! Did you all see that? Anything else you lot want to say?" Jingyu hadn't felt so great before a crowd like this in a long time.

"I'm not convinced!" A purple-clad youth stepped out at that moment. His hair had a slight purplish tint and lightning bolts seemed to shine from his eyes and mouth. Tianming had heard from Qingyu about him; he was the son of the fourth patriarch, Li Chenlei.

Li Chenlei was a year older than Li Chiling, despite being a tribane and fourth-level Unity beastmaster like her. However, his extra year of cultivation put him at the brink of breaking through to the fifth level.

Needless to say, he had also done his fair share of bullying Qingyu. Being a year older, he had the advantage in power. It wouldn't be odd for him to abuse it at her expense.

The fall of the Li Saint Clan in general, and Li Wudi from the Apex Branch, had caused much dissatisfaction among the rest. The youths from the other bloodlines had long been brainwashed by their parents and lost all reverence for the Apex Branch.

Qingyu had nobody to look out for her, and it was beyond Jingyu's ability to care for her with all the other stuff that was going on. Qingyu ended up isolated and mocked by the youths, and their parents didn't put a stop to it either. After all, they were who the children based their actions on. With Li Xuanyi and the rest starting to look down on the Apex Branch after Li Wudi's fall from grace, the kids had naturally followed suit.

Li Chenlei, Li Chiling, and the rest had caused their fair share of trouble for Qingyi since she was young, and nobody had stood out to help her. She had nobody to complain to, until Tianming came and heard her out for the first time the night before. It seemed that today was the day those arrogant pricks would receive a sound beating.

As such, when Li Chenlei stepped out to challenge him, Tianming pointed at him and said, "Alright, you then. Get your ass over here. I'll make sure you lose all your teeth by the end of the day." His gaze was far too chilling. Currently, his mental state was far beyond what was fitting for a man of his age. Sometimes, he almost felt like a god of death staring down at his prey.

Li Chenlei was stunned by that look, and embarrassment turned into anger. "Li Tianming! Hand over the Kunpeng Sacred Seal!" The implication of his demand was for Tianming to die so the seal could manifest.

"Come, don't make me wait." Tianming was the avatar of a white-haired devil. He kept Archfiend away, and with a flick, caused Grand Thunderflare Sword to appear in his hand. He had lots of tools at his disposal.

"Ying Huo, go back in. Let's test out Meow Meow's new ability today."

"Alright, let me protect the lady!" The little chick flapped its small wings and landed on Qingyu's shoulder.

"Milady, do you find me enticing?" it chirped.

"Very, my handsome chicken," Qingyu quipped back with a smile. "But my Big Brother is more handsome."

"I knew it. You and Ling'er must be blind for you to be immune to my boundless charm and complex personality." The chick hung its head in despair.

Back on the battlefield, Tianming took out a cat, of all things, before his audience. The black cat merely squirmed and continued snoring in a different pose. It was a cute, harmless pet just like the chick before it.

During the battle five days before, the cat hadn't shown itself. So, nobody knew Tianming was a twin beastmaster. But now, the proverbial—and literal—cat was out of the bag.

Though, what did a twin beastmaster like Tianming intend by having his lifebound beasts fight separately? There was only one implication: he was mocking them! How dare he hold back and humiliate him, Li Chenlei?

His rage flared. He didn't care if Tianming was some pentabane. There was only one thing in his mind: kill!

"Come to me, Skythunder Yinwater Kunpeng!"

Rumble!

A lightning cloud suddenly zipped over. When the cloud dispersed, a thunderous roc could be seen flying in the skies. It almost resembled Wei Qing's Sky-Propping Violet-Lightning Roc, though it wasn't as huge, given its still-immature form. Even so, its power and aura felt much more powerful than Wei Qing's roc.

It was also an eight-star lifebound beast! Its peng form was blessed with skythunder, while its kun form wielded Yinwater. Currently, it was in its peng form. Li Chenlei wielded a thunder-like blade, upon which nine gems were embedded. The power of lightning surged within each of the gems.

With a loud sizzle, tens of thousands of lightning bolts gathered within the blade—the Ninethunder Boltcleaver. Li Chenlei immediately deployed his Skythunder Field in tandem with his kunpeng. He looked like a knight mounting a great roc as he zipped towards Tianming.

Even now, the black cat in Tianming's hand was still snoring.

"Wake up," Tianming said.

"No, meow.... Fight yourself. I'm tired nyaah..." it lazily meowed. What it said wasn't far from the truth; it was worn out from a few days of nonstop training.

However, Tianming merely snickered, then flicked the cat's balls with his left hand. The resulting meow contained shock and rage in equal measure.

"Li Tianming, how could you?!" The bond of trust between man and cat was no more. Yet, the black cat didn't dare to hit Tianming as it wasn't his match. Having nowhere else to vent its rage from being awakened by having its balls flicked, it turned toward the incoming kunpeng and narrowed its blue irises slits.

"Meeeeeoow!" The cat went into a complete frenzy and countless thunderclouds gathered in the skies.

"Roouoaaaar!" Meow Meow's voice was now much deeper. Tianming noticed that the palm-sized cat was surrounded by a dense demonic aura that twitched and grew as its bones audibly snapped from a sudden increase in size. The demonic aura now permeated the skies as countless black thunderclouds appeared and fused into a gigantic ball of lightning. Amidst the demonic aura and gathering thunderclouds, a gigantic black beast could be seen creeping out!

1. Remember, kun is the fish form and peng is the bird form.

**Chapter 207 - Golden-eyed Youth Li Xuanchen**

In the darkness were two large, bloody eyes that looked like a magnified version of Tianming's Bewildering Eye. The beast's eyes were no longer sapphire blue like before. Even its tiny claws and fangs turned into bloody bestial talons that were sharp as daggers, while its four canines looked like four swords. Each strand of its thick fur was formed from countless lightning bolts. It was a beast of titanic proportions radiating dense demonic aura, resembling something like a fusion of a lion, tiger, and panther. It had a lion's strength, a tiger's balance, and a panther's speed, as well as the combined bloodthirstiness of the three beasts.

"Everyone likes fierce beasts.... Guess they won't be disappointed with this fellow," Tianming said with relief.

The black cat had used a spiritsource ability that originated from the Devil-Monarch Wildsoul that had been modified when it bonded with the cat's bloodline. Now, the black cat was a Regal Chaosfiend! Tianming finally had a presentable beast.

He imagined his white-haired self riding on the thunderous, demonic beast. Even if Li Chenlei was at the fourth stage of Unity, how could he compare?

Meow Meow roared in anger, but it didn't sound too different from before despite its changed form. Tianming thought it rather fortunate that the black cat always directed its anger at his foes, rather than himself.

"Defeat him and I'll let you sleep for three days straight," Tianming said.

"Roouuaaar!" Currently, the Regal Chaosfiend was almost as large as Li Chenlei's lifebound beast.

"What kind of lifebound beast is that?"

"The demonic aura is overflowing! It's outright terrifying! Its natural capabilities are definitely far stronger than other beasts of its rank!"

Since Tianming couldn't count on Meow Meow to learn bestial arts, he decided to let it fight by relying on its powerful body and lightningsource.

The sky rumbled as the Skythunder Yinwater Kunpeng shot a bolt of lightning toward the black cat, but it did nothing other than tickle it. Lightning-type spiritsource abilities were the least of its fears, since that was its forte to begin with. It didn't take long for Li Chenlei to notice it.

"Dive!" he ordered. The next moment, his beast morphed into its huge, black kun form and they both dived into the river. They would fight Tianming in their home element.

With a loud boom, the black cat suddenly spat out a black ball. It was a ball of chaos lightning at least five meters wide.

"Dodge!" Li Chenlei cried in a panic. The black kun attempted to swerve away with him, but the ball of lightning exploded the instant it entered the river. Countless black lightning snakes surged through the thousand-meter river, completely electrifying and blackening it.

"Gaaaaaaah!" Despite being a dual-type beastmaster of ice and lightning, Li Chenlei paled when he was struck by the chaos lightning. The black cat jumped into the river to engage in its favorite pastime: fishing.



The kun swam frantically as it avoided the cat's razor-sharp claws and fangs. Its spirit-source ability could infuse the river with frost energy, but the black cat's own demonic chaos aura was far more terrifying than that. It had to be noted that the chimera of lion-tiger-panther was undoubtedly a perfect killing machine. Tianming even felt that legendary dragons and phoenixes couldn't compare.

Dragons were far too long, after all.

Perhaps these mythical beasts were more powerful in other aspects, but when it came to close combat, the Regal Chaosfiend was no doubt superior. Whether it be beastmaster or lifebound beast, once it was approached by the fiend, it would be over for them.

The others could only watch as the fierce chimeric beast frantically clawed at the black kun. At the same time, Tianming executed Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven with his Grand Thunderflare Sword while Li Chenlei was still held back by the aftereffects of the ball of chaos lightning.

Demise of Man, Spectral-Dance, Soul-Extinction! Li Chenlei frantically countered these moves with a unity-ranked battle art. Next came Demise of Earth, Earth-Quaker. Tianming's footwork allowed him to zip around above the river. Each slash of his split into nine, all of them surging toward their target like a torrent of water.

Demise of Earth, Hell-Shaker split the river and forced Li Chenlei out of hiding. Demise of Heaven, Divine-Fury coalesced the rage of the gods and sent it piercing straight through Li Chenlei's lower abdomen.

"Urrggh!" Li Chenlei cried. He turned and looked blankly at the white-haired youth, feeling his legs give way.

This was someone Tianming couldn't kill. The Li Saint Clan was already in deep trouble, so killing one of their prominent members would no doubt invite nothing but trouble. While Li Chenlei had come at him with the intent to kill him in order to retrieve the seal, Tianming was someone with restraint. He gave Li Chenlei some time to recover after piercing him through, but had the battle really ended?

"Do you yield?" Tianming asked.

"No!"

Wham! Another punch later, Li Chenlei's teeth fell out when he opened his mouth to cry in pain. Not one tooth was left untouched.

"Do you yield now?" Tianming asked with a smile.

Li Chenlei looked at his kun that was almost being toyed to death and finally nodded. "I yield! I yield! Waaaah!"

"If only you'd yielded earlier, you wouldn't have lost your teeth. It must hurt, huh?" Tianming tugged on him by the collar and tossed him to the fourth patriarch, Li Yunting.

"Meow Meow, that's enough," Tianming said.

The next instant, the black cat turned into a bolt of lightning and returned to his hand in its shrunken form. When it turned over, it had already fallen asleep.

"This guy really doesn't waste a second to sleep!" Tianming was quite perplexed about what to do about his chronic sleepyhead of a lifebound beast. He hurriedly returned it to his lifebound space, lest its behavior embarrassed him more. Nobody would figure that the tiny creature was the very same monster of titanic proportions that had effortlessly toyed with the Skythunder Yinwater Kunpeng just moments ago.

Now, the battle had finally concluded. Li Chenlei cried in his father's arms with his mouth empty of teeth. The kunpeng, on the other hand, was nowhere to be seen; it had probably retreated to its lair right away.

The whole crowd was silent. Tianming stepped forward as the first, third, and fourth patriarchs stared blankly at him. Even the saintly Li Xuanyi furrowed his brows as he wordlessly judged Tianming. He'd heard those from the Wind Bloodline mention that Tianming could execute simplified heavenly-ranked battle arts, but he didn't believe it back then. It was only just now that he managed to get a good look. In fact, Tianming was much stronger than they had initially described!

Li Chenlei and Li Chiling were powerless to resist him, and almost immediately lost. They had yielded to him, and none of the youths from the three bloodlines could deal with Tianming, who was only considered sixteen as he claimed.

But that wasn't the focus; what was truly shocking was that he had managed to defeat them despite only being at Spiritsource. There was no other explanation for his talent aside from him really being a pentabane like the founding ancestor. As long as he could prove that, he wouldn't even need to prove himself to be Li Wudi's son, since that wasn't so significant.

The key was nobody would be more suitable to become the junior sect master than a pentabane. He would be the hope of the Li Saint Clan's restoration.

Tianming put his sword away and said, "Let's be frank. We're all members of the Li Saint Clan and want to bring our clan back to its former glory. I hold no grudges against all of you here. This battle took place today merely to prove that I came back to the clan to become the junior sect master. With me being a pentabane and the hope of the clan, there's nobody more suitable to take up the position. That's why, I hope the three bloodlines don't try to take the Kunpeng Sacred Seal from me for your own ambition. We, as the descendants of the Li Saint Clan, must behave in a manner that won't embarrass our ancestors. Let's not forget that the glory of the clan in the past millennia was all thanks to the Apex Branch. Even the ancestor of all of us, the founding ancestor, is from the Apex Branch!"

Nobody could dispute what he said. He had already awed them with his talent. Even Li Xuanyi could do naught but squint. His plan had been totally ruined by Tianming.

Amidst the silent crowd, a youth in a gold robe slowly walked forwards. His eyes were gold and his expression seemed a little cold. Even the sheen of his skin seemed a little metallic.

"Dad," the youth said when he came to Li Xuanyi.

"Xuanchen." When he saw his son, Li Xuanyi had another idea. Currently, the youth was looking straight at Tianming.

"I am of the same age as you, so I will challenge you for the position of junior sect master. You will have to defeat me to claim that position," the golden-eyed youth said.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Li Xuanchen of the Metal Bloodline. This year, I'm sixteen and at the sixth stage of Unity. Ninth Elder Yuwen Taiji is my master. Might I ask if I am qualified to be your match?" the youth asked.

The impression he gave off was completely unlike the former two. He didn't seem the slightest bit arrogant or anxious, but his eyes radiated a cold, calculating opportunism.

Naturally, Tianming had been made aware of him, the top genius of the clan. He was someone nobody in Vermillion Bird could hope to match. Even ten Li Chenleis or a hundred Lin Xiaotings weren't his match. Even Lin Xiaoting, who had joined Heaven's Elysium with Tianming's Saintbeast War-Soul, would be utter trash compared to Li Xuanchen.

He was also the one with the best odds of becoming junior sect master. The three bloodlines had come to make a bid for Li Xuanchen's appointment to that position. Not to mention, he was the disciple of the strongest man in the Grand-Orient Sect! Tianming had been wondering why Li Xuanchen hadn't showed up until now.

"What do you think, Li Tianming? If you fear death, you may hide in your shell like a tortoise. That's basically what Li Wudi is doing. He hides in the mausoleum like the tortoise he is. Like father, like son, I suppose."

His words sent laughter through the crowd. Li Wudi had often been mocked as a cowardly tortoise in the past decades.

"I wonder if a new tortoise will be born?" another youth mocked. There was no other way they could vent their frustrations at being completely dominated by Tianming, after all.

"Tianming, you don't have to do this. It'll take far more than a pentabane for a Spiritsource beastmaster to defeat one at the sixth stage of Unity. That's nothing short of a miracle," Jingyu hurriedly said. Xuanchen's challenge was far from reasonable.

Li Xuanchen was forcing Tianming to accept his challenge. Perhaps he was trying to provoke him into fighting to kill him and retrieve the Kunpeng Sacred Seal. However, Tianming had already proven himself. He had no obligation to engage in another battle to the death. How, then, would he deal with this hot-blooded youth?

People watched as he took one step back and said, "Come!"

He knew he couldn't defeat him. If he could, everyone could forget cultivating. It would be over for the rest of them. However, that was no reason to refuse a challenge! While it might be easy for Li Xuanchen to defeat him, he would be in for a challenge if he wanted to kill Tianming. With the Celestial Wings alone, there was a chance Li Xuanchen wouldn't be able to catch up to Tianming.

Flying oneself and flying on a mount were completely different matters. Not to mention, Feiling's Temporal Field was sure to lessen the odds of Tianming getting killed.

So, there was no reason for Tianming to refuse the challenge with his dignity on the line. As long as Li Xuanchen couldn't kill him, he would eventually have to shiver and grovel before him like Lin Xiaoting had.

### **Chapter 208 - Third Level of Unity in Half a Year**

"You said it!" Tianming said. Right at that instant, Li Xuanchen transformed into a golden beam and appeared right before Tianming.

His arm was golden when his fist struck out. Amidst all the chaos, Tianming squinted and blocked the punch with his black left arm.

It was just like back then when Lin Xiaoting had just left seclusion—he wanted to kill Tianming right away. Tianming countered first by using Bewildering Eye, causing Li Xuanchen to shudder for a moment before his full-strength attack went crashing into the black arm.

Both of them took a few steps back from the collision. The stone tiles under Tianming cracked and shattered into a few pieces, but those beneath Li Xuanchen were fine. He thought he could break Tianming's arm with one strike, yet that punch had landed on Tianming's 'talons'. He looked at his fist and saw it bleeding. It pulsed with pain, while Tianming merely shook the impact off and appeared completely uninjured. He had completely blocked the sudden strike without batting an eyelid!

Li Xuanchen was quite confident his punch was enough to cripple an arm of a fourth-level Unity beastmaster like Li Chenlei or Li Chiling. What had just happened drove him mad with fury.

"Is that the extent of what someone at the sixth level of Unity can do?" Tianming mocked. His insulting expression only poured more fuel onto Li Xuanchen's raging fire.

However, Tianming knew that while the black arm was fine, the beast ki and sheer force from the punch had traveled through the arm into his body and shaken his internal organs. Had it not been for Feiling guiding most of the force away, he would've spat out a mouthful of blood.

The gap between each Unity level was huge, and those at the sixth level were able to utilize the spiritual energy in the natural environment. In a real fight, Tianming definitely wouldn't be able to take on an opponent like him. He had to at least acknowledge the difference between him and this genius of the Grand-Orient Sect! Li Xuanchen could definitely claim to be the sect's top genius, for him to have Yuwen Taiji as his master.

However, seeing Tianming's snide smile at the fact that his surprise attack had failed to achieve much caused Li Xuanchen much grief and frustration.

"Let's continue this!" he said. Not only did he use a surprise attack, he even failed to gain much. That was nothing short of embarrassing. However, he still had another trick up his sleeve. His eyes were already burning with his will.

"Sure, whatever. Come at me quick. Don't bother relying on petty tricks like surprise attacks. How shameless," Tianming mocked.

"Die!" Li Xuanchen cried when he made his next move. To think that Tianming wasn't afraid of him at all!

But right at that instant, a green silhouette appeared between the two and blocked their way. This figure gave a light push and caused a formless arcane force to manifest and neutralize both their attacks. They both fell on the ground and found it hard to move.

It was a green-robed middle-aged man radiating a domineering aura. Like a sky-piercing tree, he stood really tall and straight, looking righteous and just.

The moment he showed up, everyone fell silent. The second patriarch was the first to react. "Junior Li Xuanyi greets Elder Ye Qing."

The Li Saint Clan was no longer relevant in the Grand-Orient Sect. The ones in the sect with the highest position were the elders, and there were only thirty-three of them in total. Every single one of them was a figure that shook the Grand-Orient Realm in some way. While Li Xuanyi stood at the apex of the Li Saint Clan, he was still way off from becoming an elder. This elder was of similar seniority to Li Jingyu, both of them almost a hundred years old now.

However, he was a saint, making him relatively young among peers of the same level, so he still looked rather vigorous and steady.

"Greetings, Elder Ye Qing," the rest greeted.

Li Xuanchen had started the fight, only to have his arm wounded by Tianming, and right before he went berserk, Elder Ye Qing showed up. His rage boiled over, yet he had no choice but to stomach it, no matter how bad it felt; he didn't have a choice.

Li Xuanyi narrowed his eyes. He knew that this elder was the closest one among the council to the Li Saint Clan. After all, the Ye Clan used to be the second clan in the sect, right below the Li Saint Clan, and had good relations with them. After the Li Saint Clan's fall, the Ye Clan also faced lots of pressure. Nowadays, only one elder on the council was from the Ye Clan.

With Ye Qing deciding to show up on the day Li Xuanyi brought his son out for the position of the junior sect master, it was obvious that Li Jingyu had asked him to come observe by bringing up Tianming's pentabane status.

"Stop fighting. You are all of the same clan, so let's not cause discord amongst yourselves. I've seen the past two battles clearly," Ye Qing announced. When he was done, he turned to look at Tianming and Li Xuanchen.

"Yes, Elder," Tianming said, knowing that his objective today was complete. All he needed was to keep his position as junior sect master to retain access to the Li Mausoleum. With so many ancestors' blessings waiting for him, there was no need for him to die here and now, fighting Li Xuanchen. If his opponent wasn't satisfied, there would be more than enough chances in the future to deal with him.

"Elder, I still want to settle my fight with him! I need to know who'll win!" Li Xuanchen said with grit teeth.

"You're at the sixth level of Unity. What can defeating a Spiritsource beastmaster prove?" the elder countered. That immediately shut Li Xuanchen up. After all, Tianming had already survived his punch.

"Xuanchen, stop causing trouble," Li Xuanyi said as he pulled his son away.

"Li Tianming, you better watch your neck. Don't let me catch you, or I'll make sure you won't keep even a single one of your teeth," Li Xuanchen threatened. Li Chenlei was his minion and he was fixated on avenging him, though the greater part of his grudge came from not being able to get the Kunpeng Sacred Seal.

After he left, everyone watched as the elder picked up Tianming's arm to inspect the five bane-rings, then touched his white hair.

"Have you entered the mausoleum?" Ye Qing asked.

"I have."

"Paid your respects to the ancestors yet?"

"Of course."

"Any thoughts?"

"The Li Saint Clan existed for a glorious myriad years, with their dominance unchallenged. That precedent is something we should try to emulate. The Lifesbane we have has the potential to change fate itself. It represents the will of our bloodline. Elder, did I get that right?"

In Tianming's eyes wasn't a hint of the naivete common to most youths.

"It's only an opinion of yours. There aren't any rights or wrongs. However, I see that you're pretty sensible and thoughtful. You don't seem sixteen at all," the elder said.

Well, of course. Tianming was twenty, after all, though Ye Qing had no way of knowing. He was merely praising his precocious mentality.

The elder turned to the three patriarchs and said, "Even though this is an internal matter of the Li Saint Clan that I shouldn't meddle with, this is the birth of a pentabane. So, let me say a word or two about it. This child's talent makes him deserving of the position of junior sect master and heir of the Li Saint Clan and their customs. With him being a pentabane, whether or not he's really Li Wudi's son is no longer important. It's not like he has any other sons anyway. Since Tianming has already assimilated the Kunpeng Sacred Seal, you would be killing off the only miracle to happen in ten thousand years—the resurgence of a pentabane—for your petty ambitions. I feel anyone that does that no doubt has ill intentions for the Li Saint Clan in mind." Ye Qing turned to Li Xuanyi and continued, "Li Xuanyi, do you want to be such a person?"

"Elder, I must say, isn't it too soon to say that he's really a pentabane? We all know what that represents. Either way, I personally don't believe that a pentabane would ever grace us ever again."

"Then tell me. What kind of talent do you know of that will allow a Spiritsource to defeat someone at the fourth level of Unity?"

Li Xuanyi and the rest of those in the three bloodlines were. There was no explanation for that.

"But, I suppose what Li Xuanyi said does make some sense," Ye Qing suddenly said.

"What do you mean, Elder?"

"As far as I know, being a pentabane only affects the speed of cultivation. Tianming claims that he reached the eighth level of Spiritsource in half a year of cultivation. That seems to match up to the speed of a pentabane's cultivation. However, there's no witness for his claims. So, all we need to prove it is to monitor his future progress within a set time frame, let's say half a year. If he can reach the third level of Unity in that time, we can be sure that he is indeed a pentabane. It's only half a year, after all, so you, Li Xuanyi, shouldn't have anything to worry about. If you really want your son to inherit the legacy of the Li Saint Clan, just wait half a year."

Ye Qing's words finally convinced every one of those in the three bloodlines.

"That's right. There's no rush. Let's give Tianming half a year."

"We'll see how much he can progress in that time!"

"He could be boasting about reaching the eighth level of Spiritsource in half a year, for all we know. So, we'll see how it goes from now."

"Reaching the third level of Unity in half a year from where he is now, eh?"

"I recall that Li Xuanchen spent two years from when he was at the ninth level of Spiritsource at twelve to reach the third level of Unity at fourteen. He only reached the sixth level of Unity at sixteen."

"Li Xuanchen is a tribane. If Li Tianming is four times faster than him, he's definitely a pentabane, no doubt."

Li Xuanyi seemed a little uncertain, hearing their discussion. He then said, "Elder, what you're suggesting is if he doesn't reach the third level of Unity in half a year, then..."

"If he doesn't, I won't be able to interfere if you choose to change the junior sect master," Ye Qing said with a smile. He shot Tianming a glance, indicating that his words were for the youth's ears as well. He was most interested in the existence of a pentabane; if Tianming wasn't one, things would be different.

"Thank you, Elder," Li Xuanyi said and smiled. He shot a secret glance at Tianming. Nobody in the sect could cultivate four times faster than his son, so he wasn't worried one bit.

Half a year was but a short time.

## **Chapter 209 - Over My Dead Body!**

"Tianming, are you confident?" Ye Qing asked.

"Elder, the timeframe is quite tight, but I'll try my best not to let you down," he replied, smiling. While he made it sound humble, his face exuded confidence. Anyone could make it out.

Reaching the third level of Unity in half a year? Back in Ignispolis, he had broken through three levels in a single month! He wasn't just a pentabane, but was in fact a decabane. Not to mention, now he had the untapped blessings of the ancestors in the mausoleum. No matter what, the position of junior sect master was his for sure. He didn't want to give up on all the blessings inside the mausoleum just yet.

"Li Tianming, I'll come test you half a year from now to see whether you actually reach the third level of Unity!" Li Xuanchen spat.

Tianming merely smiled back. He knew Li Xuanchen thought very highly of himself as the top genius of the Li Saint Clan. He would see.

At least, Li Xuanyi was satisfied with what transpired today. They didn't have to do anything, yet Tianming had taken on what was basically an impossible challenge.

"Li Tianming," the elder said as he took out a bronze talisman. He inscribed something on it, then threw it to Tianming.

"This is the talisman of an inner sect disciple of my Azure Immortal Mountain. From now on, you're considered one of my disciples as well. You may come to cultivate at Azure Immortal Mountain. Any disciple of mine will have their safety guaranteed!" Ye Qing announced.

Jingyu was overjoyed at the elder's proclamation, knowing full well what it entailed. She called out to remind him, "Tianming!"

Hearing her reminder, he hurriedly said, "Your disciple thanks you, Elder!"

"Work hard and prove you're a pentabane. I am really curious about you. The founding ancestor is a legend that I've admired all my life. Since you have the same bane count as him, I'd like to see what you'll be like ten years from now."

"All I can say is I'll definitely do my best to impress you, Elder."

Ye Qing smiled at the response. "Now that's something to look forward to." Being able to hear the elder say something like that was the greatest shock of all. The others were completely flabbergasted.

"Work hard, young man. You used to be able to back out of this risky path, but the moment you assimilated the seal was the moment you gave up on any hope of escape. I admire your courage. From now on, you'll only gain more adversaries in the Grand-Orient Sect the more accomplished you become.

"However, true experts can only emerge from the midst of chaos and carnage. The ancestors of my Ye Clan have always wanted to compete with the Li Saint Clan, but more than that, we all deeply respect them and thank them for their graciousness. The Li Saint Clan has been in decline for far too long. Such a legendary clan shouldn't be mocked by everyone, no matter how far it falls. Someone has to stand up for them. That person doesn't have to revive the clan to its former glory; defending the clan's current dignity is enough. I'm sure the ancestors of the clan would turn in their graves if they saw the state of the clan now.

"Li Tianming, I hope the person that'll stand up for the clan will be you. My clan has always held a regret. But if you can become our hope, at least the clan won't be the target of so much ridicule. I, Ye Qing, will protect you." The regret he was referring to was his failure to protect Li Wudi, as the sect master had fallen to a plot from the shadows rather than an upfront attack.

As for Mu He's death, it was suicide as a result of harrasment from Yuwen Taiji. Ye Qing hadn't expected her to choose such a method to make her exit. Tianming knew that the elder had made him a promise in earnest. He really wanted to see what a pentabane could become. The Ye Clan, second to only the Li Saint Clan, was their most loyal partner, but could do naught but sigh at the Li Saint Clan's current state.



Ye Qing patted Tianming on the shoulder. There were many things that didn't have to be outright stated. Now, Tianming just heard an impressive senior like him make a request of him. His main objective now was to live up to the elder's hopes and fulfill his promises.

"Qingyu, your big brother just returned to the sect, so there's no doubt much he doesn't know. Teach him patiently, so he doesn't suffer from not knowing the rules," Ye Qing said.

"Understood, Elder."

Qingyu was moved to tears. Tianming had obtained a total victory! His status as an inner sect disciple of Azure Immortal Mountain also meant he had planted his roots in the Grand-Orient Sect.

After his announcement, Ye Qing prepared to leave. While some of what he did would displease the council of elders, it wasn't something he would be ashamed to carry out.

"Elder, please wait a moment," Li Xuanyi suddenly said, smiling.

"What is it?"

Li Xuanyi waved and a fat, brutish, fully bearded youth came running to his side. "Elder, this is my youngest son. He's called Jincan, and is fifteen this year."

"For him to only be at Spiritsource at fifteen... it's a little too lackluster, isn't it?" Ye Qing said.

"Elder, this child was afflicted by a prenatal condition, so he can't be compared to Xuanchen."

Upon hearing that, Li Jincan seemed a little unhappy and gave Li Xuanyi a nudge. He was so chubby that it almost seemed like oil would ooze out of his face. His yellow teeth elicited discomfort in those who saw them. When he looked at Qingyu and gaped, his saliva was just on the edge of dripping out.

"What do you want me to know, then?" Ye Qing said, furrowing his brow. No normal person would bring such a humiliating son out into the public.

"Elder, this is the marriage agreement Li Wudi signed with me. Eight elders from the council signed their names as witnesses to the contract. It stipulates that when Li Qingyu reaches the age of sixteen, she would be wedded to my son, Jincan. I was about to ask you, Elder, if this agreement is valid for life."

Annoyed, Ye Qing replied, "I wasn't part of the signing, so it's not my place to meddle."

"Understood. This junior here merely wanted an elder from the council to reconfirm the agreement's validity. After all, Li Qingyu turns sixteen next month. I worry that Elder Ye Qing would think we're causing trouble for the Apex Branch when we come next month to enforce the agreement, so I just wanted to make you aware of it."

"Are you afraid I'll stop you?" Ye Qing asked.

"No, Elder. This is merely a small matter to the council. I wouldn't worry about that."

"What if I did stop you?"

"Surely you jest, Elder. Should that come to pass, I'd have no choice but to seek out the elders who signed the agreement for aid. Naturally, I'm aware that you're a busy person, so you definitely wouldn't bother yourself with petty matters like this."

Since Ye Qing's argument about Tianming's matter was sensible, Li Xuanyi had to accept it. But a marriage agreement with the signature of eight other elders gave him the edge.

"Since it's a petty matter, don't bother me with it. Annoy me enough and I'll tear the agreement up," Ye Qing said.

"Elder, forgive my transgression!" Li Xuanyi bowed his head in a hurry.

Ye Qing looked at Jingyu and Qingyu. He didn't say anything, but his message was clear. That was Li Wudi's own blunder. It was beyond his power to help, so he merely left.

When the elder was gone, Li Xuanyi turned to Tianming and the rest with a smile.

"I already made plans. Perhaps we'll hold the wedding on the fifteenth or sixteenth. Matriarch, we shall come on the day itself. Do prepare a good dowry when the time comes. The Apex Branch can't be stingy, you know. Naturally, we'll also pay the bride price on time. I'm sure you'll be satisfied with it, Matriarch. And I'm also sure you'll be all the more delighted when Qingyu finally gives birth to a great grandchild for you, right?" He smirked when he finally finished.

Everyone turned to look at the ugly Li Jincan and the beauty he was about to marry and couldn't stop themselves from laughing. They were beauty and the beast, alright, not to mention this beast had no fangs or talons at all.

"Qingyu, I want you to birth me five children to make my dad happy!" The buffoon looked at his fiancée with a smile so wide he couldn't help but drool. During the whole exchange, Tianming and the other two wore cold expressions.

"You think a fat pig like that can wed my granddaughter? Over my dead body!" Jingyu snapped.

"Matriarch, this is what Li Wudi has agreed to. If you try something inappropriate, the council of elders will get involved. It doesn't matter if you're dead or alive; Qingyu will still become my daughter-in-law." There was nobody he would fear now that he had the marriage agreement with the elders' signatures on it. Jingyu could do naught but grit her teeth. Qingyu shuddered at the lustful, bestial gaze coming from Li Jincan.

"They're going too far!" Feiling voiced from inside Tianming.

"Brother, shall we kill this pig using this opportunity? Don't worry, nobody will discover me," the little chick said. It was a rather upstanding fellow filled with a strong sense of justice.

"Don't be hasty. I have plans."

Tianming patted Qingyu on the shoulder and whispered to her ear, "Don't worry. If this Li Jincan dares touch one hair on you, I'll turn him into meat paste." He didn't sound like he was joking in the least.

"Big Brother...." She felt like a drowning person who had finally grabbed onto a float.

"Qingyu, relax. If I can't save you, I'll make my head into a chamber pot for you," he said with full seriousness.

"Big Brother, I don't need a chamber pot," she said, chuckling.

Tianming turned back to Li Xuanyi and his two sons. "Buzz off."

"Don't forget the dowry. I'll bring my younger brother here to collect it," Li Xuanchen said.

"Sure. Bring a few more lives if you would, just in case you lose a couple."

Li Xuanchen merely laughed it off and ordered, "Let's go!"

There was nothing more to say. Li Xuanchen couldn't take the position of the junior sect master within half a year, no matter what he did. But at least he could relish in the fact that his younger brother was going to get Qingyu.

The three bloodlines left just like that, and Fatepath Peak returned to its former quiet. From beginning to end, not a single one from the Seven Starry Wind Branches had shown up. This was what the Li Saint Clan ended up becoming; with no tiger on the mountain, the monkeys reigned supreme!

### **Chapter 210 - Inner Disciple Of The Azure Immortal Mountain**

Upon leaving Fatepath Peak, Li Xuanchen headed for the foot of the mountain instead of returning to Goldgleam Mountain where the Metal Bloodline resided.

On the river was a boy of about thirteen in white robes, lightly treading across the surface of the water as he approached. Despite his young age, the boy was slender and tall, with only a trace of childlike immaturity visible between his brows. His handsome features could almost be described as beautiful. Undoubtedly, this boy would grow into a gorgeous young man who could tempt talented beauties.

When he smiled, his eyes shone brightly and white teeth were revealed through his curled lips.

"Brother Li," greeted the boy.

"Shengcheng."

Despite being his senior, Li Xuanchen bowed his head slightly in a show of servitude.

"I came to watch the battle today and was planning to personally congratulate you on becoming junior sect master, but who could've imagined such an upset," lamented the boy.

"It's nothing, I can wait half a year. It won't take long for Li Tianming to fall."

"Don't you believe he's a pentabane?" asked the boy.

"Of course not. Our first ancestor only managed to awaken the pentabane after fifty years. If it was so easy, would the Li Saint Clan be in such a predicament? I don't know what special techniques he cultivated to create such an effect. It's very likely he's at the Unity stage, but lacks a unity field. So in less than half a year, he's bound to show his true colors. At that time, only death awaits him."

Smoldering under his stony expression, murderous intent leaked from his small, narrowed eyes. Just as he had been about to assume the role of junior sect master, a stranger stepped in, obstructing his way.

"Damn it. I want to know what's in the Li Mausoleum!" The boy's eyes darkened.

"If he tries to stop my younger brother's marriage to Li Qingyu, I'll be glad to give him the whooping he deserves so he's bedridden for half a year! We'll see how he rises to Unity level three in bed," sneered Li Xuanchen.

"Li Qingyu? I noticed her earlier. She's beautiful indeed."

Li Xuanchen was struck by an idea. "Shengcheng, are you interested in Li Qingyu?"

"So many women within the sect are interested in me, yet they lack Li Qingyu's unique, cold temperament." At the thought of her appearance, the boy in white smiled faintly.

"Shengcheng, let me ask you a question."

"Speak, Brother Li."

"Has your brother ever taken you out for merriment?" chuckled Li Xuanchen. "What I mean is, have you ever felt the touch of a woman?"

"No, I'm only thirteen years old. My father has forbidden me to partake in such matters until I'm fifteen, so that I may develop properly."

"Would you like to secretly have a go?" A smirk rose to Li Xuanchen's lips.

"Of course! But the girls around me are granddaughters to the sect elders. I wouldn't dare. And those without notable families, or who are short on looks can't tempt me," he complained.

"That's simple. I'll arrange a wonderful first time for you."

"Brother Li, what do you mean?"

"Don't you like Li Qingyu very much?"

"Yes, there's something special about her. Even if she's older than me, I'm attracted to her."

"Haha, Shengcheng, do you know what an idiot my brother is? He's practically half beast. On his wedding night, I'll knock him out and Li Qingyu will be yours." Li Xuanchen threw his head back in laughter.

"Really? Won't your brother make a fuss?"

"If he dares, I'll kill him," assured Li Xuanchen.

"But I don't just want it once. I want Li Qingyu to belong to me completely. Of course, I'm not planning on giving her any titles," he added.

After all, he was only thirteen and still under his father's care.

"Easy peasy. I'll handle my brother. In the future, he'll be Li Qingyu's husband only in name, but he won't touch a hair of hers. She'll belong to you alone, and only you can plunder and conquer her. She won't speak a word about it. After all, your identity, looks and talent make you a million times better than my brother. Li Qingyu could be considered to have made a bargain!" Li Xuanchen scoffed.

"Yes, what an honor it is for her. I practically saved her! What a waste it would be to have your brother defile her. I'm merely performing a good deed," laughed the boy.

"Yes, an anonymous good deed. With your talents, such a beauty is deservedly yours," flattered Li Xuanchen.

"You're right. The Yuwen family loves performing good deeds!" The boy glanced in the direction of Kunpeng Sacred Hall.

How much longer? He ardently awaited the day.

"I heard that Father loved a woman named Mu He, the wife of that loser Li Wudi. And Li Qingyu is Mu He's daughter. What the father failed to attain will be achieved by his own son. How interesting."

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When night fell, Fatepath Peak was filled with blooming flowers and lush greenery, like a scene out of a fantasy. The solitary bright moon emerged as a protagonist in the absence of the stars, reflecting its silvery light onto the earth.

Under a blue rock, a black cat was sleeping on all fours. Occasionally, mosquitoes stared at the pink nose and paws, trying to take a bite. But before they could get close, they were fried into dust.

On the edge of the moonlit cliff was a little chick, waving its wings and practicing hard.

"Kill!"

"Kill!"

"How dare you lay a finger on my sister Qingyu! Off with your head!"

Sweat drenched the little chick's feathers as it violently swung its wings.

"Ahh, kill!"

"I'll kill those motherfucking bastards!"

Beside the fluffy beasts were two figures on a rock—a young man and woman. The girl leaned gently into the man's arms, eyes glistening as she appreciated the moonlight.

"Big Brother, has your heart settled here?" Jiang Feiling blinked her attractive eyes.

"Mhmm, I think of this as my second home," answered Li Tianming.

"Are you used to it?"

"It's good. Besides, my home is wherever you are," Tianming laughed.

"Oh, you sweet talker!" Jiang Feiling hid her crimson cheeks in his embrace.

"What's this? Why is it so hard!" Her face brushed against something hard. Brimming with curiosity, she flicked at it. In an instant, Li Tianming flushed shades of scarlet and ink.

"It's the Grand Thunderflare Sword," he said through gritted teeth.

"Why don't you put your sword aside? How annoying!" She glared at him, unaware of the fire she was stoking.

"Um, Ling'er, is it alright if we explore a little excitement before our wedding...?" Li Tianming's eyes glowed with a mischievous gleam.

"What sort of excitement?"

"Something wicked?"

"Dream on, you meanie! You vulgar, shameless man! Oh, I'm so pissed! Ahh!" She clutched at Li Tianming's neck. In the heat of passion, he wrapped his arms around her slender waist.

With the soft, sweet-scented girl in his arms, the couple rolled on the grass.

"Big brother! Ling'er!"

Just as the story was about to begin, a voice interrupted them.

Li Tianming looked up and saw a young girl standing in the moonlight, staring at them blankly.

"What are you doing?"

Neither staying nor leaving seemed the right option.

"We're training!" Cheeks flushed, Li Tianming helped Jiang Feiling to her feet.

"Wow, it seems you're really giving it your all. You're both covered in sweat...." By this point, Li Qingyu was lost for words.

"Qingyu, stay." Jiang Feiling tossed a dirty look in Li Tianming's direction. What an outrage! He'd almost had his way with her!

If she condoned his advances so soon after leaving home, would there be hope for propriety in the future?

She quickly hid behind Li Qingyu.

"Hahaha...." Li Tianming teared up laughing. He wasn't in a hurry for intimacy before gaining absolute strength and providing Jiang Feiling a sense of security. His priority was creating a stable future. Engaging in passionate affairs before the wedding was a hooligan's conduct, behavior unworthy of encouragement.

He couldn't help but criticize his actions. A wonderful girl like Jiang Feiling deserved better than a casual roll in the grass.

"Qingyu, did you want to speak to me?" Tianming quickly changed the subject, resolving any embarrassment.

"Yes, Big Brother."

"What is it?"

"Aren't you Elder Ye Qing of Azure Immortal Mountain's inner disciple? So am I."

Every descendant of the Li Saint Clan basically cultivated within the Grand-Orient Sect, where the resources lay. Otherwise, the Li Saint Clan wouldn't have sufficient resources. From a young age, Li Qingyu and the others practiced in the sect during the day and only returned at night. After all, Fatepath Peak was only a small part of the Grand-Orient Sect.

"What about it?" asked Li Tianming.

"Tomorrow, a grandmentor named Ye Shaoqing will explain the key to breaking through to Unity from Spiritsource. He's Elder Ye Qing's son, and is very accomplished. Since you happen to be stuck at the peak of Spiritsource, I dropped by to ask if you'd like to listen to his sermon. Every time he speaks, it's a full house."

"Breaking through to Unity?"

A sermon and advice from a mentor of his strength would certainly answer Li Tianming's many questions. This was a good opportunity indeed; he was well aware he couldn't stay on Fatepath peak forever.

Although his ancestors' fortunes lay here, the vast Grand-Orient Sect contained countless more resources that he required. Only by integrating into the sect could he truly savor and cherish the wonder of this magnificent sect.

Since Ye Shaoqing was Elder Ye Qing's son, he was a man worthy of Tianming's respect.

"We'll go to Azure Immortal Mountain tomorrow," declared Tianming. "Qingyu, you'll have to show me around the sect."

"No problem!" she nodded.

"Well, I'm going too," pouted Jiang Feiling.

"Of course! I can't bear to separate from my Ling'er. How can I leave you here alone?" Upon further contemplation, Tianming decided to take Jiang Feiling with him at all times unless Li Qingyu could accompany her on Fatepath Peak.

She was mortal, too fragile to withstand any storms. Since he needed her help, protecting her was only natural. His heart would ache if even a hair of hers was broken. However, that protection also restricted Jiang Feiling to moving around while attached to his spirit. Fortunately, she was comfortable and could experience everything in that state.

Besides, there was no need for communication with irrelevant folk. Her unparalleled beauty would only serve as a temptation to the disciples of the sect.

In the blink of an eye, it was a new day and the trio set out.

The goal: Azure Immortal Mountain.

From this day forth, Li Tianming was the junior sect master of the Grand-Orient Sect!