

The Ages 21

Chapter 21 - The Mysterious Well In The Lake!

Li Tianming realised the direction Jiang Feiling pointed for him didn't simply lead him to the manna. As the concentration of spiritual energy in the air increased, not only did the number of beasts and nasty critters increase, but also the number of spirit herbs. Since the atmospheric temperature in the Red Twill Mountain Range was quite high all year round, the plants here were able to absorb a lot of spiritual energy from direct sunlight. As a result, most spirit herbs formed here were of the fire type.

In other words, this was paradise for the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix!

It had been ten days since Li Tianming started walking in this direction. While he hadn't found the manna, he did acquire quite a handful of spirit herbs with orange heavenly patterns. Other than three fire lingzhis, he also found orange-patterned spirit herbs such as the flaming great fruit and magmaflow leaves. As their journey towards the manna continued, the two also digested a considerable number of spirit herbs. The rewards that this place offered was proportionate to the amount of risks lurking in its shadows.

"Breakthrough!"

"Sixth level Beast Vein!"

In terms of cultivation level, he had now surpassed Li Xuejiao, and was reaching Li Zifeng's level.

"This cultivation pace is indeed unfathomable. Thinking back, I took a few years to reach sixth level when I started from scratch," Li Tianming exclaimed. Of course, these changes were only possible due to his bond with the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix, which highlighted how fundamentally different the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix was from the Four-Winged Goldroc.

"The second egg is still just rolling around in my lifebound space. This little fella is quite lazy, refusing to just hatch." Given how strong Ying Huo was, Li Tianming couldn't wait for his second Primordial Chaos Beast.

On the other hand, they managed to find quite a bit of clear spirit grass in the past few days. It wasn't really a rare spirit herb, and was more common in the deeper parts of Red Twill Mountain Range. In fact, he had already collected more than thirty strands, each of them carefully kept and packed.

"This trip is taking quite a while. Since I have enough clear spirit grass already, all I need now is the manna and then I can go back home."

"Since Ling'er pointed me in this direction, it must eventually lead me to where the treasure is!"

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Two days after reaching sixth level Beast Vein, Li Tianming found a lake located high up the mountain, boasting the highest concentration of spiritual energy in the mountain. Just by looking at the lake, he could see steam coming out of it. A searing heat engulfed his finger as he dipped it inside; a person without cultivation would have been scalded from simply stepping into the water.

Since this lake lied exactly in the direction Jiang Feiling was pointing at, and was also the most special place they encountered so far, Li Tianming decided to dive into it.

“Watch out, I can feel something foul is resting in the lake. Even if the manna is inside here, there’s probably some kind of trial that we have to clear first,” Li Tianming warned the little chick.

“Coward. Be like me! Heroic, valiant and resolute!” Ying Huo wasn’t going to miss its chance to diss Li Tianming. But just moments later, after the pair dived into the boiling lake, the little chick hid itself frantically in Li Tianming’s clothes, its little head poking out nervously.

The water was quite muddy, making it difficult to see the bottom of the lake, but Li Tianming was pleasantly surprised to find that his third eye on the dark arm could see clearly even under such circumstances. Its vision was hardly affected by the clarity of the water, giving Li Tianming a good view of his surroundings.

If he was to remove the bandage off his arm right now, one would observe that Li Tianming’s left arm was in fact quite stylish, its eye shining through the darkness of the muddy lake water. This gave Li Tianming’s normally cultured look a sense of demonic charm. With the Crimson Blood Dagger in his right hand, Li Tianming seemed like a soul reaper roaming the dark lake.

He soon reached the bottom of the lake, where the temperature was even higher. Even the rocks were red-hot, suggesting that there were magma veins flowing below the lakebed, explaining the high concentration of fire type spiritual energy in the region.

“The vision is incredible!” Li Tianming reckoned that even if someone managed to dive to his position, they probably couldn’t see a thing. The little chick was in fact unable to see anything around them, and Li Tianming himself was entirely relying on the black arm to know where they were going.

After searching roughly a third of the lake...

“What’s this?” Li Tianming swept away a few pebbles on the lakebed, revealing a well in the depth of the lake! The well seemed to be made out of some kind of bronze, the marks on its surfaces hinting at the rich history it may have.

The opening of the well was sealed off by a mossy green slate. It seemed to be firmly locked in place, and they found no ways to pry it open. Furthermore, the well was extremely well hidden, and it was hard to imagine anyone finding it without using something like Li Tianming’s third eye.

“Ooooooh, an ancient sealed well, wonder what kind of treasure lies inside.” The little chick imagined after Li Tianming described it to him.

“Look at that, that looks like a keyhole.” Li Tianming pointed at the slate.

“I can’t see for shit dammit,” the little chick mumbled.

“Could the manna be inside?”

“Then we will have to find the key, it’s probably somewhere inside this lake too.”

In his mind, Li Tianming took down the position of this well. It was a large lake, and there were about two thirds of it that he had yet to explore.

After another fifteen minutes of searching, Li Tianming found a faint glimmer coming from the lake's centre! He swam towards it and found a strangely shaped rock lying on the lakebed. The rock was glowing faintly, and Li Tianming could feel that there was something sacred about the rock.

"This must be the key!" Li Tianming was thrilled.

However, the little chick had other opinions. "No, that IS the manna!"

"What do you mean? The shape of this rock fits perfectly with the keyhole we saw on the well just now."

"This is the manna itself. I can already smell its fragrance, what makes you think that I can't tell if this is manna?" The little chick was far more excited than he was.

"Are you sure?" Li Tianming inspected the rock again, before realising that it indeed fit the descriptions of manna that he read in textbooks before. He expected it to be much more well hidden, perhaps inside that well, and not just casually lying in the centre of the lake.

"This must be it, just grab it already." The little chick pressed him on.

"Even if it is the manna, I'm pretty damn sure it's a key to that well too. Perhaps we can find other stuff inside there," Li Tianming pondered.

"Simple, just take the manna then we can try it out," the little chick suggested.

As Li Tianming reached for the manna, he had an ominous feeling. For something so precious, the manna was suspiciously easy to obtain.

"Wait!" Li Tianming stopped in his tracks and observed his surroundings.

"I can sense a wildbeast around!" Apparently the little chick had the same feeling.

As they made one round around the manna, they found two rows of blades emerging from the mud behind their prize. There were more than a dozen blades in each row, each of them more than a meter tall and had algae shrouded over them. Even at a distance, they could tell that the blades are sharp and deadly.

These blades were not wildbeasts themselves, but part of a much bigger wildbeast. There must be a giant creature resting beneath the mud, its length probably nothing short of ten meters. Luckily for Li Tianming, the beast was probably resting, and hadn't noticed the intruders who were already in close proximity.

"Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile, a three-star wildbeast." Li Tianming frowned. The rows of blades were telltale signs of its species.

Indeed, the challenge to get the manna had just began. A three-star wildbeast was comparable to a Spiritsource beastmaster, and they also wielded threatening 'innate abilities'. Li Tianming was just sixth level Beast Vein, so there was no way he could defeat the crocodile in a direct confrontation. In fact, it was way scarier than Liu Qianyang, and even the Spiritsource stage Li Tianming three years ago would be no match for it.

"If we can't win with brawn, then we have to win with our brains." Li Tianming came to a quick conclusion.

The little chick wasn't exactly impressed. "And how do we do that, genius?"

"I will bait it into leaving the lake, and you make use of this opportunity to steal the manna. Simple as that." Li Tianming explained his plans. They outnumbered the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile, and since wildbeasts were unintelligent creatures, they could easily distract it with a bit of taunting.

"You, bait? What makes you think the wildbeast couldn't catch you?" The little chick questioned.

"What other choice do I have? It's not like you have the balls to go be the bait, you nugget," Li Tianming said, mockery tinting his words.

"What did you say?!" The little chick fluffed itself up angrily. "Say it again, I dare you!"

"You'd be far better as a bait, but too bad you're just a chicken."

"I'll be the bait, and when I come back you better be on your knees thanking me for it!" The little chick hissed.

Truth be told, the little chick was a much better choice than Li Tianming. The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile was strong, but its massive size meant that its movements would be very much hindered in the forest. On top of that, the little chick was capable of flying as well, which meant that it would be very difficult for the crocodile to even reach the little chick. If Ying Huo simply dashed through the bushes and disappeared from its sight, there was probably nothing the crocodile could do.

"So what do we do after that? Are we going to try opening the well with that manna?" The little chick asked.

"We need to meet up first. If you can lure the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile far enough, then we'll have enough time to try that out."

"You can always go down there alone. Ohhh, is it because you don't dare to go inside alone without me?" The little chick sneered.

"Only because I'm worried you'd get eaten by the crocodile." Li Tianming rolled his eyes. In his opinion, they should refrain from splitting up — there were still enemies from the Lightning Manor around.

It didn't take them long to get out of the lake and prepare for their plan. Li Tianming had already found a hiding spot somewhere nearby, and it was showtime for the little chick.

"Be careful." Li Tianming was confident in its abilities, but reminded it again just in case.

"Watch and learn, I will teach you how to kite like a real master." The little chick was all pumped up and ready. As soon as Li Tianming gave the signal, it dashed into the lake like a bullet, and reached the crocodile in no time.

The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile was deep asleep when the little chick landed on its head. Without hesitation, Ying Huo used its wings to lift up the crocodile's eyelid, and gave its eye a good, hard peck.

“Your mama moaned so loudly last night, but you’re still fast asleep?” The little chick squawked. That was more than enough to wake up and enrage the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile, who let out an earth-shaking roar from the pain in its eyes.

“Come and chase me, you idiot!” Seeing that its plan was effective, the little chick flapped its wings and flew out of the lake. Moments later, the giant black crocodile leaped out of the lake as well. It swept up a massive amount of lakewater, forming water tornados that went straight for the little chick!

Boom!

The water tornado missed the little chick and hit the forest in front of it, causing an explosion of water and wood splinters. That was its innate ability, and could probably kill the little chick instantly if it was a direct hit.

“Fool, you’ll never catch me!” The little chick’s movements were swift as it weaved through the water tornados.

The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile couldn’t understand what the little chick was saying, but it did get the idea that it was being insulted. With another roar, the crocodile charged after the little chick, going deeper and deeper into the forest.

This was the perfect chance for Li Tianming! With the amount of noise the crocodile was making, Li Tianming could infer where its position was. There was enough time for him to extract the manna before the wildbeast returned.

Without a second thought, Li Tianming dived into the lake.

“Manna, here I come!”

Chapter 22 - Killing You Is As Easy As Squashing An Ant!

Ignoring all the waves that the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile stirred up when it left the lake, Li Tianming dived right back into the water, aiming directly at the manna. He swam as fast as he could and approached the manna within a few minutes.

“Got it!” The manna was small enough for him to keep in his pockets. Once his goal was achieved, Li Tianming didn’t waste a single second and swam back to the surface.

So much for having to go through challenging trials to get the manna!

Li Tianming knew he needed to converge with Ying Huo first. The little chick had played the most important part in this mission, and it just needed to shake the crocodile off its tail now. If it did manage to lure the crocodile deep into the forest, then they would have enough time to try and open up that well.

Li Tianming also didn’t want to be separated from the little chick for prolonged periods of time. Beastmasters should always refrain from doing so, as it led to the risk of them being picked off one by one.

Sadly for Li Tianming, it wasn’t the little chick, but danger that found him first.

“Who are you?” A girl dressed in blue appeared in front of him. She was a bit younger than him, her eyes were the same shade of blue as the dress she was wearing. She had a delightful look, the only downside being that she seemed to have a spoilt temperament, similar to Li Xuejiao. If Li Tianming guessed correctly, this girl must have been attracted by the commotion caused by the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile, and was a member of the Lightning Manor.

“The manna is with him!” A deep voice echoed from the distance. Li Tianming looked towards the direction of the voice, and saw two middle-aged men dressed in black. Based on their appearances, Li Tianming suspected the two to be siblings.

“Father, uncle, are you sure?” The girl glanced at Li Tianming indifferently. She stood still on the surface of the lake like a lotus leaf in a pond. From the gentle ripples beneath her feet, Li Tianming could tell that she was pretty strong, possibly stronger than Zhang Zixuan.

“Of course we are sure, just grab it already. The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile may be back any time, and according to the rules we are not allowed to engage the crocodile,” said the man with the longer beard. Beastmasters like them had already reached the peak of their cultivation, and there was no way any member of the younger generation could take a single hit from them.

“Understood.” The girl turned towards Li Tianming and denounced him. “I don’t know where you’re from, but I will make it clear that this manna here belongs to the Lightning Manor. One chance. Leave the manna here and walk off unharmed, or you will never make it out of this mountain alive.”

"Must disciples of Lightning Manor always be so domineering and rude?" Li Tianming thought to himself, as he turned around and left without a single word.

“You have sealed your own fate!” His move angered the girl, who instantly went after him. At the same time, her lifebound beast was summoned from her lifebound space and dived straight into the lake.

“Her lifebound beast is water-type!” From the corner of his eyes, Li Tianming saw a massive blue fish with glittering scales. Other than a few pairs of eyes, there was also a spike protruding out of its head. This lifebound beast evidently excelled in underwater combat, and the lake was the most ideal arena for the girl.

Within seconds, Li Tianming could feel the fish approaching him rapidly. In a single swift movement, the beast leapt out of the lake, its spike aimed directly at Li Tianming’s back!

Splash!

Li Tianming dodged the attack with his movement arts, while the fish plunged back into the lake, ready for a second round of attack.

“Six-Eyed Flying Fish, a five-star water-type fish lifebound beast.” Li Tianming could tell the species from one look at the number of eyes it had.

Li Tianming continued his escape. He wasn’t any weaker than the girl, but he needed to pick a better battlefield than that lake. The lakewater gave a huge boost to both the girl and her fish’s combat strength, and he would be stupid to fight there. Not to mention that he didn’t have the little chick with him, effectively making this a one versus two battle.

“You buffoon! I am Jiang Yilin of the Lightning Manor, and both my father and uncle are respected members of the Lightning Manor! If you do not stop and return the manna right now, your whole family will suffer the consequences of your action!” The girl threatened, seeing that all of the Six-Eyed Flying Fish’s lunges had missed. Meanwhile, Li Tianming had already made it onto land.

“Do you think you are safe on land? I am at eighth level Beast Vein. Killing you is like squashing an ant!” Jiang Yilin sneered as she too reached the shores. Behind her, her Six-Eyed Flying Fish had taken to the air. It could fly with its giant fins, so land or air combat was not an issue for it, just that it was not as strong as in water.

“How dare you!” Realising that words were not sufficient to make Li Tianming drop the manna, Jiang Yilin drew her Aqua Blood Longsword and dashed towards Li Tianming. She saw no point in convincing him when she could just kill him and take the manna from his corpse.

Her sword flashed out rapidly, sending out fierce blasts of sword ki at Li Tianming.

It was the Cascading Waterfall Sword Art! An advanced beast-ranked sword art, the move aimed to have sword ki raining down on her opponents as if they were standing under a waterfall.

At the same time, the Six-Eyed Flying Fish used the bestial art version of the move, the ‘Cascading Waterfall Strike’. The spike on its head was as sharp as a bestial weapon, cutting through the air with enough speed to shatter a giant rock!

Jiang Yilin was at eighth level Beast Vein — she was reaching the peak of the stage, and had power matching Liu Qianyang’s. But Li Tianming had an abundance of Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki running in his body right now, thanks to the resources he obtained in the mountain, and was definitely up for a challenge.

As usual, he held his Crimson Blood Dagger in his right hand, and his dark arm was clenched into a fist. After the previous fight, Li Tianming had gained a better understanding of his left arm that was covered with black hexagonal scales. If the pincers of the Blue-Tailed Scorpion couldn’t even scratch its surface, it meant normal bestial weapons couldn’t deal any damage to it, his own Crimson Blood Dagger included. With that, his dark arm could be used not only for dealing damage, but also for shielding him from most kinds of attacks.

Things were looking rough for Li Tianming who had to take on the two of them at once, but he himself was confident of his strength on land! As the Six-Eyed Flying Fish swooped towards him, Li Tianming used his Ghost Steps to dodge the strike and dashed towards Jiang Yilin. The girl met him head-on without fear, as she had already prepared her Cascading Waterfall Sword Art, showering Li Tianming with a hail of sword ki.

Li Tianming’s expressions were as calm as ever, raising his left arm to block Jiang Yilin’s Aqua Blood Longsword!

Clang!

The sound of metal clashing echoed through the forest. Li Tianming could barely feel any pain on his left arm, as if it was nothing but a bite from an ant. However the impact from the attack had traveled from

his arm to the rest of his body, throwing him off balance momentarily. After all, that was a eighth level Beast Vein stage attack.

However, Jiang Yilin was dumbfounded. She intended to cut off Li Tianming's arm, but to her shock it barely made a scratch! That was definitely enough to tear his arm off even if it was coated in metal!

Alas, there wasn't enough time for her to figure out what had happened. Li Tianming had blocked her attack and was ready to strike back.

"Is that all you have? Then it's my turn now!" In a fraction of a second, Li Tianming had launched his Bloody Soul Hunt, a move that could dominate anyone from the Beast Vein stage! All Jiang Yilin could see was a crimson flash blinking towards her, as she dodged as fast as she could. Even so, she felt a burning sensation on her rosy cheeks, the Crimson Blood Dagger scarring her face and slicing part of her hair off.

"You bast..." Before she could curse Li Tianming, he had already punched his left fist out using Dragon-Mammoth Heavy Strike. She tried to block it with her palm, but her attempt was futile and the strike landed straight on her abdomen.

BAM!

Blood flew out in an arc, as her body got launched by the impact. But before the knockback could launch her backwards, Li Tianming had already grabbed her by the waist and spun her around. With her back towards him now, Li Tianming pointed the Crimson Blood Dagger at her throat and used her as a human shield.

The Six-Eyed Flying Fish's Cascading Waterfall Strike was about to hit Li Tianming, but at this rate it would kill its own beastmaster first. With an awkward midair twist, the fish diverted its direction just in the nick of time. It then crash landed onto the ground, its sharp spike buried deep into the rocky surface of the mountain.

The battle was over! At just sixth level Beast Vein, Li Tianming pulled off a one versus two with a landslide victory and even managed to hold Jiang Yilin hostage. He decided to be smart about it this time, considering how he let Zhang Zixuan go the previous time and ended in more trouble.

"You have no idea what you are doing, plebian. You may be able to fight, but do you have any idea what Lightning Manor could do to you when they know that you injured me?" Jiang Yilin hissed, her face still distorted from the pain in her abdomen.

"Just shut up already." With the Crimson Blood Dagger controlling her life and death in one hand, Li Tianming grabbed her jaws with the other. Jiang Feiling was not done cursing at him, but with her jaws being clenched she could only make weird gurgling noises.

"That's enough." As expected, the two middle-aged men appeared before them. Both of them were staring at Li Tianming with intense killing intent. If he hadn't kidnapped Jiang Yilin, they would have shredded him to pieces already.

"Boy, you're still young, and you have no idea the power behind us. If you know about the Lightning Manor, you'd be crying and begging for mercy by now." Jiang Yilin's father, Jiang Tao, spoke in a gravelly voice.

“Nah, it’s quite hard to make me cry.” Li Tianming smiled.

“Oh, then you may die now.”

Chapter 23 - Fortune Is Found Amidst Danger

Just as the two were about to take action personally, a jade pendant appeared in Li Tianming’s hand.

“The royal clan’s jade pendant! A green Vermilion Bird represents Princess Qing!” Jiang Tao was stunned. Li Tianming had never closely inspected the pendant before this, and gave it a look. Indeed, there was a green Vermilion Bird on it. Supposedly, Vermilion Bird lifebound beasts were a truly noble bloodline, all six-stars at the minimum!

“I’m Princess Qing’s subordinate. Is there an issue with me taking this manna?” Li Tianming asked. These people all didn’t know who he was, which gave him leeway to play such tricks. It was quite effective. Someone who was ‘Princess Qing’s subordinate’ would have impressive backgrounds themselves, and was definitely not some local bumpkin from around here.

“That explains your combat strength.” Jiang Tao gritted his teeth, but his eyes betrayed his uncertainty.

“I’ve memorised your faces. If you dare fight over this manna with me, would you like to know what will happen when we return to Ignispolis?” Li Tianming asked mildly.

“Young sir, you must be joking. Our Lightning Manor would never dare. However, may I be so rude as to inquire about the identity of your father?” Jiang Tao asked.

“My dad? He’s a big shot, you definitely know him.”

“Which expert may he be?”

“Take a guess!” Li Tianming waved the jade pendant dismissively and pushed Jiang Yilin out. “Girls shouldn’t be so violent, liking to kill and fight so much. Scandalous!”

Jiang Yilin turned white with rage, but she didn’t dare voice her discontent. After all, even her father feared that jade pendant.

“Bye bye!” Li Tianming swaggered off with the manna.

“Dad, we can’t let him go! What if that jade pendant was something he picked up!” Jiang Yilin said urgently.

“Impossible. Princess Qing would never lose such an item. Only someone she values much would be bestowed the royal clan’s pendant! How would that boy have never been afraid of us from start to end if he wasn’t secure in his backing?”

“So what? We’re going to let him walk away with our manna?” Jiang Yilin said indignantly.

“What else? He was the one who snatched it from the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile after all.” Although he was angry too, there was no way for him to vent.

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Soon after Li Tianming left, another three people rushed over to the lake's shore. The two parties exchanged a look.

"You got the manna, Jiang Yilin?" The speaker was a delicate and pretty young man riding on a Lightning Bolt Cheetah, which quickly positioned itself in front of Jiang Tao's group.

"Hello, Uncle Jiang." The newcomer was Liu Qianyang. He blocked Jiang Yilin's path, but didn't forget to greet Jiang Tao.

Along with him was Flamehaven governor Li Yanfeng, as well as his new wife, Liu Qing, holding hands together.

"Why has Uncle Jiang shown himself in the open?" Liu Qianyang asked, slightly dissatisfied. When the younger generations were fighting over manna, the elders shouldn't show their face and instead just protect them from the shadows.

Jiang Tao already wasn't in any good mood after losing the manna. "A variable has appeared. The manna was taken by an outsider."

"How is that possible?" Doubt flashed across Liu Qianyang's eyes.

"An outsider? This is the wild as well as Flamehaven territory. Why would there be an outsider here?" Li Yanfeng asked. They had come over after hearing the Razor-Backed Crocodile as well as Li Yanfeng had been aware that this lake was their destination. However, he hadn't expected to hear such a commotion just as he was about to arrive.

"It was a young man who claimed he was Princess Qing's subordinate. He had obtained the manna from the lake and my daughter couldn't beat him. I was just about to take back the manna before making a final decision on how to handle this when he took out Princess Qing's pendant." Jiang Tao sighed.

The other party had a strong background, and Lightning Manor's test for the younger generation this time round had ended up becoming a giveaway for outsiders. A senior of Lightning Manor had found the manna, but he hadn't taken action, leaving it to the juniors to fight over it.

"How strong is he? What's his lifebound beast?" Liu Qianyang's face was getting uglier by the moment. He had been determined to obtain the manna, and had feared no competitor. However, this conclusion was like a bucket of cold water poured on him.

"He didn't use a lifebound beast. I suppose his cultivation would be roughly mine." Jiang Yilin kept her head lowered as she spoke.

"If you don't believe us, chase in that direction. He just left." Jiang Tao suddenly cut in.

"That so?" Liu Qing and Li Yanfeng gave each other a quick glance. Seeing was believing after all, and the group of three hurriedly made their way in that direction.

"Dad, why did you let them go? It's going to be troublesome if Liu Qianyang gets the manna."

"No choice. We have to let them meet the young man. How else am I going to explain myself after this? If I have no one to back up my testimony, they may even believe I privately stashed away the manna."

“Anyway, if they snatch away the manna, that’s offending the princess,” said Jiang Yilin’s uncle.

Jiang Yilin nodded. “I understand.”

“How is that young man’s strength compared to Liu Qianyang?”

“He’s definitely weaker with Liu Qianyang, even if he didn’t use his lifebound beast just now. Liu Qianyang has broken through to Spiritsource after all. The person just now relied on that strange armour on his left arm to beat me. His beast ki might have been scary as well, but it wasn’t invincible.”

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After leaving the lake, Li Tianming looped around to avoid being followed. Using the mysterious connection he shared with his lifebound beast, he felt the little chick approaching. The link also let them know each other was safe.

The little chick appeared from the thicket, chortling. “So, bro, got the manna? I’m telling you, I led that croc on a wild chicken chase this time. That lumbering thing couldn’t even see the feathers on my tail!”

“Pipe down.” Li Tianming hurriedly stopped him. He wasn’t sure whether anyone was following after all. “How far did you lure the crocodile away?”

“It shouldn’t take long to return to the lake. Why?”

“I encountered people from Lightning Manor after obtaining the manna. I managed to get out using the princess’ jade pendant.” Li Tianming said thoughtfully.

“Then what are we waiting for? Let’s skedaddle back to Flamehaven!” The little chick was already salivating after seeing the manna.

Li Tianming frowned. “If we leave like this and you refine the manna, we’re not going to have a chance to look at that well again. Let’s go back to it. Fortune is found amidst danger.”

Li Tianming wasn’t quite ready to give up on the well despite the circumstances.

He had met up with the little chick, the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile had yet to return and Jiang Yilin’s group was probably no longer hanging around. All the cards seemed to line up nicely for a chance.

“My third eye has an advantage inside the lake. As long as we go in, I don’t think they can find us.”

“Then let’s go, go, go! This is exciting!” It really didn’t know what fear was. It too wanted to see if the manna could open the well.

After making a giant loop back to the lake to avoid being followed, they discovered the crocodile indeed still wasn’t back, while no one was around anymore. They quickly dived in. The lake was huge and their entry caused no disturbance.

But just as they entered, Li Tianming noticed a youth riding a Lightning Bolt Cheetah appear at the shore. “Liu Qianyang.”

Li Tianming watched him, but he definitely didn’t notice Li Tianming.

Then, Li Yanfeng and Liu Qing appeared. The bewitching beauty was dressed in tight fitting clothes that showed off her curvaceous figure. Red Twill Mountain itself already had a hot climate, and her appearance only added to it.

“We didn’t find Princess Qing’s subordinate. Did Jiang Yilin point us in the wrong direction?” Liu Qianyang said irritably.

“Possibly.” They had returned to try and ask Jiang Yilin more questions, but they were no longer around.

Li Tianming thanked the heavens that he had made a loop and made a narrow escape, or else he would have been caught.

Then, something more fun happened. At this moment, on the far side of the lake, the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile happened to make its way back at this moment, and it immediately noticed the manna’s absence.

Alas, the Lightning Bolt Cheetah Liu Qianyang was riding was both a first-rate and large beast. It instantly aroused the crocodile’s ire, which bellowed as it charged into the lake, leaving a spray of foam in its wake as it blitzed towards the cheetah!

Chapter 24 - Identity Exposed!

The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile’s return was nothing but a pleasant surprise for Li Tianming. The more ruckus it caused, the safer he would be. The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile had identified Liu Qianyang as the thief, and was ready to tear him into pieces. As for Li Tianming, he was safely hidden in the lake where no one could find him.

The Lightning Manor had intended the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile to be part of the trial too. Thus, Li Yanfeng couldn’t interfere with the battle. As such, Liu Qianyang was in for a rough fight.

“Ha! Sucks to be him!” The commotion outside was getting louder, but that didn’t stop Li Tianming from diving deeper into the lake. Having been to the well once, he didn’t take long to find it this time.

Ignoring the commotion above the lake, Li Tianming produced the manna from his pocket, and inserted it directly into the keyhole.

Clack! The manna fitted into the keyhole perfectly with a crisp sound. The manna was indeed the key to open this well!

“What’s gonna happen next?” The little chick was curious.

Li Tianming was equally curious, but he didn’t lower his guard. For all he knew, the well may contain monstrosities beyond his imagination.

Moments later, a slit appeared in the middle of the slate, opening up rapidly to reveal the well’s interior. A moment later, Li Tianming saw a pitch black vortex at the bottom of the well, and before he could react, the vortex had sucked him into the well and devoured him completely!

Seconds later, the slate closed back up, sealing the well as if nothing had ever happened here. Yet Li Tianming had completely vanished, gone from the world. As long as he didn’t leave the well, he would have plenty of time to refine the manna.

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“Sis, save me!” Liu Qianyang was almost in tears. The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile was determined to hunt him and his lifebound beast down, and it was close to achieving its goals. The Lightning Bolt Cheetah had borne the brunt of the crocodile’s wrath, its body covered in blood from the scratches by the crocodile’s blades.

“I think we have to step in.” Liu Qing’s heart ached when she saw her brother being destroyed by the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile. According to the Lightning Manor’s rules, the moment the two stepped in, their disciples would be disqualified. That was why they had refrained from helping unless it was absolutely necessary.

“Hmm.” Li Yanfeng nodded. As the leader of Flamehaven, he was a reputable master from the southern borders of Vermilion Bird after all, and his level of cultivation was unmatched in the region. The Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile was no different from a chickling before his power.

Li Yanfeng pointed out his finger, and a flicker of white flame appeared on his thumb. With a flicking motion, the white flame shot towards the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile, piercing through its head. The crocodile was still chasing after the Lightning Bolt Cheetah when it got hit by the flame and collapsed on the spot, its body still sliding forward due to its momentum.

Even before its body came to a complete halt, the white flame was spreading from its skull to the rest of its body, engulfing the beast with flame in seconds. A minute later, the three-star wildbeast was completely wiped off from the face of the planet. Strangely, the flora and fauna around it was perfectly fine, as if the white flame could not hurt them at all.

“Yanfeng, that was awesome! Wow you really are so strong.” Liu Qing exclaimed.

“Piece of cake. I will go search for that ‘Princess Qing’s subordinate’, you focus on healing Qianyang for now.” After instructing the two on what to do, Li Yanfeng turned and left. Before this, he was reluctant to use his power to find the person as it was against the rules. But now that he had already killed the Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile, he might as well forget about the rules and find the thief.

“I think it’s fine if you interfere. The rules were meant for the disciples of Lightning Manor, and since it was an outsider that took it, we can decide on our next course of action after snatching it back.” Liu Qing suggested,

“Alright.” Li Yanfeng was confident of his capabilities. But there was no way he could have imagined that it was Li Tianming who robbed them of their manna.

“Sister, we cannot let this person run. This is my only chance!” Liu Qianyang cried as he stared at his blood stained lifebound beast.

“Don’t worry, your brother-in-law will get that person.”

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It took Li Yanfeng a couple of hours to return, and even then his expressions were stern.

“Yanfeng, where’s the person?” Liu Qing questioned.

“Gone.” Li Yanfeng was clearly unhappy with the results as well.

“How could that be? Don’t you know every crook and cranny of Red Twill Mountain? You can’t even find a teenager hiding here?” Liu Qianyang’s voice was filled with bitterness, as he yelled at Li Yanfeng in disbelief. What about his manna?!

“Calm down!” Liu Qing gave her brother a fierce stare. Liu Qianyang was losing his mind over the manna, and if he knew that the person who took it was hiding right in the lake beside them, he would probably puke blood on the spot.

“I have searched everywhere, and I couldn’t find this person. He must be quite good at hiding.” Li Yanfeng narrowed his eyes. “Either that, or Jiang Tao made this person up to trick us.”

“He won’t dare to, he’s not the type to play dirty and break the rules.” Liu Qing shook her head.

Hearing the conversation, Liu Qianyang got even more agitated. “Then stop wasting time here and keep searching!”

Not only did they find the manna or the person who took it, he also got a beating from the crocodile. Liu Qianyang was holding grudges against his brother-in-law by now.

“Find Jiang Tao and Jiang Yilin, and we can ask him what that young man looks like.” Li Yanfeng came to a final conclusion.

“Fine.” Liu Qing agreed, as the three of them reluctantly left to find the other groups.

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In half a day’s time, Li Yanfeng met up with Jiang Tao’s group again. Following a series of arguments, the three of them had no choice but to believe that there were indeed a ‘Princess Qing’s subordinate’ around who took the manna and eluded Li Yanfeng’s capture.

A day later, the six of them ran into another family of three, consisting of the Zhang Chong couple and Zhang Zixuan.

“What’s with that sulky look, who got the manna?” Zhang Chong could tell that something went wrong.

“The manna was located in ‘Mirror Lake’ atop that hill, guarded by a three-star Razor-Backed Colossal Crocodile. By the time we reached it, a random boy had already taken it away.”

Zhang Chong was flabbergasted. “A random boy? Even if our younger ones couldn’t overcome him, why don’t y’all just take it back? How can you let a stranger touch our Lightning Manor’s treasure!”

“That boy had Princess Qing’s jade pendant, do you dare to touch the princess’s subordinate?” Jiang Tao rolled his eyes.

“Princess Qing!” Zhang Zixuan gasped.

“Did you see Princess Qing around?” Surprised by Zhang Zixuan’s reaction, the six clueless members stared at him anxiously.

“Yes we did, and what did you say? A young boy, with Princess Qing’s jade pendant?” Zhang Chong was in shock too.

“Do you know that person?” Li Yanfeng inquired.

“Here’s the story: A few days ago, we ran into this boy...” Zhang Chong briefly explained the dispute between Li Tianming and Zhang Zixuan.

“After Princess Qing brought the boy away, she even gave him the jade pendant? What’s so special about the boy for the princess to treat him so well?” Zhang Chong was still trying to fully comprehend what had happened.

“Have you all seen this boy? Are there special any features about him? Or could he really just be a plebian from nearby?” Li Yanfeng’s brows were twisted into a single line.

“It’s hard to describe what he looks like.” Jiang Yilin’s group had run into the boy too.

“He has a little chick as a lifebound beast. A tiny yellow one.” Zhang Zixuan supplemented with more details that he could remember.

“What!” The Li Yanfeng trio jumped up in shock. A month ago, a particular little chick had left them a strong impression, and it was quite impossible to find another lifebound beast as special as that one.

“Are. You. Sure?” Liu Qianyang was breathing heavily, his face as red as an apple. “Describe his looks in greater detail.”

Jiang Tao and Zhang Chong each took their turn to describe the young man, and they came to a conclusion as all the information came together.

“Li Tianming, it must be him! Li Tianming!” Liu Qianyang could not understand, how someone that he had despised so much could possibly spoil his plan and ruin his trip to the Red Twill Mountain!

“Isn’t he just at seventh level Beast Vein? How did he defeat Zixuan and Yilin then?” Liu Qing was still doubtful, despite all the evidence that was pointing towards the truth.

“He reached Spiritsource before, and has some degree of battle experience. He must have used some tricks to get the manna.” Li Yanfeng stared into the distance. His mind had went blank momentarily when he heard that name earlier on, and even now, his voice was still a lot coarser. Li Tianming, his own son, coming to spoil his plans again and again!

He had already promised Liu Qianyang to get the manna for him, but Li Tianming was here to disturb him yet again. If Li Tianming managed to get the manna, what would Liu Qianyang think of his brother-in-law then? A governor that let his own son ruin his plans not once, but twice?

“What’s next?” Liu Qianyang was so pissed off that he couldn’t even control the disappointment in his voice.

“He will eventually return to Flamehaven, and when that happens we just have to stop him halfway. Rest assured, he is the last person I will hand the manna over to,” Li Yanfeng hissed, looking towards Flamehaven’s direction.

“Why would he return if he had gotten the manna?” Liu Qianyang tossed out the question that the rest of the crew had in mind as well.

Li Yanfeng did not respond to that. He had no intention to tell them that the sickly Wei Jing was still in Flamehaven and Li Tianming needed to pick his mother up.

“Did you mention that this boy used a blood pact to get himself a one-star wildbeast?” Jiang Tao asked.

“That is correct.”

“Then there’s nothing to worry about. No one-star lifebound beast could refine a manna. This boy’s efforts are futile.”

That sentence made Liu Qianyang a lot calmer.

“Even if we don’t find him on the way back, he will make his way back to Flamehaven within a week’s time.” Li Yanfeng finally managed to appease the group, bringing the discussion to an end.

Chapter 25 - Great Fortune: Godsoul Canon!

Li Tianming tumbled downwards after being sucked in by the black vortex. “Where am I?” He immediately scrambled to his feet to find himself inside a chamber. The chamber was surrounded on four sides by black walls, while the stone ground was also particularly sturdy. However, the ceiling had a bronze passageway — it was likely to be the well.

“I should be below the well.” Li Tianming examined his surroundings. He found a grand total of two items in the hidden chamber. One was the manna that had fallen in with him, while the other seemed to be a sphere made of flawless white jade, giving off luminescence.

It was thanks to the sphere that the chamber wasn’t cast in complete darkness.

“Know what this is?” Li Tianming summoned Ying Huo out of his lifebound space. There was definitely something strange about the sphere, so he didn’t dare act too rash.

“There’s something here?” The little chick circled one round around the sphere. “Yep, a strange thing alright. Hand me the manna, I’m itching to get on with it!”

“Right here?”

“Where else? Your father’s still outside. Who knows if they’ll start coming in later.” The little chick rolled its eyes.

The process of manna refinement would primarily be executed by the lifebound beast. During the process, Li Tianming only had to stand guard. If it succeeded, the next time they cultivated, the lifebound beast’s improved bloodline energy would remould the beastmaster.

“They take me as a one-star lifebound beast, and definitely don’t believe I can refine the manna. However, they definitely don’t know that I’m not evolving, just unlocking some bloodline shackles.” The little chick said smugly.

“Alright, alright, stop bragging.” Li Tianming handed it the manna. He heard that there were many variables that cropped up in refining manna, and the help of seniors in refining it was almost always a

given. There were many incidents of failure throughout history, and some even resulted in death. As a rule of thumb, the younger generation would never try to do it alone. However, Li Tianming was not worried for this Aeternal Infernal Phoenix.

The little chick was as excited as a child getting their favourite toy. “Well, examine the sphere first. I’ll start if there’s nothing else.”

Li Tianming also couldn’t wait and started to examine the sphere impatiently.

“The well uses that manna as a key. If there’s only this white jade sphere inside, its value must be several times the manna,” Li Tianming mused.

“Well, that’s going to depend on whether you’re fated with it!”

Li Tianming nodded. He mentally prepared himself as he reached out to the sphere. It was cool to the touch, but he didn’t feel any sense of rejection.

He raised the sphere to eye level. It was flawless without any markings, no matter what angle he inspected it from. It only seemed to be an ordinary jade without any oddities.

Then, an eye appeared on the sphere without warning, gazing at him. Li Tianming immediately felt the world spinning and melting away, leaving him dizzy. In the next instant, he was transported to a world filled with only white light. Innumerable people seemed to be talking around him from all directions.

“Of within the Wondersky Realm, I reign as absolute sovereign; From within the great unknown, hereward I beckon you forth!” A voice suddenly boomed out and filled the world, each word thundering in Li Tianming’s mind.

There were two pieces of info implicit in this message. First, the message itself definitely came from the owner of the sphere. He called himself the absolute sovereign of the Wondersky Realm. Unfortunately, Li Tianming had never heard of that place. The second portion was more incoherent. What did he mean he had beckoned Li Tianming forth from within the great unknown?

He had come for clear spirit grass, then had come to know of the manna through Jiang Feiling. He found out about the well through his black arm. How was he led here in any way?

“Young man, when you cultivate Godsoul Canon to the level of Skypolarity Eye, the spirit core shall truly open. The path to the Wondersky Realm shall be established, and you may seek my legacy thereward!”

And there it was, another bamboozling string of words.

However, he guessed the ‘spirit core’ referred to the sphere and the eye on it.

Suddenly, a golden mist coalesced in front of him, which reformed into golden words.

“First stage of Godsoul Canon, the Bewildering Eye.” Li Tianming read out loud. The golden script was too long and complex, but every word he recited was indelibly etched into his mind, never to be forgotten. It took him a minute to parse through it all.

“When the Bewildering Eye is mastered, the Godsoul Canon’s second stage can be learnt.”

Li Tianming was still confused, and when he shook his head to clear it, he realised that white world was gone. He was back in the hidden chamber with the white jade sphere, but the eye from before was gone.

Ying Huo stared at him. "What happened, why did you suddenly start reciting some scripture?"

Li Tianming took a while to respond. He examined the white sphere for a long while. Its glow was starting to dim, but nothing he did elicited any further reaction. The inheritance had ended, and perhaps only when Li Tianming made some accomplishments in the Godsoul Canon would there be a reaction.

"Do you know somewhere called the Wondersky Realm?"

"Nope."

"I think I got some good fortune."

"What kind?"

"One called the 'Godsoul Canon'. It seems to be the technique of illusion-type beast masters." Li Tianming said.

Illusion-type lifebound beasts were a rare breed, all of high rank. Supposedly, Liu Qing was one of those rare beastmasters who possessed one. These abilities to cast illusions were impossible to guard against, and in battle, they could be used to confuse the opponent or even take control of them.

"Well, then try it. I'll see how you fare when I'm done with this." The manna refining had already started, but the process still needed some time.

Since it was going to take a while, Li Tianming took a seat, planning to examine the Godsoul Canon's first stage, Bewildering Eye. "This is a technique, not a battle art."

Illusion-type beast masters also had their own illusion-type battle arts, but the Godsoul Canon wasn't one of them. Illusion-type battle arts were based on the foundation of being an illusion-type beast master to use, and ordinary people couldn't use it.

The Godsoul Canon worked by transfiguring the eye to make one become an illusionary-type beastmaster. Such outrageous techniques would be called secret techniques.

Techniques had two kinds. Apart from secret techniques, there were the more standard cultivation techniques like the Darkgold Technique and Aeternal Infernal Codex.

Cultivation techniques helped convert the spiritual energy of heaven and earth into beast ki, make breakthroughs, form the spiritsource and so on. It was the fundamentals, even more important than battle arts. Li Tianming had heard of some specially created secret techniques that could be added onto the base system of cultivation techniques. Today, Li Tianming found one, one that didn't conflict with the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix at all, the Godsoul Canon.

He began to practice it.

“Scary, scary! The idea is to establish ‘illusion-type spirit veins’ in the eye to let beast ki flow through. They’re tiny and they need to cover the whole eye. A slight failure could very well lead to your eye being kaput!”

“The Bewildering Eye needs you to establish a whole eighty-one illusion-type spirit veins in an eye. This kind of thing that needs such delicate work is very dangerous. Those without special eyes basically have no chance of mastering it.”

“But success would lead to the eye becoming a Bewildering Eye. It can still cast illusionary effects even if you’re not an illusion-type beastmaster. It may even be stronger than one! It’s already so complicated. I wonder what stage the Skypolarity Eye that can make the spirit core open the Wondersky Realm is?”

Li Tianming had a premonition that this was a huge windfall. If he could master it well, it would lead to untold benefits. “I wonder how it compares to my Saintbeast War-Soul?”

His sixth sense told him the spirit core wasn’t worth any less.

“From within the great unknown, huh?” Li Tianming felt so many things still felt unknown and mysterious to him. His meeting with Jiang Feiling felt like one of them. He really did have some belief that he had obtained this spirit core not just through luck, but also through its owner’s beckoning.

“Let’s begin!”

Chapter 26 - Back to Flamehaven!

The first step of Bewildering Eye was to establish eighty-one illusion-type spirit veins in the eyes. Each had their own unique shape and would criss-cross with the others. The order and speed of establishment was mightily important.

Li Tianming failed the moment he started on the first. Blood began leaking the moment beast ki poured into the eyeball, bringing unspeakable pain.

“Was this even made for humans?” Li Tianming couldn’t help being suspicious. Bewildering Eye had over ten thousand words to its technique, but the first line alone had left him like this. He might as well just give up on the rest.

His right eye was in incredible pain and wouldn’t be able to withstand a second try. If he forced it, only blindness would follow. Even with his decent toughness, he had nearly lost his right eye and his entire body was shivering in pain.

Li Tianming realised it wasn’t him not being hard-working enough, but just a matter of lacking talent. Why did the spirit core’s owner believe he could succeed his legacy and lure him here?

“And here I was, thinking I had picked up some super duper badass technique.” Li Tianming was a little gloomy, but at that moment, he caught sight his bandaged left arm.

“How did I forget about that eye!” His original eyes might be talentless, but that eye on the black arm was miraculous! It could see clearly in the murky depths of the lake, which meant that that eye may have been the specific thing that was beckoned forth from within the unknown!

He immediately went ahead with attempting the method to run beast ki through his third eye. He had exercised his full caution, but the result left him questioning his worldview. "I guess hard work is a joke in the face of absolute talent after all."

This technique, which his original eyes had failed utterly at, had succeeded with absurd ease when it came to his third eye. He hadn't even familiarised himself with the latter portions, but the process went smoothly without a hitch. He had the feeling even if he closed his eyes while doing it, nothing would go wrong. And thus, the process finished.

Li Tianming looked at that eye and could clearly make out the spirit veins slowly forming. Just like a human body, the eye now had its personal cultivation system. Li Tianming's body had six beast veins opened, while this tiny eye had eighty-one spirit veins. Despite their little size, however, their strength and intricacy was nothing to sneeze at.

The eye had been completely transfigured, the effect like giving a strong man a sharp weapon. The analogy was apt, as Li Tianming's two original eyes were like babies. Giving it a supreme-grade bestial weapon wasn't going to accomplish much. The third eye however, was a strong man that had been bestowed a weapon and cultivation techniques. This combination would only get stronger and stronger.

Now that the spirit veins had been established, the next step was its cultivation. The properties of the Bewildering Eye would be adhered to it bit by bit. The power would be unleashed through eyesight as a medium to affect the enemy.

"This left arm really is outrageous." He had made some mistakes just now during the spirit vein establishment, which had hurt the eye, but he had felt it quickly recover from it, proof of its outstanding regenerative capabilities.

"It really does feel like I'm starting to collect quite a few enigmas. Primordial Chaos Beasts, the black arm and now this spirit core." He really did feel a strong desire to unravel them, and even had a premonition it was his life's calling.

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The next five days were spent by him cultivating the Bewildering Eye and the little chick refining the manna. By then, he felt like he had the ability to confuse enemies just like an illusion-type beastmaster.

The left arm would be of great assistance to him in battle. The Bewildering Eye, powerful physical strength and defense... and more that he needed to unearth.

"Success!" A fireball in the hidden chamber let out an excited whoop. As it dispersed, a mighty aura pressed down.

Li Tianming was looking forward to it. Ying Huo's appearance now was too cute and dumb, lacking the slightly gravitas. It'll only be cool if it reverted to being an Aeternal Infernal Phoenix.

The fire was gone. And thus, Li Tianming's expectant gaze fell on a tender and yellow little chick...

"Damn!" Li Tianming was speechless as he looked at the practically unchanged little chick. "Are you sure you evolved? Why do you still look... you?"

"What kind of tone is that! Can you judge an evolution by its appearance?" The little chick snapped.

"Then? I was promised more badassery! More domineering! What the heck, it's still the same ole chicken!" Li Tianming snorted disdainfully.

"You're just narrow-minded and judging a book by its cover!"

Actually, Li Tianming had noticed its eyes seemed to have six stars now. To an outsider, they would think a six-star lifebound beast was already a premier expert's beast.

"Li Tianming, you just don't know my limits. Such lousy manna can only barely just loosen my bloodline shackles. We need far more manna for me to become a phoenix. Of course, even the current me isn't something a six-star lifebound beast can compare with," the little chick said arrogantly.

The six stars in its eye in fact weren't an indicator of its potential, but just a symbol of its bloodline shackles opening. Of course, its bloodline energy now was stronger than before. That was the purpose of manna. The Aeternal Infernal Phoenix didn't need it to evolve, but to recover.

"Come, come, let grandpappy show you how awesome my bloodline energy is now," Ying Huo said pretentiously.

The first time they had cultivated together, Li Tianming had been given an Aeternal Infernal Body. Any improvement in Ying Huo's bloodline would be reflected in him as well. It was an innate skill of lifebound beasts and beastmasters, where their beast ki was mutually shared during cultivation, allowing Ying Huo's new bloodline energy to transfer to him.

"Incredible!" Li Tianming could feel both his body's power and his talent skyrocketing. The majestic bloodline energy crashed down onto Li Tianming like a waterfall. He got stronger and stronger, approaching the power of a true Primordial Chaos Beast. Others could only dream of such transformations in their lifetime. The burning energy that continued to course through him even ignited the remaining medicinal dregs of the fire lingzhi mushroom the two had eaten.

They began to edge towards the seventh level Beast Vein.

Then the next day, man and chick hit the seventh level together! The magma-like Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki coursed through the thick dragon-like veins of the two, turning them into something like erupting volcanoes.

The effect was especially pronounced for Li Tianming. His Bewildering Eye turned even stranger as beast ki circulated through the spirit veins inside.

"With all the gains we made, the two of us are like whole new people compared to before we came in."

"Try out your Bewildering Eye!" Ying Huo challenged.

"On you?" Li Tianming chuckled. Truth be told, he did want a guinea pig.

"Try me, you nugget!" the little chick mocked.

Li Tianming removed his glove just enough to show the Bewildering Eye, but not enough to reveal the whole arm. Then he abruptly pointed it at the little chick.

Li Tianming operated it according to the technique, activating the eye. Ying Huo's eyes widened slightly as it froze up, staggering back as it looked foolishly at Li Tianming.

Success!

Li Tianming grinned. If this happened in battle, it would present many openings to exploit.

"My goodness, you do make quite the sexy hen!" Ying Huo rolled around on the ground, unable to contain his laughter.

"What?" Li Tianming was confused. When he used the Bewildering Eye, he turned into a sexy hen? How was that possible?

He was uncertain if he could use the eye on himself, so he pointed his left hand at himself and activated it. He felt his vision blur.

The next moment, he saw his left arm turn into an alluring beauty. She had features reminiscent of Jiang Feiling as well as a figure even better than Liu Qing. She played with her hair coquettishly, looking at him invitingly...

"AHHHH!" Li Tianming flinched in pure terror. What kind of godforsaken technique was this? It was all well and good to be an illusion technique, so why did it have to go be some seduction technique?!

"Ahahaha!"

How humiliating.

Still, if he used the hand when fighting against Liu Qianyang and transformed into a beauty, that would give him the chance to... hmm, win.

It was time to go back for his Flameyellow Order. His mother must have been anxious after he was gone for so long. "Li Yanfeng, Liu Qianyang, I'm coming back to Flamehaven!" It was time for the final battle!

Chapter 27 - Trying To Gang Up on Me?

Halcyon Hotel saw pretty good business most days, its three floors packed with customers. But things were different for them today, as there was only a small group of customers on the third floor.

They were no ordinary customers, but reputable guests from the Lightning Manor of Ignispolis! The hotel staff were informed that the governor and his wife were personally accompanying these guests, and officials from Flamehaven were not even allowed to enter the building. That was enough to suggest how important these guests were.

In the past few days, all the households around the region have been ordered to vacate. No one knew why the governor wanted to empty out the area, nor did they understand what the group was waiting for. A curious crowd had gathered a few hundred meters away from the hotel, interested to see what would unfold in the coming days.

Even more peculiar was the fact that those eminent figures all seem to be staring at the same place, a dilapidated courtyard not far away from the hotel. If anyone were to walk into the courtyard now, they would find nothing but an elderly lady lying on a lawn bench in the garden, dozing off in the gentle

sunlight. She was enjoying the final remaining days of her life, just like what she had been doing for the past few days.

Li Yanfeng would occasionally throw a peek at the courtyard too, before quickly diverting his attention somewhere else. For now, he had Liu Qing's delicate hand in his and a faint smile on his face.

"Today is the seventh day, and that guy still hasn't returned. Did he die in Red Twill Mountain?" Liu Qianyang was seated at one side, more agitated than ever.

"He still retained part of his strength from three years ago, so it's quite unlikely he'd die there." Jiang Yilin, the girl that got defeated by Li Tianming back in the mountain, was seated beside Liu Qianyang. In fact, all seven Lightning Manor contestants were seated together. True to their roots, every single one of them had a gallant look.

At one side, the two local talents, Li Zifeng and Li Xuejiao could only hide in one corner, their abilities paling in comparison with the seven.

Other than the seven youths, their parents and guardians were there as well. They had a sour look, considering that they have been doing nothing but looking at the old lady snooze in her lawn chair for seven days.

"Li Tianming is not back yet. Could it be... that his lifebound beast managed to refine the manna?" Zhang Zixuan mumbled anxiously.

"We have ruled out that possibility. The lifebound beast he obtained using a blood pact is just one-star."

"The blood flowing in an one-star lifebound beast is way too feeble to handle the strength of the manna. Let alone the fact that he has no seniors there to help him regulate this power."

"Even if Li Tianming could fight, it's totally because of his past experiences with his previous lifebound beast." The other youths chattered on. The four of them have never seen Li Tianming before, but they heard enough from the rest of the group.

"The only thing we have to deal with is the jade pendant. At least we know the governor won't be helping him." Jiang Yilin stated.

"I don't understand, why would Princess Qing give him, a useless piece of trash who can't go past the Beast Vein stage, her personal jade pendant?" Liu Qianyang spat. He hated Li Tianming for taking away the manna that was rightfully his. To think that back at Zephyr Tower, he barely gave a hoot about Li Tianming, but now that pest was back to give him such a headache.

"We have already received approval from Lightning Manor. The moment Li Tianming returns, the first one who takes him down gets the manna."

"As long as us parents do not get involved and all the fighting is done by the young ones, the manor will help us settle Princess Qing's side."

"After all, it was the Lightning Manor that found the manna first, and if Li Tianming wanted to take it he'd better fight for it."

"Surely the princess can't complain if our kids take the manna from Li Tianming by defeating him."

“Don’t overestimate Li Tianming. If he really had connections with Princess Qing, he won’t end up like a cripple in the first place,” Zhang Zixuan scoffed.

At those words, Li Zifeng and Li Xuejiao couldn’t help but shake their heads. It was a cruel world for those who were abandoned. While the youths from Lightning Manor were discussing what to do with Li Tianming, his own father had no reaction and was instead all lovey dovey with his new wife.

“Our only worry now is if this guy took the manna and went to find Princess Qing instead. Then all our waiting will be in vain.” Zhang Zixuan said.

“That’s not possible.” Liu Qianyang shook his head.

“Why?”

“Firstly, he is a filial son. And secondly, he wanted the Flameyellow Order to return to Flameyellow Scions Institute, in order to take revenge on brother Ting.”

“Huh?” The seven youths stared at each, before bursting into laughter unanimously.

“Revenge? On brother Ting?”

“Haha! Why doesn’t he take a good look in the mirror to see that stupid face of his? Even three years ago, he was nothing compared to brother Ting!”

“Help, I’m laughing so hard right now!”

Amongst all the laughter, Zhang Chong suddenly stood up, a smile creeping up his face. The rest followed his line of sight and found a youth walking towards the hotel! He seemed to be a well-educated person, his look gracious and amiable. Perhaps the most special thing about him was the little chick chattering away on his shoulder.

“His lifebound beast has not evolved!” The group came to a quick conclusion. That means the manna had to still be with him!

Their wait wasn’t fruitless! The Lightning Manor’s new rule was that whoever that snatched the manna from Li Tianming would be its owner. It also meant Li Tianming’s appearance was the signal for the battle to begin.

“Look at that, the manna must be there!” From afar they could see a bulge in Li Tianming’s clothes. Little did they know that that was the Spirit Core he had obtained in the well.

“What are you waiting for, go!” Jiang Tao stared at his own daughter. He didn’t want her to miss this chance.

Before he could finish his sentence, the seven youths had leapt off the third storey of the hotel. They needed to fight Li Tianming together, but deep down inside they knew only one person would get to keep the manna.

A battle was about to begin!

.....

Li Yanfeng's brow was knitted since the boy's appearance. Li Tianming had arrived at the courtyard, and was only steps away from opening the gate when the seven youths halted him.

"Yanfeng, are you feeling sad for him now?" Liu Qing asked gently.

Li Yanfeng shook his head. "He chose this fate for himself. It's nothing to do with me."

"Hm, I'm glad you'd think this way. Once this is over, you can put aside the governor's job for a while and follow me to Lightning Manor. The Lightning Seigneur has already accepted you as part of the family, and will assign you a greater role."

"Got it." Li Yanfeng nodded his head. He had already fulfilled his mission, and he was only one step away from reaching out to his dreams. He would make sure of that, even if it means sacrificing his own son...

.....

Li Tianming had seen the people on the third floor of Halcyon Hotel long ago. All of them, his own father included, had a hawkish stance.

"He knew I'd be back, so he's here to stop me, and help the outsiders to get the manna?" Li Tianming thought. But it wasn't that surprising, considering how Li Yanfeng had disappointed him time and time again, so he shrugged it off a moment later.

The seven geniuses had him surrounded, and he was staring directly at Liu Qianyang too! Ultimately, one of his main goals for returning to Flamehaven was to take the Flameyellow Order back from Liu Qianyang. It has been a month since their deal, and he was ready for the battle.

The Lightning Bolt Cheetah between Liu Qianyang's legs growled threateningly from its impatience, an action immediately mirrored by the six other beasts a second later.

It was stated clearly in Flamehaven's laws that lifebound beasts were not allowed to battle inside the city. Therefore, the noises from the lifebound beasts had attracted many residents to peek from a distance. Coupled with those curious about the governor's reallocation order a few days back, a crowd had already gathered, ready for a good show. Even more would join them later, which was a good thing for Li Tianming.

On the day of the selection, he had failed to properly prove himself. Now that he was surrounded by seven geniuses from Lightning Manor, it was his moment to shine! His blood was beginning to boil, and even the dark arm became so hot that anyone who touched it would be scalded.

Aside from Liu Qianyang and his Lightning Bolt Cheetah, Li Tianming saw Zhang Zixuan with his Blue-Tailed Scorpion and Jiang Yilin with her Six-Eyed Flying Fish. The scorpion's eye seemed to have recovered a bit, which wasn't surprising considering the amount of resources and money the Lightning Manor had.

Other than that, Li Tianming saw four other lifebound beasts, all of them five-star beasts like his Midas.

"Trying to gang up on me?!" Li Tianming glared at the seven pairs with bloodshot eyes.

Chapter 28 - One Against Seven!

A variety of lifebound beasts surrounded Li Tianming right now. There was the Hurricane Swallow, a wind-type avian beast that was constantly surrounded by gusts of wind. The Rumble Rodent, a lightning-type terrestrial beast that excelled in attacking from the shadows. The Mythical Ice Bug, an ice-type bug beast that could freeze its opponents. And the last one was a steelclad-type beast known as the Steelclad Giant Shrimp, its armor impenetrable by many weapons.

Against the seven lifebound beasts of different species and types, the little chick looked so powerless. How could it even stand a chance?

Li Tianming was trapped by a circle of fourteen opponents all staring at him fervently. But why would they be so interested in him when he had already refined the manna?

“Ohhh.” He figured out the reason when he looked down and saw the spirit core in his pocket. So they thought that was the manna!

“Li Tianming, we hereby inform you that this manna is Lightning Manor’s property. The manor has decided that even if you bear Princess Qing’s jade pendant, you shall compete with the seven disciples to contest for the manna. Can you agree on that?” Liu Qianyang was the first person to break the silence.

“Of course! Don’t waste my time, the seven of you can come at me together.” Li Tianming gladly accepted that condition. After all, he returned to Flamehaven today to fight for his pride, and to escort his mother away in dignity. One against seven? He had nothing to fear, and in fact, welcomed it!

The disciples of Lightning Manor obviously saw this as an insult. As prodigies from the Lightning Manor of Ignispolis, they usually wouldn’t even spare a second glance at people with such background.

“Pretty cocky, huh.”

“Don’t bother. He’s always like this. He’ll talk a big game, then run off like a coward.”

“Don’t regret your choice. We were having difficulties deciding on the sequence anyway. From now on, whoever obtains the manna first wins!” Zhang Zixuan proclaimed. His intention was to pick Li Tianming off after the rest had first weakened him, since he knew he couldn’t beat Li Tianming.

“Sorry, what did you say? How’s your scorpion’s eye?” Li Tianming taunted, causing Zhang Zixuan’s face to flush in fury.

“No point squabbling, let’s go.” Liu Qianyang was already in a battle stance, confident that he would be the one to get the manna as the strongest out of the seven.

“Liu Qianyang, is our deal from a month ago still on? Or are you too scared to hand me the Flameyellow Order if you lose?” Li Tianming’s eyes locked onto Liu Qianyang.

“A promise is a promise. And when you lose, you better hand over the manna!” Liu Qianyang replied, dashing towards Li Tianming. He knew that he had an advantage over the other six contestants, which was the Flameyellow Order that Li Tianming desired. Because of that, Li Tianming would definitely focus on him and then he could easily defeat that fool to get the manna!

The moment Liu Qianyang made a move, the other six immediately followed suit. They were all competitors who didn't plan to let Liu Qianyang get the manna that easily. And from Li Tianming's perspective, it was much easier for him to deal with seven enemies that were like loose sand.

"First, don't disturb mother's rest. Second, it'll be good to let more people know who's the real winner of the Flameyellow Selection! And finally, I'll trample those Lightning Manor geniuses, and make Li Yanfeng regret his choice!"

Ever since that fateful day, Li Tianming's goal had never changed. He wanted to get the Flameyellow Order, to walk out of the Flamehaven in dignity with Li Yanfeng personally sending them off. It had been three years, and Li Tianming had enough of being a loser.

With a clear goal in mind, Li Tianming used his Ghost Steps to break out of the siege. Another few swift steps brought him up a rooftop, whereupon he dashed towards Halcyon Hotel. This was too far away from Li Yanfeng and Li Tianming wanted to fight directly on top of the hotel where Li Yanfeng had front row seats.

"He's escaping!"

"Quickly, chase him!"

Man and chick were chased by seven pairs of beastmasters and lifebound beasts on top of the city district. Some of the beasts like the Lightning Bolt Cheetah were so destructive that any roofs they launched themselves off crumbled instantly, even causing one building to collapse. It wasn't long before they reached the Halcyon Hotel, the tallest building in the area. Ignoring the group of adults in the hotel, Li Tianming hopped onto the roof of the hotel.

"Just what is he thinking!" The group of seniors were all puzzled by his behavior.

The seven geniuses caught up a minute later and positioned themselves on the roof. The roof was both wide enough to function as an arena and also tall enough to be viewed by close to half of Flamehaven! It was clear to the spectators that it was him, Li Tianming, taking on seven geniuses of the Lightning Manor alone!

"Good enough." Li Tianming could feel the power flowing through his black arm as he clenched his fist. In his right hand, the hideous Crimson Blood Dagger's sharp tip glowed a bloody red.

Li Tianming focused on his seven opponents, his eyes ablaze with fury. The seven of them had tried to interfere and even attack each other during the chase. As the strongest contestant, Liu Qianyang even had to deal with four of his peers. After all, it was allowed by the rules for the six of them to eliminate Liu Qianyang first before taking Li Tianming on!

"They think it's a game with seven hunters, and me being the only prey! But is that really the case?" Li Tianming could feel that his Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki was even stronger than normal beast ki at ninth level Beast Vein. He was almost, if not just, as powerful as himself three years ago!

"Let's do this."

After dodging a few attacks, Li Tianming's icy cold gaze found its first victim, Zhang Zixuan. The boy who claimed that he would shred Li Tianming into pieces didn't intend to attack, as he wished to pick Li Tianming off only when he was weakened.

Hmm.

When Li Tianming's eyes met Zhang Zixuan's, he could sense his opponent's fear. With a tap on the roof that sent tiles flying, Li Tianming blinked in front of Zhang Zixuan. With Li Tianming's strength now comparable to those in the ninth level of Beast Vein, how could Zhang Zixuan, who was only slightly stronger than Li Zifeng, even stand a chance?

Voosh!

"Zhang Zixuan, you're first!" Zhang Zixuan broke out into cold sweat as he saw the punch thrown towards his face. Before he could even dodge, Li Tianming's fist had already found his face.

Wham! Zhang Zixuan's nose sank into his face, and blood splattered all over the place!

That was the first scream that would be heard from the roofs of Halcyon Hotel today. The seniors on level three first saw Zhang Zixuan falling off the building with blood trailing from his nose, followed by a furious little chick piercing the Blue-Tailed Scorpion's armor in a scarlet ray of light. Before the scorpion could retaliate, the little chick's wings whipped across its face, the force of the slap throwing it far into the distance and slamming into nearby houses.

"Xuan'er!" Zhang Chong's face was as white as chalk. Rage churned inside him as he picked up his son and saw his disfigured face. He had already murdered Li Tianming a thousand times in his mind, but he didn't dare make a move. After all, the Lightning Manor had specifically instructed them that they would be disrespecting Princess Qing if they personally got involved in a fight among the younger generation.

"Oi, if you have other children, stop giving them common names! I can find ten thousand Zixuan, Zihan and Ziqis in Flamehaven." Li Tianming's comment from atop the roof almost made Zhang Chong puke blood. How would Li Tianming know that he took over a week to think of this 'elegant' name!

This first casualty from the battle had already thrown the spectators into confusion. The citizens of Flamehaven rubbed their eyes in disbelief, thinking that they might have seen wrongly. But no matter how hard they rubbed their eye or shook their head, the result was the same.

"Did Li Tianming, THAT Li Tianming, just kill a Lightning Manor genius in one punch?" They couldn't see much details from a distance, so the only thing they caught was Zhang Zixuan falling off the roof with blood coming out of his head. Little did they know, this was just the beginning!

Li Tianming could see that the rest of the six were still divided, some of them still trying to block Liu Qianyang from Li Tianming. Their infighting brought a grin to Li Tianming's face, since he would have an easier time taking them down one by one.

So far, only one of them had gotten rid of his competitors and made his way to Li Tianming. Amidst all the confusion, he probably didn't even notice Zhang Zixuan being knocked out by Li Tianming.

“A Hurricane Swallow?” The first thing Li Tianming noticed was the lifebound beast. Before he could even see who the owner was, the swallow flapped its wings and sent a burst of wind in his direction. The gust even ripped off many of the roof tiles, shooting them at Li Tianming like hundreds of razor blades.

It looked like Halcyon Hotel would be needing a long time to fix their roof...

Chapter 29 - Unstoppable!

“Hey there, swallow, are ya male or female?!” The little chick rushed forward with desire. Relying on its enormous strength, it seized the swallow and gave it a sound drubbing, causing its feathers to fall off.

“AAHHH, mission failure again! Another guy!” Ying Huo raged. The similarly seventh level Hurricane Swallow could only play a part as the one beaten up. The other lifebound beasts couldn’t help it in time before it was pecked full of bloody holes. Shrieking miserably, it fled.

Its master was a young man dressed in green with a pretty face, exerting control of the surrounding wind as if he was their favoured child.

“Die, Li Tianming!” He looked incredibly elegant with a longsword in hand. His sword strikes were fierce like the winds of a tempest. Alas, no matter how pretty they were, they didn’t make up for the fact that he was the same as Li Tianming, seventh level Beast Vein. And that was no challenge at all to Li Tianming who could fight two levels above himself!

Li Tianming directly leapt into the flurry of attacks as he used his left hand to seize the longsword.

“Impossible!” The young man’s face fell as his longsword was immediately locked in place.

“Shoo!” The next moment, a slap on his face sent him on the expressway down Halcyon Hotel’s three floors. His parents only just managed to catch him before he landed, saving him from a grim fate. The two experts from Lightning Manor had grim faces, but what was most insufferable was that they could only watch on! Still, they couldn’t understand how Li Yanfeng’s son could be so strong.

Didn’t Li Yanfeng claim he only had the strength of a seventh level Beast Vein? They immediately shifted all their anger to Li Yanfeng, as they felt that he was definitely trying to mess with them. When they looked back up, they saw Li Tianming was still continuing his one-sided abuse.

“So, you just have to be this strong to be called a genius in Lightning Manor?” Li Tianming’s mocking words filled the area.

The remaining five no longer dared to continue their infighting. They were starting to have an inkling that Li Tianming wasn’t easy to deal with, but it was already too late. Apart from the ninth level Liu Qianyang, three were eighth level and the last was a seventh level girl.

The girl took one look at Zhang Zixuan’s injuries and then said, “Well, I quit. Have fun.”

And with that, she fled, her Mythical Ice Bug hot on her heels.

Four were left!

“Are those really geniuses of Lightning Manor?” The citizens were stunned silly. To them, Lightning Manor was a superpower that could crush Flamehaven with a casual breath.

How could Li Tianming suppress them so easily? Wasn't he kicked out of the governor's manor like the dog that time by Liu Qianyang?

"Let's stop the internal fighting and deal with him first. We'll decide after we get the manna," Jiang Yilin was shaking. She was clearly aware Li Tianming hadn't been this strong before. She had to stop herself from quaking in her boots when she met in the eye. After all, they were down to four.

"Together!" Only Liu Qianyang could still be considered calm. It was to his advantage if Li Tianming was stronger, as it made him a tough nut that only he could crack. He may have made a strong show, but it was still within his acceptable boundaries.

Under his command, the four geniuses and their lifebound beasts, the Lightning Bolt Panther, Rumble Rat, Steelclad Giant Shrimp and Six-Eyed Flying Fish encircled him and approached him from four directions. Immediately, the beastmasters executed martial arts while their lifebound beasts unleashed bestial arts, cutting off all of Li Tianming's escape routes!

However, was it really a successful suppression? Li Tianming turned into a blood-coloured blur as he used his supreme beast-ranked art. Fast. Precise. Vicious. The Crimson Blood Dagger stabbed forward using the Bloody Soul Hunt. The Rumble Rat's master was shrouded in electricity, but that proved no obstacle at all as the dagger sunk into his stomach!

Another person tumbled off the roof and into his parent's embrace. His beast immediately fled the battlefield, returning to its master's side.

"Another one!"

"Is that his guts poking out?"

The Flamehaven citizens couldn't see clearly if those geniuses had perished in battle, but that didn't stop their gasps of amazement.

"Next!" Li Tianming's voice seemed as if it drifted out from a nightmare.

Blood leaked from holes rent in the Steelclad Giant Shrimp's shell from the little chick's claws, while its beastmaster was nearly killed by Li Tianming's Bloody Soul Hunt. His erratic and agile movement arts left weaker opponents no chance to retaliate. The fifth genius fell off the roof, his beast following him in retreat!

"Another one dead!"

"My goodness!"

They didn't know none of them had died as to Li Tianming, steamrolling them was sufficient.

He didn't need to look at Li Yanfeng and the rest of the higher levels of Lightning Manor to know how ugly their expressions were. Ugly at how strong he was!

In the blink of an eye, seven had been reduced to Jiang Yilin and Liu Qianyang.

"I surrender." Jiang Yilin was still smart enough to tell from how Li Tianming felled her two same level peers that she would be next. She didn't care if it was a loss of face as she jumped off the roof and returned to her father's side. She hugged her father's arm, her face pale as her legs trembled.

The entire third floor of Halcyon fell into a deathly silence, except for the wails of the genius beastmasters in their parent's arms.

Li Zifeng and Li Xuejiao, who were hiding in a corner were stupefied. Li Xuejiao tried to bring her cup of tea to her lips for a sip, only for a tile to fall from the ceiling onto her head.

"Embarrassing," Li Zifeng sniggered.

"Like you're much better. Take a look in the mirror at how pale you are."

"How was I supposed to know he'll become this strong? Do you think dad's words, that he's stuck in Beast Vein for life, are true?" He no longer put much stock in those words when he saw Li Tianming's performance.

The members of Lightning Manor also had rather ashen faces. They had expected taking the manna from Li Tianming to be like taking candy from a baby, and the main event to be the internal conflict after.

However, reality had given them a slap on the face! Li Tianming had gone on to solo seven by himself. Four had suffered humiliating defeats, two had conceded and only Liu Qianyang was left.

"Brother Feng, what's going on?" Even Liu Qing was confused. She had come to Flamehaven believing everything was all according to plan, only for some minor character to wreck her plans again and again. Now, she was also rather worried for Liu Qianyang.

"Relax. Li Tianming is older, and did once hit Spiritsource. He also has abundant battle experience and a lot of combat techniques. A slightly spectacular final stand is ordinary. However, have faith in Qianyang! He's a bona fide ninth level Beast Vein stage. As for Li Tianming, every bit of strength he uses will never recover." Li Yanfeng was the calmest present.

"Still, Qianyang is going to have to try his best. This battle is also very useful to his long-term growth. Overcoming this difficulty and obtaining the manna will make his prospects limitless," Li Yanfeng continued. Still, his words didn't stop Liu Qing from looking at the roof anxiously.

On the roof, Li Tianming was facing off against Liu Qianyang under the watchful gazes of tens of thousands people. This was the stage he wanted, and he was now the main topic of conversation for half of Flamehaven. From now on, no one would ever say he had challenged Liu Qianyang a month ago only for face. He had used his actions to shut them up!

However, Li Tianming wasn't done yet. To him, seven Lightning Manor geniuses were just the warm-up.

Liu Qianyang carried himself with a confidence similar to Lin Xiaoting as he rode the Lightning Bolt Cheetah, as if he were the master of all life. Looking disdainfully at Li Tianming, "Let me be blunt. The manna is useless to you and even if you get the Flameyellow Order, the Flameyellow Scions Institute will NEVER give you entry. You want to go back for revenge? What a joke."

“That lifebound beast you got through a blood pact has the same lot in life as you. Is trash, and forever will be. Since that’s the case, become my stepping stone.” Sparks danced in Liu Qianyang’s eyes. He had never held fear for Li Tianming from start to finish.

“Even if all I can use it for is as paperweights, I’m still taking them from you.” Li Tianming chuckled, but the fire in his eyes told a different story.

“Anyone can talk big, like you from three years ago. Unfortunately, you’re destined to be a cripple. It’s only through crushing you that I can make you despair and return to your rightful place as a street rat.” Liu Qianyang drew his weapon.

Li Tianming frowned when he saw the weapon, as he could tell this bestial weapon was different from usual.

Bestial weapons were crafted with spirit ores with heavenly patterns as their base. They were further strengthened by adding elements such as spirit fire and spirit wind, as well as lifebound beast blood. There were many types, ranging from offensive, defensive, movement, support and so on. Bestial weapons were split into ten grades, from grade one to grade ten, based on their quality.

Li Tianming’s Crimson Blood Dagger was a grade two weapon, which was already rather precious. There were quite a number of orange heavenly patterns on it, proving that a variety of orange heavenly pattern ores had been used in its forging.

Liu Qianyang had taken out a purple chain that reached four metres in length. Each of its purple links had lightning and purple flames flowing on its surface. This meant that spirit lightning and spirit fire must have been mixed in during its production.

The so-called spirit lightning and spirit fire were actually just lightning and fire that had absorbed much spiritual energy and elemental energy, granting them great destructive power. They were called spirit hazards, and wind, water, earth, ice and others were also candidates to obtain heavenly patterns. Only, it wasn’t easy to see heavenly patterns on them.

Such spirit ores, spirit hazards and spirit herbs were all precious treasures and miracles of the world.

Li Tianming noticed some yellow heavenly patterns on the chain, which made it at least a grade three bestial weapon. It was quite the accomplishment for a beast vein stage beastmaster to be capable of using a grade three weapon.

Liu Qianyang was definitely stronger than expected. But, after what he had accomplished so far, there was no way Li Tianming would fear him!

Chapter 30 - Crazy Demon!

“Li Tianming, be honored that you will be the first person to ever taste the fury of my Thunderfire Chain.” Liu Qianyang held the recently acquired chain in his hands, staring fervently at Li Tianming. He was the only one in ninth level Beast Vein here, and he took pride in that talent of his!

While the Thunderfire Chain was looped around his arm for now, it was likely that Liu Qianyang would be using it as a whip. Considering its capacity to tangle its foes, it was even more deadly than a regular

whip. The grade three bestial weapon instantly attracted voices of envy and admiration from the audience, with most people suspecting it was too big an advantage for Li Tianming to overcome.

“Don’t think Li Tianming can take this one down...”

“Forget it, his performance today is already quite impressive.”

“Other than that scandal in Ignispolis, Li Tianming was quite a good student. It’s saddening to see the kind of things young people would do for love.”

“But that one misstep was enough to destroy his future. His struggle now is all but useless.”

In fact, Li Tianming could hear a lot of the things being said about him. A useless struggle? He came back here today to show the world that it was anything but a useless struggle. He came back to tell the world that he, Li Tianming, would rise up from the ashes! He had enough with people throwing him looks of pity or ridicule!

That coldblooded man downstairs, what did he think when he saw Li Tianming fight for his honour or his own wife withering away? Li Tianming might not be able to make that man regret all his actions, but the least he could do was to make his father question his choice of picking Liu Qianyang instead. And to do that, he just needed to defeat and shame Liu Qianyang!

“Die!”

This time, him and Ying Huo would have a direct clash with Liu Qianyang and the Lightning Bolt Cheetah!

As expected, Liu Qianyang used his whip art, the Thunder Channeling Whip! The Thunderfire Chain lashed out with a swift and mighty strike, giving the impression that Li Tianming had nowhere to hide. Bam! A few snaps from the whip later, the rooftop of the Halcyon Hotel had collapsed, forcing all those still inside the building to evacuate. Moments after everyone had left the building, the Halcyon Hotel, the tallest building in the area, had collapsed into rubble and dust under the force of Liu Qianyang’s whip!

Even then, the chain brimming with sparks of flame and thunder was still chasing after Li Tianming mercilessly! Many spectators couldn’t help but think that Li Tianming was just another paper tiger who would not stand a chance against Liu Qianyang and his Thunderfire Chain!

“Wimp named Li Tianming, do you still dare not fight me?” Liu Qianyang snickered as the situation swayed in his favor.

“To me, one move is enough.” With his smooth sidestep, Li Tianming evaded a pounce from the Lightning Bolt Cheetah, followed by a lash from Liu Qianyang’s whip. Like a crimson shadow, he kept on dodging within the debris.

As for Ying Huo, it was even bolder. It had made its way onto the Lightning Bolt Cheetah’s back, trying to tear a hole in its body. With its small size, the cheetah was hard-pressed to catch or even attack it.

Bzzz! In defense, the Lightning Bolt Cheetah used its furs to generate electric bolts to force the little chick off its body.

“Stop struggling! Today is the day I’ll drink your blood and feast on your flesh!” Enduring the electric shocks, Ying Huo actually managed to peck a hole in the cheetah’s body and was trying to worm inside. The cheetah even tried rolling around but to no avail.

Within moments, Liu Qianyang realised that there was no point targeting the little chick, and the smarter move here was to attack Li Tianming together with his Lightning Bolt Cheetah. As he lashed his Thunderfire Chain at Li Tianming, the cheetah also swept its long tail like a whip at the fleeing young man. That forced Li Tianming to deal with both the martial art and its beastial art equivalent at the same time!

Li Tianming looked like he was on the downside, but as he said, he only needed to use one move for the entire battle. And now, he had found the perfect opportunity to strike!

The crimson shadow suddenly changed his course and dashed towards Liu Qianyang, his left arm tanking multiple hits from the Thunderfire Chain. That force would be enough to rip off anyone’s arms, but Li Tianming’s remained perfectly intact.

Liu Qianyang was stunned to see his attacks not taking effect, and even his whip became slower because of his shock. At that precise moment, Li Tianming grinned and raised up his left hand, where both Liu Qianyang and the Lightning Bolt Cheetah could see the centre of his palm.

Bewildering Eye!

In that split second, both Liu Qianyang and his Lightning Bolt Cheetah’s eyes became dull, and even their body froze momentarily on the spot.

“Sister.....” Liu Qianyang muttered, his pupils hazy and his tone perplexed.

“Scumbag!” Li Tianming of course knew that the Bewildering Eye would cause its victims to see the person who they desired the most, but he never expected that person in Liu Qianyang’s case to be his very own sister! Was this how rotten these so-called ‘prestigious’ families were?

Ethics aside, the use of the Bewildering Eye had given him that one chance he needed to end the battle. Before Liu Qianyang could recover from his illusion, Li Tianming had already punched out his left fist with a Dragon-Mammoth Heavy Strike, aiming straight for Liu Qianyang’s face.

BAM!!

The sound of bones cracking echoed through the city. A month ago, Li Tianming swore to punch Liu Qianyang’s stupid face, and now when he had the chance to do it, he wasn’t going to show any mercy! It was a blow even stronger than the one Zhang Zixuan received, not only breaking Liu Qianyang’s nose but even threatening to snap his neck!

“Help me, sister! HELP!” Liu Qianyang felt as if he fell off heaven and went straight to hell. The impact of the punch had fried his brain and wiped out any morale he had left. As blood and snot flowed across his face, he just couldn’t understand. How the hell did Li Tianming create an illusion of Liu Qing? If anything, illusion arts were his sister’s specialty. Just how??

Alas, Liu Qianyang never got a chance to voice his doubts. The sensation of blood flowing in his mouth had reduced him to a trembling mess, only capable of desperate screams for help. In fact, peeing himself was not off the cards right now.

The events unfolding at the Halcyon Hotel was beyond any of the spectators' wildest dreams.

"Liu Qianyang, how do you like this?" Li Tianming was like a demon looming over him, ready to harvest his soul. The sheer terror made Liu Qianyang fall to his knees, his vision blurred by his own blood and his voice hoarse from screaming.

"You have won, Li Tianming, just let me go now. Please, I have made a mistake, spare me, I don't want to die here." Liu Qianyang was afraid. He knew that even if Li Tianming dared to kill him, Li Yanfeng and Liu Qing would take revenge for him. But what good will it do when he would already be dead? He could feel Li Tianming's wrath, and no one could save him if Li Tianming decided to end his life right now.

Liu Qianyang didn't want to die! Kneeling on the floor, he begged for Li Tianming's mercy. Hell, he would even kowtow and lick Li Tianming's shoes if he still had the strength to.

At that moment, Liu Qianyang could feel cold chills from head to toe. The blurry image of the man standing in front of him would appear in every single nightmare he had for the rest of his life. As for the memory of him crushing Li Tianming at Zephyr Square a month ago, it seemed so ephemeral, like a dream. But for him, that dream had ended.

"NO! I beg you, don't kill me! I'm the useless one, I'm worse than an animal, don't kill me please!" Liu Qianyang howled while trying to wipe off the blood from his face, not realising that it just smeared his face even redder.

"But what if I insist on killing you?" That line was enough for Liu Qianyang to let go of his bladder completely, and warm fluid began to trickle down his pants.

As for Li Tianming, he had already made his way behind Liu Qianyang. The Crimson Blood Dagger was pressed against Liu Qianyang's neck, ready to slit his throat anytime!

On the other side, the little chick also made use of the Lightning Bolt Cheetah's delusions, drilling deep inside the cheetah's body. It was like a woodpecker, pecking on the cheetah's spine and eventually cracking it. The cheetah fell to the floor, unable to even stand up!

"Still dare to act so cocky in front of grandpappy chicken? Next time, I'll peck off your manhood!" Having completed its mission, the little chick took to the air valiantly, like the king of all beasts!

The battle was over! All that the audience could see now was a struggling Liu Qianyang held by dagger's tip, and a rolling Lightning Bolt Cheetah with a little chick trampling it. It all happened way too fast, and no one, not even Li Yanfeng, could understand how Liu Qianyang suddenly got defeated.

A dead silence enveloped Flamehaven, broken only occasionally by the jeers of the little chick and Liu Qianyang's cries. Everyone's eyes were glued to Li Tianming and his lifebound beast, still shocked at the results of this battle. For a good minute or so, not a single soul moved.

Li Tianming threw a glance at the courtyard. Amidst all the fighting and the commotion, Wei Jing had merely flipped herself on her lawn chair and was still snoozing off. He smiled, thinking of how relaxed Wei Jing must be. What he didn't notice was the tear rolling off her cheek.

That tear, however, was a tear of joy. Within this one month, Li Tianming had finally proven himself not only to be worthy of the Flameyellow Order, but also that he was back to take back everything he had lost three years ago! Defeating Li Zifeng was just a start, and when he had taken down the seven disciples of the Lightning Manor, he had shown his true worth. His actions screamed out to Flamehaven, that he was no longer the boy that had been crippled, and he would instead be their pride and glory!

The Halcyon Hotel had collapsed, and Li Tianming stood before the elites of Flamehaven and Lightning Manor, the life of Liu Qianyang still within his control. The look of exasperation on these peoples' faces made Li Tianming want to laugh, to question them "Who is the worthless boy now?"

Of all people, Li Tianming was most interested in Li Yanfeng's expression, and he was not disappointed. It was certain that Li Yanfeng had lost much face today. Not only did the son he abandoned outperform everyone else, he had also failed his promise of helping Liu Qianyang obtain the manna.

"Lord Governor, is it just me or are these so-called geniuses from Lightning Manor all utter garbage? If not why can't they take a single hit from Flamehaven's resident cripple?" Li Tianming was the first person to break the silence, smiling brightly at Li Yanfeng. What would Li Yanfeng think, when he realised the blood-soaked wreck crying in Li Tianming's hand was the prodigy he put so much hope in?

"Release him!" That was the only thing Li Yanfeng had to say. If this happened at Red Twill Mountain instead, he could have silenced Li Tianming even if he won the fight. Alas, it wasn't possible now with so many witnesses.

"Sure thing, but before that, I'll be taking my Flameyellow Order according to our bet. And as per tradition, the governor should announce to the city who's the winner of this year's selection." As he spoke, Li Tianming had already found the Flameyellow Order he so dearly wanted in Liu Qianyang's pocket. The Flameyellow Scions Institute had opened its gates to him once again!

"You already got it, let go of Qianyang, now!" Li Yanfeng could hide the anger in his voice, but he couldn't hide the distortion on his face. As for Liu Qing, she was already trembling, her face pale as paper.

"You forgot the announcement, very esteemed governor." Li Tianming still had his dagger pressed against Liu Qianyang's neck, his eyes never leaving Li Yanfeng. Liu Qianyang tried to struggle, his efforts earning him a tight slap that elicited more cries for mercy.

Li Yanfeng never felt this passive in his life before. He was afraid of Li Tianming because he couldn't afford to let Li Tianming kill Liu Qianyang. Li Tianming had behaved like a crazed demon, and no one would be surprised if he actually did murder Liu Qianyang in cold blood. Making things more troublesome was Princess Qing's jade pendant! That meant Li Yanfeng had been forced to a dead end with no other choices.

"I hereby announce that Li Tianming is the winner of the Flameyellow Order." Li Yanfeng's eyes were burning with anger, but there just wasn't anything else he could do.

The citizens of Flamehaven never imagined that Li Yanfeng who silently evicted his wife and son a month ago would be forced to declare the victory of this very own 'useless' son of his! As for Li Tianming, he knew that this was only the first step of his revenge. He had sworn that he would never leave like a loser again!