

## The Ages 211

### Chapter 211 - Ying Huo and Shuo Yue

It was the first time Tianming had left Fatepath Peak since he'd come. He was now with Qingyu, the two of them seated on her mount and flying away from the Grand-Orient Mountains toward Azure Immortal Mountain. The rivers coursed through the mountain without a single break. Qingyu's lifebound beast was a top-tier eight-star beast that could be considered a saint beast, even higher than Mu Yang's Ink Qilin. Among the youths of the Li Saint Clan, only Li Xuanchen and she had top-tier eight-star beasts. Hers was called the Grandwhite Kunpeng, and it was currently in its pure white roc form. Its white feathers were beautifully long.

Tianming had seen a fair number of kunpengs himself, but this was easily the prettiest one he'd seen, much like Qingyu. It was also a rare moon-type lifebound beast. The moon attribute was similar to Sage Chen's star attribute, but channeled the power of the moon. Qingyu and her kunpeng could train by absorbing moonlight. At the same time, the kunpeng was also of the wind and water attributes, which could be infused with the power of the moon.

This was something those of the Wind Bloodline didn't have. Grandwhite Kunpengs were rare, even in the Apex Branch. The beast was as white as the moon in both its kun and roc forms. While it looked fine during the day, it shone like a jewel in the night. Qingyu's beast was named Shuo Yue. From the name, it was clear that it was a female lifebound beast, and the little chick had fallen for it.

The moment it set eyes on the kunpeng, it began drooling. Shuo Yue had turned its head down to look at the little chick and didn't have the slightest idea it was pining over itself.

"Hehe...." The little chick laughed like a fool. "You won't be able to escape me," it said.

"Imbecile." The kunpeng knew how to speak, having spent much time with humans. Most lifebound beasts were only willing to telepathically communicate with their masters and couldn't be bothered to voice actual sounds with their mouths. It was too much trouble when the alternative was far easier. Tianming's own two talkative beasts were definitely not the norm.

Shuo Yue was giving it the cold shoulder, but Ying Huo wouldn't give up. So what if its body wasn't a good fit for Shuo Yue? It swore that it would successfully woo this beautiful white bird one day.... Or was it more of a fish? Currently, Ying Huo stood atop Shuo Yue's head, letting the wind hit his whole body. There was a hint of ill-fitting maturity on the little chick that was less than half a year old. It was trying to find a domineering pose that would attract Shuo Yue's attention to its handsomeness, but the strong winds only messed its head feathers up, revealing the embarrassing horn on its head, which it tried to cover up in a hurry.

"Darn it! I better continue evolving! What is with this darned horn? My hairstyle's all ruined because of it!"

Not to mention, it had only seven stars in its eyes. It seemed that it would still be mocked by many. Even Shuo Yue had eight stars, and it looked absolutely shiny and beautiful. Its next evolution would make it a saint beast.

Ying Huo, Shuo Yue, our names sound like we're made for each other! it exulted. No, wait, an Aeternal Infernal Phoenix like me is going to have a harem one day. I have to make sure to keep enough love for all of them in my harem! the little chick thought to itself.

Qingyu looked at the mountains as they flew past, introducing them one after another to Tianming. The Grand-Orient Sect was a rather secretive body that had gathered countless techniques and materials after ten thousand years. Even in its current form, it was still comparable to the hegemon of the Grand-Orient Realm, Heaven's Elysium. The Li Saint Clan was merely a single facet of the sect, and couldn't be used to judge it as a whole.

"Big Brother, the council of elders now has the highest authority in the sect. They're mainly located at the central-most mountain peak of the Grand-Orient Mountains, the Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain. It's the most important place in the sect.

"Back then, it was called Kunpeng Sacred Mountain. The Grand-Orient Sacred Hall on the mountain was the old Kunpeng Sacred Hall. However, that hall was moved to Fatepath Peak," she said from where she sat beside him. The strong winds caused parts of her hair to flutter about.

"I see. No wonder the throne inside Kunpeng Sacred Hall was so large."

"That's right. It's the throne of the sect master of the Grand-Orient Sect," Qingyu said.

All of that was now in the past. Currently, apart from the nominal title of sect master, the Grand-Orient Sect basically had nothing more to do with the Li Saint Clan. The sect no longer needed its master anyway, since the thirty-three elders could settle matters on their own.

"Apart from the center-most Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain, there's thirty-three immortal mountains around it, each belonging to one of the elders, and each of which hosts its own faction. Elder Ye Qing's immortal mountain is called Azure Immortal Mountain, and we're inner disciples there," she explained.

The thirty-three immortal mountains surrounded Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain, each of them rising to startling heights.

"What's an inner disciple?" Tianming asked.

"It's a kind of rank used in the Grand-Orient Sect. Disciples of different ranks train in different places, with different statuses and resource support. Disciples are basically ranked based on their talent, but given the current state of the sect, some are able to cut corners. It's basically controlled by the clans at the end of the day."

"Controlled by the clans? Oh, I think I get it now. There were many clans that followed the Li Saint Clan back in the day, so the sect is basically a conglomerate of different clans. While the council of elders is the highest authority in the sect, each elder also belongs to their own clan."

Since the main clan of the sect, the Li Saint Clan, had fallen from grace, the other clans sent their best to form the council of elders and jointly control the sect. None of them wanted to be subordinate to another, after all, so joint rule was the solution.

"How many disciple ranks are there?" Tianming asked.

"Basically four. The lowest ranking disciples are called nominal disciples. These people can't come to the sect itself to train, and I've never seen any, either. They're probably geniuses scattered across the various nations that don't quite meet the standard of the sect. So, they're given a nominal placement in the sect. That way, they can contribute to the sect in some capacity. There's many nominal disciples of different ages.

"Within the sect itself, the lowest ranked disciples are called outer disciples. They aren't allowed to enter the interior of the sect or Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain, but are only able to train in the outer sect. They might not have proper people guiding them in their cultivation either. They have to rely on themselves for cultivation in the ninety-nine mountains outside of the thirty-three immortal mountains. The ninety-nine mountains span a lot of area, and each is ruled by a mountain lord."

It seemed like competition among the outer disciples was definitely the fiercest.

"One rank above the outer disciples are the inner disciples. Basically, the most talented outer disciples that manage to fight their way through countless obstacles and get noticed by one of the elders will be picked to join the elders' own immortal mountains. For instance, we're inner disciples of the Azure Immortal Mountain. Inner disciples are coached by exalted masters, have much better access to cultivation resources, and are allowed to train at Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain, which is easily the best place to cultivate in all of the sect. The reason many outer disciples compete so hard to become inner disciples is to gain access to it."

"What's the highest rank, then?" Tianming asked.

"That would be the elders' direct disciples. That rank belongs to only the most talented people in each immortal mountain. They enjoy access to all the cultivation resources of the immortal mountain. Most with this rank are descendants of the elders' own clans. Those that become inner disciples and eventually get made direct disciples are a very small minority, as each elder only takes in ten direct disciples every decade. That's especially the case for some of the more powerful and younger elders, who are far pickier about their direct disciples."

Qingyu was still an inner disciple. As a member of the Li Saint Clan, she was fighting for the rank of a direct disciple, too, as that would grant her much more status, resources, and power.

"Is Li Xuanchen Yuwen Taiji's direct disciple? Yuwen Taiji's pretty strong, right?"

"That's right. Li Xuanchen's talent is far better than mine. However, the main reason he became a direct disciple is due to his father, Li Xuanyi, constantly pulling the rest of the Li Saint Clan away from the Apex Branch. Perhaps he's working with Yuwen Taiji on that," she said with her eyes full of bloodlust unfitting for her age. The mere mention of Yuwen Taiji elicited such a reaction.

Now, Tianming was an inner disciple, and there was still a rank higher than his. "Do you want to become Elder Ye Qing's direct disciple?" he asked. Currently, the Li Saint Clan only had one direct disciple: Li Xuanchen.

"Elder Ye Qing is no longer taking disciples. However, his son, Exalted Master Ye Shaoqing, stands a chance of becoming a new elder. Some time back, an elder passed from old age, and Exalted Master Ye has the best odds of being made an elder. He had said that if I can reach the sixth level of Unity before I turn seventeen, he'd make me his disciple, and by the time he becomes an elder, I'll automatically

become a direct disciple. That would definitely be good for the clan." She seemed rather optimistic about her prospects.

"You'll definitely make it, Qingyu!" Feiling encouraged. She'd been listening in on the whole conversation, but had remained silent, as she was ignorant of most aspects of cultivation. Tianming couldn't forget that she was around, with his body pulsing here and there from time to time.

"Thanks, Ling'er," Qingyu said, "Big Brother, perhaps you can become the exalted master's direct disciple, too, if you do well. He doesn't have any disciples yet."

"We'll see. I'm currently the junior sect master, so becoming a direct disciple is almost like a demotion, haha!" he joked. They all knew what kind of status the position of junior sect master had, nowadays. Even so, the joke really helped lighten the serious mood.

1. This wasn't explained in the raws at all, and doesn't really work in Chinese. Ying Huo (螢火) doesn't share similarities with Shuo Yue (朔月) like some popular forms of wordplay in Chinese. Best we can guess, it's just the equivalent of a high school girl doodling her name with her crush's last name in her notebook. Thankfully, the Shuo/Huo similarity works in English though, so I'm leaving it in.

### **Chapter 212 - Prime Disciple Yuwen Shendu**

After Tianming and the others had come to the sect, Qingyu started smiling a lot more. Ying Huo's antics often caused her to burst into laughter.

"Big Brother, there's another rank that's higher than direct disciples and doesn't fall under any of the elders. They're allowed to train in Prime Tower, the most sacred place in all of the sect. Those disciples can stand on equal grounds as the elders in the council and are senior to even normal exalted masters," Qingyu suddenly said.

"Oh, a higher rank? What is it called?" Tianming asked.

"Prime disciples."

"Prime disciples, eh? So they're even above direct disciples in rank...." It seemed that these singled out ones held a really high rank. It was probably the equivalent of the elysian children of Heaven's Elysium.

"That's right," Qingyu continued, "every prime disciple is among the most ridiculously talented people in the sect. As long as they're allowed to mature, they'll definitely be as powerful as the elders. A new generation of prime disciples are selected every decade. Each generation usually only has one or two, or even none. However, the current generation who are under twenty is an exception; there's four of them in this generation. All of them are really famous figures in the Grand-Orient Realm. They are, without a doubt, the best geniuses the sect has to offer." Her eyes lit up with adoration at their mention.

"There's four of them? That many? How powerful do you reckon they are?" Tianming asked curiously.

"They probably managed to reach the peak of Unity at sixteen or seventeen, or perhaps even break through to the Heavenly Will stage," she said enviously.

"Hell." They were too overpowered. Tianming had thought that he would be among the top among the geniuses of the Grand-Orient Sect. How would he be able to compete with these prime disciples? They could rival Li Yanfeng at the age of sixteen!

"Did they grow up stuffed full of medicines and herbs?" he said.

"Of course not. Those four are all descendants of elders, and have their personal guidance. Basically, they started cultivating at the age of three. They would've been training for more than ten years by the time they're sixteen." At age three, Tianming was still playing in the mud. "For instance, Yuwen Taiji's eldest son has had the guidance of the third and ninth elders since childhood. Coupled with his saint beast, his talent is unreal. Him becoming a prime disciple was something everyone took for granted."

This prime disciple had come from one of the largest clans in the Grand-Orient Sect. After all, the third elder of the council was Yuwen Fengtian and the ninth elder of the council was Yuwen Taiji. With a grandfather and father like that, along with a saint beast, his rise was almost guaranteed. The elders' ranking wasn't based on their power, but rather their contributions. Every time a reevaluation was called, Yuwen Taiji's rank would advance. Perhaps he would surpass his own father, Yuwen Fengtian, one day.

"What's that prime disciple called?" Tianming asked.

"Yuwen Shendu."

"Now that's an intimidating name," he said with a chuckle. That was Yuwen Taiji's eldest son, and now, Tianming was Li Wudi's 'eldest son'. They were destined to not get along. Yuwen Shendu was probably at the peak of Unity, or even at Heavenly Will. While Tianming was twenty, he wasn't that much older than Yuwen Shendu. Even so, the actual time he'd been cultivating wasn't really that long.

Using age to judge one's talent simply didn't apply to him.

"Are you afraid of the Yuwen Clan?" Tianming asked, seeing Qingyu's gaze shifting.

"No."

"Then what do you want to do?"

"I want to avenge my parents. That's the only thing I ask for in this lifetime of mine," she said.

"That's too hard for now. Let's do something else and take our time," he said, giving her shoulder a pat.

"But Big Brother, could you put your mind to doing anything else before you killed Lin Xiaoting?"

He couldn't, which was why he understood how she felt. "Life is long, and karma will definitely come. These crooks will eventually have to reap what they sow, and we'll make sure they get a good taste of what they grew. When the time comes, I'll stand with you."

"Big Brother, it's fine. I should do this myself—"

Before she could finish, Tianming hushed her and said, "Don't make any decisions yet. We'll see when the time comes."

"Okay!" she said with a nod. Perhaps she saw some hope in his words.

"Alright, let's continue the introduction. Apart from the elders, what other kinds of seniors are there?"

Qingyu sat straight up and said, "The elders have the highest rank, and each of them control an immortal mountain. There's ten hall prefects on each mountain who are in charge of resource distribution, conflict resolution, and normal operations of their immortal mountains.

"Under the hall prefects are the exalted masters who guide the disciples in their cultivation. They may take personal disciples, though their ranks remain inner disciples.

"Each immortal mountain has ten hall prefects and tens of exalted masters, so roughly a hundred or so per mountain. Most of the hall prefects and exalted masters are saints. They form the backbone of the Grand-Orient Sect. Elder Ye Qing's son, Ye Shaoqing, is one of the hall prefects of Azure Immortal Mountain—the highest ranked, in fact. He's also an exalted master at the same time.

"There's another rank in the sect on the same level as hall prefects: the chiefs. They aren't affiliated with any particular immortal mountain, but rather the council of elders. They're the executive branch of the council. There are hundreds of chiefs in the sect, and they all reside on Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain to manage sect operations.

"There's another rank that doesn't belong to any immortal mountain. The Grand-Orient guardians. When most of the outer disciples mature, and aren't eliminated from the sect and don't make the cut as exalted masters, they become guardians. The guardians are the main combat force of the sect. Most of them are stationed within the sect, but many reside in the Abyssal Battlefield. There's also some scattered all across the Grand-Orient Realm to defend the sect branches.

"Additionally, there's ninety-nine mountain lords for the ninety-nine mountains of the outer sect to manage the cultivation of the outer disciples. Mountain lords have the same status as exalted masters."

Tianming now had a rough understanding of the hierarchy and geography of the sect. Not counting nominal disciples, the rank and promotion roadmap starts from outer disciple to inner disciple, then direct and prime disciple. As one ages past a certain point, they would graduate from disciple status. The weaker ones would be eliminated and sent to the branch sects, which were analogues of the Heaven's Sanctum in Vermillion Bird.

The average ones would be inducted into the Grand-Orient guardians, to serve the sect. The talented ones would become exalted masters or mountain lords, and those beyond them became hall prefects or chiefs. The most terrifying talents would join the council of elders. Naturally, without backing from a clan, no normal person could advance to hall prefect or beyond, unless they truly were ridiculously talented.

"This is a rather hierarchical and competitive place, after all," Tianming concluded. It was the first time he had seen a sect that strictly regimented. He figured that Heaven's Elysium wouldn't be that different, and perhaps it was even more convoluted. In other words, Lady Long truly did have a rather high ranking. It was no wonder Ling Yichen would attend her like a servant.

Tianming craved to be on the same level as an elysian child, or prime disciple. However, he had to start from where he was, first.

By now, an azure mountain was in sight. From a distance, the peak of the mountain resembled a deity standing with arms held out in greeting. That was where the name Azure Immortal Mountain came from. There were many buildings scattered around the mountain, numbering in the thousands. Most of the inner disciples lived there; only a few like Qingyu, and others from the Li Saint Clan, would stay with their clans at their respective mountains instead.

Tianming obviously belonged in the latter category, too. Even though he was an inner disciple of Azure Immortal Mountain, he wouldn't even go there often. He reckoned he would mostly be active at Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain and Fatepath Peak in the future.

"Exalted Master Ye is starting his lecture soon. I'll take you along with me."

When they reached the rear of the mountain, they kept their lifebound beasts in their lifebound spaces. Tianming and Qingyu entered a rather wide and elegant courtyard, at the center of which were hundreds of seats, each spaced out from the others by more than three meters. Currently, most of the seats were occupied.

One had to sign up for lectures from exalted masters in advance; taking a spot without doing so wasn't allowed. Qingyu had done so beforehand, and took Tianming to a seat near the corner.

"Even though today's lecture is about Unity, many disciples at the first level of Unity are attending as a refresher. It's pretty effective."

It was no wonder he saw many disciples who were already first-level Unity beastmasters. Only some young boys and girls around the age of fourteen really needed to listen in.

"Big Brother, you're already twenty. Don't you feel awkward attending lectures with thirteen-year-olds?" Feiling ruthlessly teased.

"Nonsense. If I'd been born here, I'd be an exalted master by now," he replied.

"You're bragging again. Any more of that and I fear Azure Immortal Mountain will collapse from the weight of your ego."

"You're underestimating me again. Hehe, there'll be consequences when I end up giving you a sound face-slapping, you know."

"I know you wouldn't dare. Don't try scaring me."

"Well, slapping your face might be a no go, but your butt, on the other hand..." Tianming snickered mischievously. Teasing her was among his favorite pastimes.

"You wouldn't dare! I'll get Meow Meow to scratch you. It'll listen to me."

"Huh, if it dares I'll give its balls a good flicking." The poor cat was still asleep in the lifebound space, completely oblivious. Feeling a sudden chill, it hurriedly shielded its 'jewels' with its tail.

At that moment, Qingyu warned, "Big Brother, Exalted Master Ye is here. Don't make any noise."

He nodded. Currently, his biggest obstacle was breaking through to the first level of Unity. So he wanted to know what this soon-to-be elder Ye Shaoqing had to say about it.

Could he help with his breakthrough?

### **Chapter 213 - Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain, Imperial Ninefold Gates**

A man that looked younger than thirty came out from the inner hall. He was clad in a white robe and held a fan, which enhanced his elegant bearing when coupled with his slender build and gentle expression. Had Qingyu not told him about that youth beforehand, Tianming would think he was just some random scholar.

The man cleared his throat and said, "Inner disciples, I am Exalted Master Ye Shaoqing. I'm here today to expound on some insights into the Unity realm. Today, we will talk about the formation of a unity field. During the lecture, you may not speak without permission."

"Understood!" the disciples chorused. Immediately, the elegant courtyard turned silent. Qingyu sat straight up in an obedient manner. Before Ye Shaoqing started the lecture, he looked at her and smiled before turning to Tianming, whose white hair stood out considerably among the crowd. It was even more eye catching than Qingyu's light grey hair.

Ye Shaoqing must've heard from his father, Ye Qing, about Tianming being a pentabane, and how he managed to defeat someone at fourth-level Unity despite being at Spiritsource himself. It went without saying that he had come to get some insights into breaking through to Unity. It seemed that this lecture of his was going to be a rather challenging one; that notion only fueled his passion for his lecture even more.

"When discussing the Unity realm, we must start from its name. Unity means returning to one form, fusing two into one, or perhaps even three into one. To look deeper into the mysteries of the Unity realm, you must first understand the unary nature, or, the 'oneness'. What does it really mean?"

"A beastmaster and a lifebound beast are distinct entities. Why should they become one? How should they become one? I'm sure it goes without saying that a beastmaster and his lifebound beasts have spent their whole lives together, familiarizing themselves with each other. However, is that truly the same as becoming one?"

"That's right, the uniting aspect of the Unity realm doesn't just refer to fighting together. Instead, their thoughts, mindset, will, and fighting spirit also have to be perfectly fused. The perfect state would have the man become beast and beast become man.

"That's why, to achieve the Unity realm, one doesn't need to consider nexuses or energy synchronization yet. One needs to start from their innermost psyche to strike an emotional resonance with the lifebound beasts! Let everything between you be the same. The birth of a unified whole is the true form of the Unity realm. Unity fields and nexuses are merely applied techniques of the realm. Remember: the key is the mind. Unity of minds is the cornerstone of the Unity realm.

"If the mortal realms are the starting steps of cultivation, the Unity realm is the point where beastmaster and lifebound beast reach the same realm. From that point on, you'll understand their spiritsource abilities far better, and your beasts will comprehend your strategies and power. The Unity realm will also enable you all to observe the natural world to comprehend the basics of the Heavenly Will realm. The Beast Vein and Spiritsource realms are merely prerequisites for that stage. The mortal realms of cultivation are the core foundations. Only after one reaches the saint realm will they embark



on the path of defying fate as their cultivation soars! You must set your ambitions far ahead, but also focus on the present to achieve a genuine understanding with your lifebound beasts."

Ye Shaoqing's lecture was rather decent, and Tianming had no problems remembering the entire thing. Seniors like these had their own insights and opinions, just like Mu Yang. Tianming was a decabane and his mind was clear. In the silent courtyard, he had entered the state of mind Ye Shaoqing was guiding him toward. Mental understanding started from observation; he had to observe his beasts and understand them before being able to become one. Only then could they create nexuses to form a bipolar domain.

Even though all of that was theoretical, it served as a good guiding light for Tianming and cleared many of his doubts before his breakthrough attempt. Usually, a lecture only lasted an hour, but Ye Shaoqing spent double that time today. Tianming took quite a lot of notes from it. It wasn't that he couldn't remember the points; he felt he needed to look it through a few times to truly grasp the intricacies of what was said. Still, he had gained much from the lecture today, and was no longer as clueless about the Unity realm as he had been before.

By now, the lecture was finally over. The other disciples said their thanks and left. Tianming kept his notes away, after giving them a final look. He only wished the lecture was much longer.

"Big Brother, let's go," Qingyu said.

"Sure." Tianming smiled. Going to class with his sister felt rather great. However, Feiling was already nodding off. Only after hearing that it was time to leave did she feel energized again.

"Isn't this the junior sect master?" an odd voice rang from behind just as they were about to leave. Turning back, they saw that it was Li Linghe, Li Xuanhe's son from the Wind Bloodline, who Tianming had harshly defeated.

Tianming had long noticed his presence there. Beside him was a beauty with an enchanting countenance around the age of sixteen, wearing a cold expression of arrogance. She wore a purple dress and didn't skimp on the preparation and makeup.

"What do you want?" Tianming asked.

"Nothing, really. I'm just here to pay my respects to the junior sect master. Meanwhile, let me introduce you to Ye Ziyi, Elder Ye Qing's granddaughter. She's rather interested in you," Li Linghe said.

Tianming turned to look at the girl.

"This is Exalted Master Ye's niece," Qingyu said.

It was no wonder she felt so different from Ye Shaoqing. Ye Ziyi had come over to look down on Tianming, like a lofty noble would a commoner. "You are the one who defeated Li Linghe and became the junior sect master?"

"That's right."

"Did you know he's my friend?" Her gaze turned dark and she tilted her head in an unfriendly manner.

"Friend? Are you sure he's not your pet?" Tianming asked.

"What did you say?!" Li Linghe snapped.

"Guess it's the latter then. So the owner is mad I defeated her dog, is that it?"

"Li Tianming, are you sure you want to cause trouble in my turf? You weren't even there when I messed with Li Qingyu back then. You want a taste?" she threatened.

"So you're the one who regularly bullies my sister?"

"Big Brother, just ignore her," Qingyu said.

Tianming turned back, seeing her with her head lowered and fists clenched. She had cultivated alone in Azure Immortal Mountain, while Ye Ziyi was the boss of the place with lots of followers. It only took one glance for Tianming to know that she was the mastermind behind the bullying. Perhaps Li Chiling and Li Chenlei were her minions, too. Li Qingyu was someone who avoided conflicts, but thanks to her family situation, people would often mess with her for a quick ego boost.

"That's right. I've messed with her hundreds of times since childhood. What can you do about it? I'm not going to let you off just because you're the junior sect master, either. It's common knowledge that the junior sect master is even lower than the outer disciples, after all," she said with a gleeful tone. Her minions cheered at the insult, relishing in their shared sense of superiority for landing a dig on the junior sect master.

Even though it was rather pointless, such a proud, arrogant girl really deserved a few slaps in Tianming's book. But in consideration of her status and the fact that Elder Ye Qing had helped him out, he decided to let it go. He noticed that Exalted Master Ye Shaoqing was looking at them from afar.

Ye Ziyi stepped forwards and reached out for Tianming's arm. "I wanted to make Li Linghe the junior sect master so he could go into the mausoleum and tell me what's inside! Yet you ruined my plans and even latched onto my grandfather to come to my Azure Immortal Mountain? I don't believe you're a pentabane. Show me."

A girl like that was no doubt brought up wrong. She was even more spoiled and fearless than Wei Lingxuan. Someone like that would never be anything more than an immature child in Tianming's eyes. He turned to Ye Shaoqing, for they were on his turf and whether he could thrash his niece depended on him.

Ye Shaoqing suddenly said, "Ziyi, get out. Don't come to my lecture if you have nothing better to do.

"Uncle!" she snapped, having lost face from being chided. Her minions were all around her to see it.

"Buzz off, or I'll make you," Ye Shaoqing pressed.

Ye Ziyi was stunned, her face crumpling into a dissatisfied scowl. Being humiliated in front of her friends caused her to flush so hard it hurt. Her pent-up rage was about to gush out in a torrent of tears. All she had done was mock the junior sect master a bit, yet her own uncle didn't even give her any face. He wouldn't butt in to stop her like that before!

"Go play in the mud, little kid," Tianming said. Since Ye Shaoqing didn't care, Tianming didn't either.

"Just you wait," she hissed, then stomped away.

"She has issues," Tianming said helplessly. He hadn't even done anything to her to earn her hatred. It appeared this was expected for the junior sect master. Was this the general treatment he would get from the whole sect? If so, he was going to have a tough time. A look at Ye Ziyi's expression as she left told Tianming that the troubles were just beginning, but he reckoned he wouldn't need to do anything about it. Given what he knew about Elder Ye Qing and Exalted Master Ye Shaoqing, he believed that the Ye Clan wasn't a group of unreasonable people.

"So, you're Li Tianming?" Ye Shaoqing said, appearing before him.

"Yes, Exalted Master."

"Can I see your bane-rings?"

"Definitely." Tianming knew that he was definitely curious about it.

"Not bad. They do look genuine. I'm rather curious to see if you'll reach the third level of Unity in half a year," he said with a smile.

"I'll try my best."

"How was the lecture?"

"I understood a lot, and know which way I should be striving now," Tianming said.

"Not bad. Guess my extra hour didn't go to waste. You seemed pretty attentive during the lecture." He'd seen how Tianming had even gone so far as to take notes.

"Exalted Master, your detailed explanations were really helpful."

"In that case, I'd suggest you give the Imperial Ninefold Gates a try. See if you can break through to the first level of Unity straight away."

"What are the Imperial Ninefold Gates?" Tianming asked.

"Did Qingyu not tell you?"

Qingyu replied, "Exalted Master, I was about to bring him to Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain after the lecture. I'll give him an explanation when we're there."

"There's many things at the Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain that are really useful to inner disciples, the Imperial Ninefold Gates being one of them. It's also called the 'instant Unity maker'. It's able to suppress your lifebound space. Under that immense pressure, you'll be able to synchronize your mind and energy with your lifebound beasts, which will be really helpful to reaching Unity. You're at Spiritsource now, and only by breaking through to Unity will you have a much easier time. So, go there, young man." Ye Shaoqing gave Tianming a pat on the shoulder.

"I'll head there immediately, Exalted Master," Tianming said with a nod. Ye Shaoqing had turned out to be a decent person after all. If he could become an elder and make Tianming his direct disciple, that would be perfect. Ye Shaoqing was far more frank and direct than the more formal Elder Ye Qing.

"Thank you, Exalted Master," the siblings said in unison.

"Work hard. Also, greet Li Wudi on my behalf," he said, then waved his fan and left.

## **Chapter 214 - The Legend of The Hundred-Star Saint Beast!**

Grand Orient Sacred Mountain.

The main peak towered into the clouds, majestic and dignified. The disciples of the Grand-Orient Sect referred to it as "the sacred mountain" for short. It was the gathering place for the council of elders and the summit where the Grand-Orient Sacred Hall was built, dwarfing the other mountains.

Under the Grand-Orient Sacred Hall were the ten elder halls. Here, the elders unaffiliated with any immortal mountain maintained the order of the sacred mountain.

Only inner disciples and above could cultivate in the sacred mountain, evincive of its myriad advantages. To put it bluntly, the main peak was ground zero for cultivating beastmasters.

"There's many important spots in Sacred Mountain, and the Imperial Ninefold Gates is one of them. This is where disciples break through to Unity and all of its levels. You'll understand the specifics when you get there."

The siblings stood on the Grandwhite Kunpeng, whizzing through the air. Left and right were lifebound beasts wandering all over Sacred Mountain, roaming the land, water, and air. The diversity of these rare beasts was stupefying to the eye.

Tianming's goal today was the Imperial Ninefold Gates. After all, it was personally recommended by Ye Shaoqing.

In the midst of their conversation, the siblings arrived at the sacred mountain, where Qingyu led Tianming to the Imperial Ninefold Gates. Nine gigantic, black stone gates stood abreast, front and back, forming a ninefold passage in a vast square, visible from a distance.

Having withstood the vicissitudes of time, these ancient gates were reminiscent of a bygone era, imposing and profound. Each of the stone gates were a hundred meters tall and over fifty meters wide.

Tianming had an inkling these stone gates were spirit ores with saintly heavenly patterns, like Li Shenziao's tomb. Sure enough, he soon came across saintly heavenly patterns stretching across the first stone gate. Due to the existence of the patterns, the stone gate resembled a towering mountain that tested each disciple with its sheer pressure.

On the second gate were two saintly heavenly patterns. By that analogy, the next gate would have a third saintly heavenly pattern. At the very end, the last Imperial Ninefold Gates would contain nine saintly heavenly patterns, making a total of forty-five patterns.

Despite paling in comparison to the eighty-one patterns on Li Shenziao's tomb, the value of the Imperial Ninefold Gates was evident.

Li Wudi had previously explained that white heavenly patterns were saintly heavenly patterns. And over the past few days, Tianming had inquired a fair bit about saintly heavenly patterns and acquired a basic understanding of them.

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, black, and white. Superior to the rest, the white heavenly patterns are the most profound and insightful, and are classified as saintly heavenly patterns. Any spirit herb, ore, or hazard containing a saintly heavenly pattern has the word 'saintly' prefixed to its name. For example, saintly spirit herb, saintly spirit hazard, and saintly spirit ore are three types of treasures distinguished by the number of saintly heavenly patterns, and not the color. In short, the more patterns, the more precious they are! Case in point, the Imperial Ninefold Gates has forty-five saintly heavenly patterns.

If the Imperial Ninefold Gates was the sect's jewel in the crown, one could only imagine the immeasurable value of Li Shenxiao's tomb. When Tianming had finally comprehended the concept of saintly heavenly patterns, he could only admit what a bargain it was to have entered the Li Mausoleum.

But at this moment, that was a distant concern. As an insignificant Spiritsource beastmaster, his goal was to employ the sect's resources to break through to Unity. Beyond that, Tianming would have to explore Heavenly Will for a chance to learn the secrets of Saint stage.

However, those who reached the Saint stage were all elders over the age of forty, such as Ye Shaoqing and Yuwen Taiji, so Tianming was in no hurry.

"Big Brother, it's your first time visiting the Imperial Ninefold Gates. Come with me, I'll walk you through it. In fact, I need to cultivate here as well. I'm just short of breaking through to fifth-level Unity."

With her age and current cultivation, Qingyu's talent placed her on par with direct disciples of the sect, such as Li Xuanchen. This was of great importance to her.

"Which gate will you be using?" asked Tianming.

Among the ninefold gates, most disciples gathered in the first three. The farther behind, the fewer disciples. There was almost no one after the fifth gate.

"I usually cultivate at the fifth gate. After that, only disciples with lifebound beasts can bear the oppression of the gates. The farther you go, the better the effect. However, pushing yourself beyond your limits will cause your lifebound space to collapse. Once it collapses, your lifebound beast will die a miserable death. These are serious consequences."

"I understand," Tianming narrowed his eyes at the last gate. "What kind of lifebound beast would one require to enter the ninth gate? One at Unity?"

"Fourth-order Saint Beast. At present, none of the prime disciples have a fourth-order Saint Beast," she softly replied.

"There are different orders for Saint Beasts?"

Weren't Saint Beasts nine-star lifebound beasts? Seven stars royal beast, eight stars imperial beast, and nine stars saint beast—at least that was how the Vermillion Bird categorized them.

"Of course. There's nine orders for the Saint Beasts," said Qingyu.

"Nine orders? So the strongest are the ninth-order Saint Beasts?"

"Yes."

"How strong would a ninth-order Saint Beast be? What are the cultivation limits of a beastmaster?"

"Forget about ninth-order Saint Beasts. There isn't even a seventh-order Saint Beast in the entire Grand-Orient Realm. Big Brother, surpassing the eight-star lifebound beast is the Saint Beast, and a first- to third-order Saint Beast is the basic requirement for reaching the Earth Saint realm. You'd need a fourth- to sixth-order Saint Beast to reach the Sky Saint realm and seventh- to ninth-order Saint Beast to reach the Emyrean Saint realm," explained Qingyu.

Having recently entered the greater world of cultivation, Tianming was in great need of expanding his humble outlook. "So that's how it is! I was just wondering how certain beastmasters could reach Earth Saint or Sky Saint, while others managed to break through to Emyrean Saint."

In Li Tianming's eyes, a deep yearning blazed. What he wanted to know was, what exactly were the limits for Primordial Chaos Beasts?

"Qingyu, how do you distinguish what order a lifebound beast is?" he queried.

"By the stars in their eyes."

"How so?"

"First of all, a lifebound beast must have nine stars to be considered a Saint Beast. However, merely nine stars makes it a non-ordered Saint Beast. Although the beastmaster is expected to enter Saint realm, his growth will be limited."

"A nine-star lifebound beast is considered an ordinary, non-ordered Saint Beast?" And to think Tianming had once believed nine stars were the limit.

Despite having seen the infinite stars in Ying Huo and Meow Meow's eyes, it seemed like an unbelievable dream, too far detached from reality.

"Yes, first-order Saint Beasts have ten to nineteen stars in their eyes, second-order Saint Beasts have twenty to twenty-nine stars, third-order Saint Beasts have thirty to thirty-nine, and so on."

"I see. So ordered Saint Beasts have double digit stars in their eyes. And ninth-order Saint Beasts have ninety to ninety-nine stars?" added Tianming.

"Yes."

"What about a hundred stars?" His lips curled in a curious grin.

"From what I've heard, the hundred-star Saint Beast is the foundation for transcending the Emyrean Saint realm. But that's the stuff of legends."

Tianming now had a basic idea of the Saint Beast orders. Since a fourth-order Saint Beast was required to cultivate at the ninth gate, his lifebound beasts must have at least forty stars. Unfortunately, both Ying Huo and Meow Meow were merely seven-star lifebound beasts and would easily be crushed under the oppressive force of the gate.

Most of the disciples cultivating in the Imperial Ninefold Gates had first-order Saint Beasts. Second-order Saint Beasts were rare, and third-order ones were almost unheard of.

The Void Kunpeng was born a third-order Saint Beast with thirty stars. Relying on manna for further evolution, the number of stars in its eyes could be increased to forty, making it a fourth-order Saint Beast. Of course, having a fourth-order Saint Beast didn't necessarily guarantee a breakthrough to Sky Saint; it was merely a prerequisite. Actual cultivation was dependent on a variety of factors.

Only those in Unity cultivated in the Imperial Ninefold Gates. Transcending that, one would cultivate elsewhere.

Although the prime disciples were a step away from surpassing Unity, they didn't own fourth-order Saint Beasts.

"How long has it been since a disciple entered the ninth gate?" Tianming wondered aloud.

"Thousands of years ago," said Qingyu. "They were all ancestors of the Li Saint Clan's Apex Branch. They were born with Void Kunpengs that evolved into fourth-order Saint Beasts before the age of twenty. Those are the people who are now buried in the Li Mausoleum."

"And aside from the Li Saint Clan?"

"There are none. My father came close, but his lifebound beast was stuck at thirty-nine stars, only one short."

"I see," nodded Tianming.

"Big brother, since your lifebound beasts have seven stars, you should cultivate at the first gate. As long as you don't cultivate at the gates, you won't feel any oppression, but the reverse is also true. Come with me to the fifth gate, first. I'll give you a demonstration before you attempt the first gate," suggested Qingyu.

"Sure!"

Although the first gate was crowded, Tianming preferred to err on the side of caution at the thought of the other eight eggs in his lifebound space. What could crying and regret achieve if his eggs were pulverized into dust by the force of the gates!

Thus, the siblings walked side by side into the Imperial Ninefold Gates.

### **Chapter 215 - A Splash of Green Amidst Myriad Flowers**

The Imperial Ninefold Gates was the most popular training area on Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain, attracting crowds of disciples daily. One even had to line up at the first and second gates. Without a queue, it would be complete chaos.

Usually, the chiefs of the sacred mountain stood guard there to prevent the disciples from getting into fights. This month, for instance, there were two chiefs who shared the same status as hall prefects watching the gates on in shifts; the assignment was nothing short of boring.

Beyond the Imperial Ninefold Gates was a hall. Through the windows of the first floor, one could see a young man and young woman sipping tea as they chatted and looked outside. Upon closer inspection, these youthful people radiated a thick, bloody aura and didn't behave at all like youths in their twenties should.

The prerequisites for one to be made a chief of the sacred mountain was breaking through to the Saint realm. Even the lowest stage of saints, an earth saint, had a minimum lifespan of two centuries. Those that reached that realm in their forties only looked like twenty-year-olds, relative to mortals. Upon breaking through to the Saint realm, one would be reinvigorated to the point their aging would be reversed.

The chief on the left was a man with a huge physique, standing at least two meters tall. He resembled a huge, resting bear. There wasn't a single hair on his scalp, and a scar on his face made his head look rather like a shiny, cut boiled egg from afar. When viewed from up close, however, his fierce gaze immediately suggested that he was no normal person. Each one of the seniors of the sect was a terrifying existence, as far as Tianming was concerned. Even the inspectors from Heaven's Elysium would have to bow to these mountain chiefs, though that was a given since they were mere lackeys. The truly capable ones wouldn't leave Heaven's Elysium for such an assignment.

The sacred mountain chief on the right was quite different from the other. She seemed like a lively young lady; one would instantly be able to tell that she was the pinnacle of beauty with a cursory glance. Though she seemed young, her gaze, and the way she carried herself, suggested otherwise. Everywhere she directed her gaze, disciples would have to bow their heads to her. She was called Ye Yuxi.

"Yuxi, we're holding a banquet to celebrate Shengcheng's thirteenth birthday. Should I reserve a seat for you?" the bald man warily asked.

"No." She crossed her arms and refused without even looking at him.

"Ruthless as ever, huh?" the bald man said with a chuckle.

"Aren't you used to it by now? Yuwen Kaitai, I told you I don't fancy you long ago. Why waste your time on me? There are tons of other women lining up to be yours," she said.

"But they're not my true love."

"Whatever you say." She couldn't be bothered to argue.

Yuwen Kaitai shook his head and smiled, though Ye Yuxi failed to notice the cold look that flashed across his face.

"Your brother is going to become an elder. I heard my dad and elder brother say that there were five candidates, and your brother got eighteen votes. Among them, two are from the Yuwen Clan. You know I spared no effort in convincing them to do so, right?"

"You think he can't become an elder without your two votes? If any of the other pathetic four managed to become elders, it would be too easy. Even I could become an elder," she said, rolling her eyes. Though she was chronologically rather old, her face still looked young and beautiful; even her eye roll still held quite a bit of charm.

"It isn't that clear cut, though. You know that my dad and eldest brother have quite a bit of influence in the council of elders. If it weren't for them, many others would hesitate to cast their votes in your brother's favor. There's no saying who they would've picked."

Ye Yuxi merely chuckled without responding.



"Well, soon, your Ye Clan will have two elders in the council. Congratulations," Yuwen Kaiti said.

"What's the big deal with that? Millennia ago, the Ye Clan's might was easily ten times that of your Yuwen Clan's."

"That's right. And back then, the Li Saint Clan was hundreds of times mightier than us, with your Ye Clan being second to none but them. Hahaha...."

The rise and fall of powers really amused Yuwen Kaiti. "Are you boasting?"

"Oh, no. It's mainly thanks to my brother and dad. I'm merely bathing in their limelight."

Ye Yuxi pursed her lips and took a sip of her tea. She still had a few more days of monitoring duty with Yuwen Kaiti here at the gates; she felt really annoyed about it, to say the least. The way he looked at her caused her to put her guard up.

Currently, the Grand-Orient Sect belongs to the Yuwen Clan! she complained in her heart. The Ye Clan no longer held so much sway in the clan. Perhaps that would improve when Ye Shaoqing became an elder.

She turned her gaze to the Imperial Ninefold Gates and observed the teenage kids advancing on their path towards Unity.

"Let go! Everyone, move aside! Don't block my way!" someone suddenly called out.

Ye Yuxi turned towards the direction of the voice, only to see a thirteen-year-old boy helping a group of young beauties towards the Imperial Ninefold Gates. It was far too crowded, so the youth simply started chasing people away.

Many a disciple who were just about to grasp some insight had their sessions ruined by the youth. It went without saying that they were rather mad about it. But when they saw who was behind them, they could only look down and leave with a look of dissatisfaction and make way for the youth.

"Isn't that Shengcheng?" Yuwen Kaiti said with a laugh, "What a kid. He's only thirteen, yet he has a bunch of beauties tailing him. Let me see... that young lass should be Gongsun Yu, right? And that one's Feng Chiyu, I think. She's Elder Qin Wulie's direct disciple. Those sisters, on the other hand, are called Su Li and Su Tao. Su Tao's only thirteen and is almost at Unity.... She must be the precious granddaughter of Elder Sun Zhen. And the rest..." Yuwen Kaiti continued with a smile on his face.

There were many beautiful women of high status around the handsome young man, making him seem all the more charming, especially considering his age.

"Is being surrounded by a bunch of girls a sign of his talent or ability?" Ye Yuxi asked.

"Of course! It's proof of his charm. This kid really is something... he's even more of a playboy than my brother."

Ye Yuxi rolled her eyes and didn't want to continue talking about that. They were simply not going to come to an agreement on that.

"You'd better watch him well. Don't think he can mess around at the Imperial Ninefold Gates just because his clan is powerful," she warned, referring to how the young man was chasing the other cultivators away.

"It's fine. This is merely a small matter. Those chased away don't have anyone backing them. Those disciples can't be compared to Shengcheng at all, given how he's already at the fifth level of Unity at his age. I'm sure he'll become a prime disciple in a few more years!" Yuwen Kaiti exclaimed.

Ye Yuxi no longer wanted to humor him. Yuwen Shengcheng often hung out with Yuwen Kaiti, so he often threw his weight around on his elder's account.

.....

Tianming wasn't aware of the two mountain chiefs watching over the Imperial Ninefold Gates. Just as he was about to enter the Imperial Ninefold Gates, he encountered a handsome youth that brought a bunch of beauties with him as he chased away quite a number of people in the queue.

"Who is this and why is he so arrogant?" Tianming asked. He could tell that the youth was only twelve or thirteen, yet he was stronger than Li Chiling and even Qingyu.

"That's Yuwen Shengcheng," she said with a squint. While the youth was no doubt handsome—the beauties around him were testament to that—Qingyu hated him with a passion.

"He's Yuwen Shendu's younger brother."

Tianming asked, "So he has good talent for cultivation, which has me convinced. However, what's he like as a person?"

"Well, he's one of the Yuwen Clan.... They act about the same way. You'll get used to them," she said coldly.

Tianming could tell that the girl called Su Tao was about to break through to the first level of Unity. He was currently cultivating at the fourth gate. When she took her seat, the other girls that surrounded Yuwen Shengcheng told her about their own experiences breaking through to Unity.

Yuwen Shengcheng chased away the rest of the disciples, leaving only them at the fourth gate. Judging by how happy and carefree the group seemed, they definitely lived a life with little hardship, given that their clans had the backing of several elders. Those without standing or power stood no chance in joining their circle, though Tianming couldn't be bothered with them.

"Qingyu, are you going to try breaking through to the fifth level of Unity today?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Should I lend Ling'er to you?" Feiling could achieve level six synchronization with Qingyu, after all, which was more than sufficient for cultivation.

"Are you sure?" She knew how it felt to be attached to Feiling.

"Of course," Tianming said. In an instant, he transferred Feiling to Qingyu by the simple expedient of grasping her hand, without letting Feiling manifest in her physical form, the process of which greatly

shocked Qingyu. She had never imagined a person could actually 'flow' from one person's body to another. The moment Spiritual Attachment set in, she felt an infusion of energy. Even though it wasn't as impressive as it was on Tianming, her combat abilities were substantially improved. Her capabilities were improved by roughly six tenths of a level.

"Thank you, Ling'er, Big Brother."

"No need to thank him. He has nothing to do with it," Feiling said. Currently, she couldn't show herself. But when Tianming managed to secure his footing in the sect and had the ability to protect her, perhaps she wouldn't need to constantly stay attached to him any longer.

Without cultivating under the gates, Tianming didn't feel anything special emanating from them. He followed Qingyu through one gate after another, heading for the fifth gate. By the time they reached the fourth, Yuwen Shengcheng spotted them. While Tianming hadn't met him before, Yuwen Shengcheng knew who he was.

"Stop!" he said haughtily, crossing his arms.

### **Chapter 216 - Pentamoon Skybane**

The girls beside him also looked up. They didn't know Tianming, but they laughed at the sight of Qingyu and gave each other smug looks. To think that girls could be so mean among themselves.

"Oh, it's the sect master's daughter."

"You're here to train at the Imperial Ninefold Gates again? Haven't you broken through to the fifth level of Unity yet?"

"To think that you're a member of the Apex Branch with your level of talent...."

"Apex indeed, eh?"

They clung to each other as they talked and giggled. Tianming couldn't help laughing either. "Wow, you're also mocked all the time like I was. It seems that we really are siblings after all."

Qingyu forced a smile. "I'm already used to it." For the Apex Branch to fall to its current state, many people couldn't help but want to kick them while they're down. Not to mention, Qingyu didn't fit in well with the crowd, as she didn't praise anyone she didn't mean to, or spout false platitudes to match the group rhetoric. It went without saying that she would eventually be isolated; female cliques were notoriously complicated. Also, Qingyu was far prettier than they were, which threw jealousy into the mix of already negative feelings.

"It's fine. Prove yourself with your power. It'll be far more productive than wasting time arguing with these people," Tianming encouraged with a pat on her shoulder.

"Okay."

"Who's this white-haired person? Is he only at Spiritsource? Don't tell me he's your boyfriend...." The one who said that was Elder Su Zhen's granddaughter, Su Li. She was tall and slender, but developed in the right places. Despite her young age, she was a rather charming lady herself.

"Who knows?" the rest said.

"Li Qingyu, you haven't done any missions from the Wuyou Faction for quite a while. You'd better watch out or you'll be kicked from the faction by Sister Wuyou. If that happens, you can only go to the Abyssal Battlefield by yourself in the future," Gongsun Yu said.

The rest were still squabbling away, but Tianming and Qingyu already turned towards the fifth gate.

"What's the Wuyou Faction?" Tianming asked.

"All disciples of the sect are free to form their own factions with a leader and administrators. Those factions are free to select their members from the disciple population. Outer disciples generally have their own factions. Factions belonging to inner disciples, however, occasionally accept outer disciples as members.

"The main reason one would join a faction is to fulfill sect missions and go to train in the Abyssal Battlefield in groups. In a dangerous place like that, it's always safer to have more allies to watch our backs. Many factions have a history dating back thousands of years. To go to the Abyssal Battlefield, I joined the Wuyou Faction that's comprised exclusively of female disciples. The faction leader is called Su Wuyou. Back then, the faction was named Fengling Faction, but Su Wuyou was too powerful. She wanted the name changed to hers, and others couldn't do much about it," Qingyu explained.

"Then we'll let your fellow faction members witness your potential. If they say you can't do it, what should you do?"

"Prove myself!" she said with grit teeth.

"Alright. Now, show them what you've got!"

"Okay!"

Tianming just so happened to want to see what the hype about the gates was all about. He sat down in front of Qingyu and watched her begin cultivating. Feiling would definitely be able to help her out, too.

When it started, Tianming could feel it. The gate above him had five saintly heavenly patterns putting pressure on Qingyu's body. At the same time, her lifebound space was also compressed, along with the Grandwhite Kunpeng within it.

Immediately, her Moonlight Field was unleashed right before Tianming's eyes, and moonlight illuminated the area around them. Thanks to Spiritual Attachment, Qingyu's skin glowed subtly. Seeing her trying so hard and resolutely, despite having to endure the pain and suffering, Tianming suddenly had an epiphany. It was rather great to have a sister worth protecting. Back then, he had been quite kind to Li Xuejiao; however, both she and Madam Huang were influenced by others. In the end, Tianming didn't feel this kind of familial bond with them at all.

But now, he could feel it towards someone that wasn't even his real family. This wasn't love; he didn't have any desire towards Qingyu at all, given that he already dedicated himself to Feiling. However, he still didn't want Qingyu to feel unhappy, nor would he tolerate anyone else bullying her.

"Qingyu, we still have a long future ahead of us. I've never had a sister of my own, so from today onward, you will be my sister. I can't promise anything, but at least I'll try to do whatever a big brother

is supposed to. From now on, you have to speak out for yourself, your parents, and the clan. I'll stand together with you as your brother," he passionately said.

"I got it, Big Brother." She was no weak girl. In fact, she was stronger than anyone else. Tianming's words became a lifeline she could use to hold herself together.

"Now that the clan's fallen from grace, we'll definitely suffer the mockery of others. That isn't anything surprising, it's just the way people act. In a world of competition, people don't just get along with everyone for no reason. However, we can't give up because of that. We have to grit our teeth and endure to our last breath. We have to have the courage to fight. Eventually, a victor will emerge. The heavens will definitely reward smart and hardworking people." He said that not just as a reminder to Qingyu, but also to himself. He knew he had boundless talent, but also wanted to warn himself to take each step carefully, without rushing.

The pressure coming from the gate was incredibly fierce. Qingyu was already sweating from the effort and her face was pale, but she still endured. Back then, she might not have been able to hold on for so long. She wasn't a top genius, and everything she had achieved so far was due to her own efforts. But today, with another girl like Feiling, she could open herself up to someone cheering for her from within her body and a brother that stood tall and firm, like a mountain she could rely on, she changed once more. Perhaps fate was cruel to her, but she wasn't one to give up.

This was the inner demon she had to face.

"Qingyu, you'll prove yourself one day! Those of us from the Li Saint Clan don't fear hardship, and we don't surrender to fate! If what lies ahead of us is the hard path, we'll defy fate and carve our own path! This is the will of our clan! I believe that while our clan has fallen, our clan's will still lives within us! Our forebears were so glorious; there's no way we can be trash that other people look down upon!"

The moment he'd entered the mausoleum, he felt the glory of his ancestors when their blood boiled within him. Since he'd inherited their blood, he also had to inherit their will!

"We won't perish without a fight!"

As simple as those words were, Qingyu's body shuddered when she heard them. At that moment, only Tianming noticed that her irises had vanished, leaving her eyes completely white and shooting out a blinding light, just like two round moons.

Tianming thought his eyes were playing tricks on him. The next moment, a dense wave surged forth from her body, greatly strengthening her Moonlight Field. The surge of power caused Tianming's blood to boil until he felt a calm power radiating from within Qingyu's body.

Lunar Eyes? By the time he stood back up, he saw that Qingyu was also standing, her eyes back to normal. She looked at Tianming with a face full of joy; while it didn't seem like much about her had changed, she had broken through to the fifth stage of Unity. Tianming was overjoyed for her success, but why was she so agitated?

"Big Brother!" she cried, and rammed straight into Tianming, almost sending him flying, with her eyes tearing up.

"Big Brother!" she called out once more, rubbing her teary face on his chest.

"Qingyu, calm down." He really didn't know what she was so emotional about. It was just a breakthrough. They weren't real siblings, either. He figured Feiling would give him a sound beating for the intimacy they just showed.

Even so, she didn't let go. "Thank you! Thank you! From now on, you're the most important person in my life!"

"What do you mean, sister mine?" Tianming was flabbergasted. All he had done was give her a hot-blooded speech. Surely there wasn't a need to be so moved by that. She almost seemed like someone who hadn't made a breakthrough in a whole decade.

Pulling her hands apart, he looked at her face that was still tearing up for some reason. All those tears made her hair rather wet, but her eyes radiated nothing but hope.

"Big Brother...."

"Calm down and tell me what happened," he said with a smile.

She stepped back a bit and said, "Look." Carefully, she pulled up her sleeve to reveal her forearm, then stopped for a moment and immediately covered it back up, lest others see. Even so, that was enough to completely flabbergast Tianming. There weren't just three interlocking rings on her arms, but five blinding moon-like rings! It was like a sky with five moons! In other words, she had grown from a tribane into a pentabane!

More shockingly, her rings had changed color, just like the second ancestor, Li Xinghe's! They'd turned from black to silver, and their positions and appearances had also morphed. Not to mention, Li Xinghe was only a tetrabane, with four bane-rings, but Qingyu had five. She was a Pentamoon Skybane!

"Oh, ancestors, have you all gone mad?" Tianming felt that it wasn't a mere coincidence. There were many who believed that the number of bane-rings that appeared on the day their Lifesbane was cured would remain constant throughout their lifetimes, but it seemed that they were underestimating their unique constitution.

### **Chapter 217: The Li Saint Clan Makes A Comeback!**

My mother's talent was considered comparable to an average genius in Vermillion Bird. However, she suffered from Lifesbane for twenty years before awakening three bane-rings! This itself is a change that goes against destiny. And I awakened a bane-ring each day over ten days, which proves the number of bane-rings isn't fixed! Our first ancestor, Li Shenxiao fought against Lifesbane for fifty years, becoming the first person blessed with the gifts of Lifesbane, Tianming thought.

Compared to the rest of the Li Saint Clan, Tianming had no trouble embracing the existence of the pentamoon skybane. Unlike the usual black, interlocked, bane-rings, Qingyu had five silver-blue moons that lay next to each other. Even the first ancestor had only possessed five ordinary bane-rings. Other ancestors were tetrabanes at most, with either bane-rings of different color or different locations. However, none of them had had both changes at the same time. Even so, they enjoyed a great reputation and were once the strongest in the Great Orient Realm!

"Big Brother, how did this happen? Am I seeing things...?" Confusion flickered in Qingyu's eyes, her face frozen in bafflement.

"Qingyu, you're not seeing things. Both your physique and bane-rings have changed, though I can't be certain why this is happening. If I were to make a guess, I'd say the Li Saint Clan ancestors can't stand watching us dwindle and decline any longer. Perhaps they demand we undertake the mission of reviving the clan. After all we were once a great clan, with legendary ancestors. Now that we've fallen to the extent of being bullied, what an embarrassment it is for our ancestors. Thus, the ancestral souls gathered to bless our generation. With this stroke of luck, we must shoulder the responsibility of living up to their expectations!" Tianming contentedly preached.

Reviving the Li Saint Clan, fulfilling their ancestors' hopes, putting their blood inheritance to good use so the clan regained its glory—that was their mission!

Of course, this was all hogwash. Tianming didn't really know what the reason was. His change was most likely related to the effect of the Primordial Chaos Beasts' blood inheritance. As for Li Qingyu's pentabane, he hadn't the slightest idea.

However, Qingyu was convinced.

"Big Brother, I understand! I promise to live up to our ancestors' expectations. I must make good use of my talent!"

Tianming was unaware what sort of seeds his words had planted in Qingyu's heart, seeds that would one day grow into a towering tree.

"That's right," he said. "Come to me if you have any problems in the future. United, we stay strong!"

"I will, Big Brother. For now, we can't reveal anything to others, except for Grandma." Qingyu nodded.

"I only exposed my bane-rings to obtain the position of junior sect master, but your circumstances are different. Try not to attract any attention to your cultivation. If anything happens, you can count on me," Tianming declared, boiling with passion.

Despite Tianming's short time here, there was no doubt the blood of his ancestors flowed through his veins. He had been to the Li Mausoleum and witnessed its glory. The sense of mission he felt was just as strong as Qingyu's.

If the rise of the Li Saint Clan became a reality, perhaps even he would burst into tears from a sense of accomplishment that far surpassed his hate-filled revenge on Lin Xiaoting.

"Do you feel any changes?" asked Tianming.

"My mind is crystal clear, and the problems that troubled me seem so simple now. I know what I have to do to reach sixth and seventh level Unity, as well as correct the imperfections in my battle arts."

The transformation she described resembled the changes that came when Tianming had comprehended the Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven; both perception and ingenuity rose with each day.

"The pentabane sky has also appeared under Shuo Yue's wings."

Just as Tianming had expected, the bane-rings were shared by beastmaster and lifebound beast, whose destinies were tied.

Thoroughly cognizant of Qingyu's physique, Feiling explained that her five bane-rings were comparable to seven of his. Perhaps there were other mysteries to the pentamoon sky that required digging on Qingyu's part.

Tianming glanced at the serious Qingyu, a hint of emotion flickering in his eyes.

"Big Brother, I've taken up your time. Now that I've succeeded, it's your turn to break through to Unity."

Concealing Qingyu's transformation wasn't an issue, since her hair remained light grey. As for her bane-rings, they were well-hidden and wrapped with strips of cloth under her sleeve.

"Yes, I'm going to give it a try. Perhaps I might awaken the pentamoon sky as well!" he laughed.

Qingyu had accompanied Tianming to the Imperial Ninefold Gates, never imagining such a drastic change in her destiny.

They set out for the first gate, where Tianming would attempt to break through to Unity. As they walked past the fourth gate, they bumped into Yuwen Shengcheng with a group of beauties. The ugly look on their faces spoke volumes. Watching Qingyu advance to fifth level Unity was a slap in their contemptuous faces. Qingyu's breakthrough had propelled her ahead of half of these girls, leaving them behind in the dust. Words meant to mock her resulted in the opposite effect.

"Did you just advance?" Gongsun Yu bit her lip. She too was at fifth level Unity.

Qingyu gave them the cold shoulder and continued walking, her blatant disregard making them flush with embarrassment. After all, being ignored before Yuwen Shengcheng was a hard pill to swallow.

"Li Qingyu, I heard that you're marrying Li Jincan. Your husband is both handsome and talented, a peerless Adonis. Yet here you are, showing affection to a young man. Where's your sense of propriety?" chided Su Li, granddaughter of Elder Su Zhen. She stood beside Yuwen Shengcheng, leaning gently against him.

These words were a long time coming; "Handsome and talented" were meant to deride. Everyone knew what a loser Li Jincan was.

"Stop pretending you didn't hear me. Flirting with other men before marriage... isn't that putting a green hat on Li Jincan?" she chastised.

The girls laughed heartily once more, but unfortunately, Qingyu had already left.

"Aren't you upset?" asked Tianming.

"There's nothing to be upset about. I might've been angry before, but I'm different now," remarked Qingyu. "Big Brother, you're right. Only with strength can I prove myself. No one will listen to the weak."

For this reason, she hadn't bothered arguing with Su Li. Once she emerged from the clouds and waved her pentamoon sky for all to see, Su Li would naturally shut up.

"That's my style," chuckled Tianming.

By the time they reached the first gate, the girls beside Yuwen Shengcheng were condescendingly gossiping.



"Who does she think she is? She's about to become someone else's wife, yet she lacks basic manners!" Su Li disdained.

"It's only to be expected of a daughter from that embarrassing family," replied Gongsun Yu.

"So that's why she hasn't received any tasks in the Wuyou Faction. Turns out she's frolicking about with her lover!" Feng Chiyu chimed in.

"How disgusting! She acts all pure and innocent, but it turns out she's that kind of girl," added Su Li.

Yuwen Shengcheng couldn't bear to listen to them any longer. "That's her brother, Li Wudi's illegitimate child. He recently returned to Grant-Orient, and is now junior sect master."

You're all mistaken. The one who's going to put a green hat on Li Jincan isn't Li Tianming, but I. Some words were better left unsaid.

The day of Qingyu's birthday was drawing ever closer.

1. In China, "wearing a green hat" means a man is being cheated on by his wife.

### **Chapter 218 The Real Face Of The Masses**

Yuwen Shengcheng certainly wouldn't speak these words. After all, the girls next to him were descendents of sect elders, and dreamed of marrying him. Those kinds of girls were the most troublesome; nice to look at, but forbidden to touch. Succumbing to temptation would be akin to a lifelong disaster.

In comparison, Qingyu seemed more attractive. What he liked were those cold, indifferent eyes.

"Junior sect master?" Su Li stared blankly for a moment.

"What? I didn't know there was such a position within the sect!" Gongsun Yu voiced her incredulity.

"Li Wudi's bastard? I heard the bloodline of the Apex Branch has long been broken. Could he be an imposter?" Su Li laughed.

"I don't think he's even reached Unity. I'm certain he's here to fool around, even dyeing his hair white. How shameless!" snapped Feng Chiyu.

"You're wrong. The junior sect master is an exceptional genius with the pentabane physique of the Li Saint Clan's founder. He claims to have reached the peak of spiritsource after half a year's cultivation and defeated an opponent of Unity stage four." Yuwen Shengcheng cracked a smile.

"Hmph, was his opponent an old man? From what I heard, the pentabane body is the most heaven-defying physique throughout the entire history of Grand-Orient Realm. Who would believe his nonsense! With such a physique, he could be a prime disciple," added Gongsun Yu.

"You don't really believe him, do you? He's obviously a fool with one foot in the grave. In less than three years, the rest of the Li Saint Clan will be annihilated," sneered Feng Chiyu.

Right then, Su Li's younger sister, Su Tao, broke through to Unity stage one. The little girl jumped up with excitement and rushed into her sister's arms, shouting with glee. Delighted, Su Li turned to her

friends, "Is the junior sect master trying to break through to Unity here? Even our Xiao Tao broke through at the fourth gate, yet the pentabane junior sect master is attempting the first gate? Shengcheng, are you sure he's a pentabane?"

Despite her young age, Su Li's gorgeous smile and seductive figure radiated a captivating air. Yuwen Shengcheng's gaze was riveted on the young woman, his throat swallowing dryly.

In fact, the grandchildren of the sect elders had superior appearances, temperaments and talent—they were the creme de la creme of the Grand-Orient sect, not to mention direct disciples.

Third Uncle said to keep my options open, so I must resist. Yuwen Shengcheng reminded himself to endure the temptation of these alluring young women.

Yuwen Kaitai was his third uncle.

"Whether or not he's really a pentabane will be revealed. All we have to do is watch. The first gate? That's where the bottom disciples of the sect cultivate," remarked Yuwen Shengcheng.

"Shengcheng, which gate did you use to break through to Unity?"

"The fifth gate. I was ten years old," Yuwen Shengcheng proudly declared.

The entire Grand-Orient Sect had taken for granted his appointment as the next prime disciple. From then on, he could catch up with his brother's achievements. Three years from now the selection of the prime disciple would be held. With two elders in the top ten and two prime disciples from the same clan, the Grand-Orient Sect would be at their beck and call.

A pentabane? So what, he doesn't look like much. Only the Yuwen family can be considered real geniuses! Father says that Heaven's Elysium's glorious days will soon come to an end. The future of the Grand-Orient Realm belongs to the Yuwen family! Grandfather will create the foundations while father and my uncles will develop new territories and take charge of Grand-Orient. Big Brother and I will shock the heavens with our might! Yuwen Shengcheng fantasized about the future.

While Yuwen Shengcheng had his head in the clouds, news of Li Tianming's identity as junior sect master was spreading within the sect. In the blink of an eye, every Grand-Orient Sect disciple knew his identity. Since the junior sect master had remained out of the public's eye for quite some time, the disciples stared at him like he was some sort of rare beast as they engaged in idle gossip.

"The junior sect master won't be alive much longer. He's not even at Unity!"

"Shall we bet if he'll last for even a month without dying from embarrassment?"

"Not any Tom, Dick, or Harry can take the position of junior sect master. Hahaha...."

Tianming's response to those vitriolic words was to laugh it off. However, Feiling and Qingyu were gnashing their teeth in anger.

"All beings are the same, influenced by their emotions and worldly desires. In this secular world of mortals, who can escape? Mocking me makes them feel superior and good about themselves. But since they have this sense of superiority, they must prepare to taste defeat." Tianming turned to the girls.

"Tianming, stop blowing your own horn! Hurry up, or Meow Meow will fall asleep again." In his lifebound space, Ying Huo was carrying the sleepy black cat on his shoulder.

"Yes, boss!"

Unity?

Feiling returned to Tianming's body. While the outside world remained chaotic, Tianming returned to cultivating in absolute tranquility. The sarcastic, mocking gazes and haughty laughter gradually faded away. At present, there was only heaven and earth, his lifebound beasts, the Imperial Ninefold Gates, himself—

And an angry Feiling.

The little chick and black cat had both cultivation techniques prepared, the Aeternal Infernal Codex and the Genesis Chaos Codex. Reaching Unity and possessing a Unity field meant there would be a better connection between the beastmaster and lifebound beasts in battle.

With a Unity field, Tianming could gather the spiritual energy of heaven and earth during battle, enhancing the force of his attacks and prolonging his endurance. Advancing from Spiritsource to Unity was a great leap!

"Ling'er, calm down," urged Tianming. Her anger was affecting his mood.

"I'm furious! Those people don't even know you. Why must they say so many unpleasant things?" argued Feiling.

She couldn't comprehend their hearts. This was a world filled with people desperately seeking superiority where he was a nobody, vulnerable to the public's disdain.

"Think of it this way; the junior sect master possesses the ancestors' protection and the immense fortunes of the Li Mausoleum. To enjoy those benefits, I must shoulder the responsibility and mission that comes with my identity. If you want to get here, you must respect the historical mission and historical responsibility that this identity needs to carry. Although they don't know me, I deserve everything. As long as I cultivate in the Grand-Orient Sect in this capacity, insults and frustrations are just burdens I have to bear. It's only fair and to be expected. But not to worry, I'm fearless," Tianming righteously professed.

"Big Brother, you're amazing and so insightful. I feel as if my frustrations are all gone," replied Feiling.

"Tianming, are you done flirting? Meow Meow is starting to doze off!" barked the little chick.

"Right away!"

With that, their beast veins were connected. The Aeternal Infernal Phoenix beast ki from the Infernalsource and the Genesis Chaos Thunderfield beast ki from the Thundersource began to converge and circulate. Tianming was well-acquainted with the Unity portion of these two techniques; in fact, he had made thorough preparations for his breakthrough. Everything was in place but the east wind.

And the east wind he was waiting for was the pressure of the Imperial Ninefold Gates!

During Qingyu's cultivation, Tianming had observed that the oppression from the Imperial Ninefold Gates acted on the lifebound space, crushing, grinding, and stirring like a millstone till it culminated in perfect fusion. Reaching Unity required harmony and integration; the stronger the oppression, the stronger the coalescion between their spirits.

When the two were united in spirit, beastmasters and lifebound beasts shared every experience. This was the essence of Unity.

"Let's begin!"

As long as he cultivated, the pressure would descend upon him!

The three beast kis were activated as Tianming endeavored to create a Unity field with the integration of the three energies.

"Where's there pressure?"

A while later, their faces were frozen in a look of confusion. What about the pressure from the Imperial Ninefold Gates? Was there nothing at all? There wasn't even the slightest vibration in his lifebound space.

"What's going on? Didn't they say seven-star lifebound beasts can only cultivate at the first gate? Why isn't there any pressure?" wondered the little chick.

"I can't, bro. There's no oppression at all. If we continue like this, I'll fall asleep!" The black cat started yawning.

Tianming was just as baffled.

"I don't feel any pressure either. Could the gates be broken?" added Feiling.

If they continued in this manner, Meow Meow was going to fall asleep. Tianming decisively stood up.

Noticing the motionless Tianming, Qingyu asked in confusion, "Big Brother, what's the matter?"

After all, there were countless eyes on him, waiting to witness the power of a pentabane.

"I don't feel anything," admitted Tianming.

"Why don't you try the second gate?" suggested Qingyu.

Thus, Tianming moved onto the second gate under the curious gaze of the other disciples. As soon as he arrived at his destination, the eyes on him turned cold. Perhaps they thought he was showing off.

"Don't they have anything better to do?"

Tianming's heart was a tranquil lake, focused on breaking through to Unity. He was uninterested in meaningless scorn and sarcasm.

Very quickly, he discovered the same situation as the first gate.

The second gate? No pressure.

The third? Still no pressure.

When Tianming arrived at the fourth gate, Yuwen Shengcheng and the girls were still present. Apathetic gazes swept across Tianming's form.

"Junior sect master, are you here to perform monkey tricks?" asked Yuwen Shengcheng.

"Yes, and the monkey I'm trying to fool is you," Tianming exclaimed.

Yuwen Shengcheng's eyes narrowed dangerously. For thirteen years, no one had ever dared speak to him like this.

"How dare you! Don't you know what Shengcheng's position in the sect is?" shouted Su Li.

"And what position is that? Is he superior to the junior sect master?" Tianming retorted.

### **Chapter 219 Dual Supreme Abilities**

They laughed at his lack of self-awareness. Did he really think the position of junior sect master held water?

"Is this a provocation?" A chill was burning under Yuwen Shengcheng's stony expression.

Indifference from a thirteen year old boy? This was no child.

"Is a kid like you even worthy of provocation? Shut up. You're delaying my cultivation."

"Cultivation? You're just a sideshow!"

A sideshow? Tianming couldn't be bothered arguing with this kid. At his age, quarreling with a kid and rushing to prove himself would only be an embarrassment.

He continued on his way to the fourth gate, feeling the energy within him rush and boil as if on the brink of breaking through to Unity. Unfortunately, his silence was considered an admission of weakness.

The girls around Yuwen Shengcheng cast contemptuous gazes in his direction.

"The Apex Branch are a bunch of losers," pouted Su Li.

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Meanwhile, Tianming's appearance had alarmed the two elders.

"He's Li Wudi's son?" Ye Yuxi gave him the once over.

"I heard he's a pentabane," said Yuwen Kaitai.

"Do you believe that?" asked Ye Yuxi.

"Of course I do. This young man looks extraordinary. I bet he'll reach third-level Unity in thirty years," laughed Yuwen Kaitai.

"You're crazy!" Ye Yuxi turned to look at the young man.

"It seems that he's unsatisfied with cultivating at the fourth gate. I heard he has a seven-star lifebound beast. Under normal circumstances, he'd have a hard time at the first three gates."

She couldn't quite comprehend why the young man refused to properly cultivate, but wandered to the next gate instead.

Wasn't he inviting sarcasm by humiliating himself?

While Ye Yuxi was pondering his actions, Tianming had already stepped into the fifth gate.

However, he rose to his feet in no time. Such a scene provoked snarky looks from all around. Was he just taking a tour of the gates? If this continued, Tianming wouldn't cause any ripples even if he walked up to the ninth gate.

What an injustice for Tianming! He wasn't feigning grandiosity, but actually trying to break through to Unity. However, the first five gates placed no pressure on him.

"Tianming, are the Imperial Ninefold Gates broken? There must be something wrong with it. Even the fifth gate has done zilch." By this point, Ying Huo was speechless. And the trouble at hand was a sleepy Meow Meow!

Having witnessed the benefits of the Imperial Ninefold Gates in advancing to Unity, all Tianming lacked was such oppression. He had a hunch he would break through at once.

Ye Shaoqing's advice had been useful, yet even the fifth gate was ineffectual.

"As long as I pass this hurdle, I'll make rapid progress cultivating on Li Shenxiao's tomb. No one will be able to stop me!"

Breaking through to a new stage was completely different from advancing to a higher level. Li Shenxiao's tomb might have eighty-one saintly heavenly patterns, but it couldn't achieve this effect.

Tianming moved on to the sixth gate.

"From the sixth gate onward, I'm supposed to possess a Saint Beast in order to endure the pressure of the Imperial Ninefold Gates. I just hope I'll feel something. Let the violent storm wash over me!"

Tianming began cultivating. Ready to welcome the tremendous pressure, he watched as the saintly heavenly patterns gathered at the top of his head.

Ten seconds later—

Where's the tremendous pressure?

"Tianming, find someone to fix this thing! What a waste of effort!" grumbled Ying Huo.

"It's been fine for tens of thousands of years, how can it be broken now?" Tianming frowned.

"Someone, fix this bloody gate!" Ying Huo bounced up and down like an ant on hot bricks.

At the sight of the sleeping cat, Ying Huo brimmed with frustration.

For lack of a better option, Tianming set off for the seventh gate as the rest of the disciples icily watched on.

At the seventh gate, Tianming wept tears of joy. The malfunctioning gates were finally working! The slight pressure he felt was like stumbling upon an oasis in the middle of the desert.

Ying Huo eagerly awoke Meow Meow. The east wind they were waiting for had finally appeared at the seventh gate, meant for beastmasters with second-order Saint Beasts; that is, twenty to twenty-nine-star lifebound beasts.

Ten seconds later—

"It's not doing anything for me! There's hardly any pressure, it barely even tickles," complained the furious little chick.

Even as the others began laughing, Tianming hardened his resolve and departed for the eighth gate.

"This feels so refreshing," smiled Ying Huo.

With eight saintly heavenly patterns, the pressure was barely noticeable. Perhaps this would help them!

"Oh, stop wasting my rest time. Let's move on to the ninth gate," urged the impatient Meow Meow.

Tianming set his sights on the ninth gate, where the ancestors of the Li Saint Clan had once practiced. It had been a thousand years since any disciple attempted the last gate.

That was the land of faith.

At the moment, the onlookers were boiling with rage. They were certain Tianming was playing them for fools.

When Tianming stood at the ninth gate, he allowed the world to surge while calm reigned in his heart. The humiliation brought on by Yuwen Shengcheng over his identity as junior sect master, as well as his sinister intentions were all mundane matters. Only when the mind was tranquil could one rise above and leave all the worries behind.

"In the Grand-Orient Sect, I may be my own opponent." Though Tianming was unsure why he held such a sentiment, he believed it was a sign. He was a decabane with dual supreme abilities and ten Primordial Chaos Beasts.

Composing himself, everything but the Imperial Ninefold Gates disappeared—even Qingyu. This was the biggest hurdle he had yet to encounter on the road of cultivation.

Unity stage is integration of the spirit, thus creating harmony in cultivation and battle.

Most importantly, the pressure of the ninth gate would be enough to launch him towards Unity.

Tianming felt tremors in his lifebound space.

Ying Huo and Meow Meow withstood the oppressive force of the Imperial Ninefold Gates, protecting the remaining Primordial Chaos Beast eggs.

"Ah, feels good." Ying Huo sighed contentedly.

"Let's get started!" Tianming was confident that today was the day he would break through to Unity.

**Chapter 220 - Humongous Nexus**

Both of Tianming's techniques were being cultivated at the same time at a much improved rate, thanks to the pressure from the Imperial Ninefold Gates. The two little animals also had to protect their eight unhatched siblings from the huge pressure. Tianming grasped this turning point of an opportunity to regulate the flow of the Aeternal Infernal and Genesis Chaos Codexes, working just as hard as the other two.

Their lightningsources and infernalsources circulated at the same time, using a unity-ranked technique as a guide. The pressure coming from the gate caused a void field to manifest. Tianming, the little chick, and the black cat achieved synergy in their beast ki. At that moment, the infernalsources and lightningsources linked with their counterparts and allowed the beast ki to flow.

An audible hum got louder and louder. The first step to achieving Unity was to form a bipolar domain outside the Beast Vein when synergy was achieved. In other words, it was the formation of a field. As time passed, two weak fields manifested near Tianming, one on top and the other below, like a stack of two plates that formed some sort of contour.

The Imperial Ninefold Gates were truly effective. Without it, Tianming figured it would be incredibly difficult for him to reach this point. The pressure really did enhance his connection and understanding with his lifebound beasts. All of a sudden, he almost felt like he'd fused with them.

"There is me in you and you in me," Tianming said.

"Sounds a little gross," said Ying Huo.

"I know," Tianming replied.

The process hadn't ended yet. The longer it went on, the more Tianming understood how useful the gates were. Even without Yuwen Shengcheng provoking him, he would have chosen to come here to break through to the Unity stage on his own accord. Given his decabane talent, there was a good chance he could reach the ninth level of Unity and catch up to the prime disciple! The gates continued pressing down on him at increasing speeds, causing the manifestation of the unity field to speed up.

It's said that fourth-order saint beasts have more than forty spiritsources and can generate more than forty nexuses. I wonder how many my unity field can have?

The number of spiritsources and nexuses were determined by the tier of the lifebound beast. Beastmasters with eight-star lifebound beasts could have eight spiritsources and eight nexuses, and use eight spiritsource abilities. Overpowered fourth-order saint beasts, on the other hand, were said to have forty to forty-nine stars, with the beastmaster being able to manifest more than forty spiritsources and nexuses. Not only that, they would be able to gain as many spiritsource abilities as the number of spiritsources they had! It was said that saint beasts had no upper limit to the number of spiritsource abilities they could have, thanks to their abundant number of spiritsources.

However, the huge number of spiritsources could cause complications for purgatory refinement, making it much harder. So, beastmasters with saint beasts would only retain a few of the strongest spiritsource abilities, and discard the weaker ones. The sheer number of spiritsources and nexuses was what differentiated an average beastmaster from a talented one.



Take, for instance, a beastmaster with an eight-star lifebound beast and one with a fourth-order saint beast. If they were both at the first stage of Unity, the former would have four or five times fewer spiritsources than the latter, creating a huge disparity in their combat prowess.

Naturally, there were no disciples with fourth-order saint beasts in the Grand-Orient Sect, but even those with third-order saint beasts were monstrously talented; they would have between thirty and thirty-nine spiritsources and nexuses. Incidentally, Li Wudi had had thirty-nine nexuses in his prime.

However, Tianming had only ever had one spiritsource that had continued expanding in volume. Now, it was about ten times larger than a normal one. While it could still expand in the future, the number was probably fixed.

He could almost feel it. Each of his fields only had one humongous nexus, but they were about ten times as large as a normal one! The Infernal Field and Chaos Field beside him were slowly forming a domain.

Tianming realized Ying Huo's Infernal Blaze could span the entire Infernal Field, which had a diameter of more than twenty meters. Meow Meow's Chaos Voltball also spanned the Chaos Field, with about the same range. Initially, the fields were rather flat, but now they were inflated into large balls with Tianming and his two lifebound beasts at the center. One was a burning ball of hellfire, while the other was a globe full of chaotic lightning. Anyone attempting to approach Tianming in combat would be in for a hard time, especially since his unity fields seemed far more damaging than normal ones.

These fields had diameters of more than twenty meters; Tianming was the core of both of them, while Ying Huo and Meow Meow each occupied the center of their own respective field. When both of the fields resonated at a range of roughly fifty meters, their power reached its full potential, though when they were out of range from one another, the resonance would vanish.

Even so, their individual fields were still powerful in their own right.

Currently, his humongous nexus was absorbing spiritual energy from the environment nonstop. Tianming knew that with his nexus, they would be able to gather spiritual energy at an even more frightening rate.

"The Unity stage!"

He finally succeeded. With Ye Shaoqing's guidance and the pressure of the Imperial Ninefold Gates, everything fell into place. He felt that his combat capabilities had improved by miles after his breakthrough, and with his main obstacle gone, he was free to explore all of his untapped potential.

The effect was strongest when Ying Huo and Meow Meow's own unity fields resonated with his, for they would be able to freely use the energies from one another's fields, thanks to the resonance. Tianming could even use his nexus to borrow spiritsource abilities from his lifebound beasts.

The infernal flames and chaotic lightning pulsated with power within his stable and mature unity fields. That could only mean that he had broken through by training at the ninth gate! While there had been many disciples of the sect who had broken through at the Imperial Ninefold Gates, Tianming was no doubt the most unique one. He had only one nexus—a sign of having a one-star lifebound beast—even that wasn't as noteworthy as him being the first one in thousands of years to break through at the ninth gate.

He didn't know the kind of shock he'd caused when he started training at the ninth gate. Within ten breaths of time, some had gathered to watch him condense his field and mock him for attempting suicide. Ten breaths later, their expressions froze. On the thirtieth breath, they wore expressions of disbelief and their lips shuddered when they talked. After sixty breaths of time, Tianming had manifested his field and humongous nexus, causing everyone to watch him in dead silence. They were far too young, and didn't know what that meant.

"Is the ninth gate broken?"

"That's impossible. It's never been broken before."

"Then what is this supposed to be? I heard his lifebound beasts are only seven-star beasts."

"I have an idea."

"Only fourth-order saint beasts can withstand the ninth gate. Are his lifebound beasts at that level?"

"He's a pentabane and has fourth-order saint beasts? Isn't that outright ridiculous?"

"That's right...."

They no longer mocked or laughed at him. Instead, they were laughing at their own relative ineptitude. They had been blind to who Tianming really was. This was the first time in a long while the Imperial Ninefold Gates had been so quiet. As Tianming made his breakthrough, Yuwen Shengcheng and the girls around him had the most interesting expressions.

Yuwen Shengcheng merely stood there awkwardly with his face getting darker and darker as Tianming's breakthrough went on, as if he were being slapped with a bag full of soot. However, Su Li and Gongsun Yu's reactions were even worse.

"Shengcheng... what... what's going on here?" Su Li asked in a daze.

"That's right. Since when did he have a fourth-order saint beast? I recall that even your elder brother doesn't have one. Is the junior sect master more powerful than your brother?" Gongsun Yu asked through quivering lips.

They looked at the white-haired Tianming like they were witnessing a miracle. Seeing him achieve Unity, their legs began giving out on them.

"Shut up!" Yuwen Shengcheng groaned, causing the girls' faces to pale with fear. They hurriedly took a step back.

"What's going on, Shengcheng?"

The young boy grit his teeth and bellowed, "I don't believe this! Something must be wrong somewhere!"

If Tianming really had a fourth-order lifebound beast, Shengcheng would truly be a mere monkey for him to toy with. He would be utterly humiliated! His face flushed so hard it was hot to the touch for the first time in his life. Having a fourth-order saint beast was his lifelong dream, yet some rando from nowhere was living his dream! It simply couldn't be! The more he agonized over it, the more embarrassing his display became.

"He reached Unity... it's over." When Su Li said that, Yuwen Shengcheng gripped both his fists and sharpened his gaze. Everyone was looking at him. He was mocking Tianming just now, and now he had to eat his words.

Tianming stabilized his condition and ended his cultivation session, then stood upright. Everyone turned their eyes to him as he walked toward Yuwen Shengcheng.

Were they going to fight? It seemed likely in the eyes of the other disciples. They had seen how Yuwen Shengcheng was being pushed to his limit with seething venom. However, Tianming didn't give him the time of day and simply left the gates.

The kid was just far too young. He was merely talented in some regard. Tianming was someone with standards, who would only pick worthy opponents. Yet, he didn't think that ignoring Yuwen Shengcheng would only cause the kid's face to pale further with anger.

"Li Tianming! Don't think I don't know you must've used some kind of trick! There's no way someone like you can have a fourth-order saint beast!" he spat. He was reaping the seeds of humiliation he'd sown earlier. Seeing his outburst, the other disciples stopped speaking.

Only then did Tianming turn back and look him in the eye. "Kid, what's wrong with your face? You look like you swallowed a pile of shit."

The crowd immediately burst into laughter at the apt description. Yuwen Shengcheng's face was indeed contorted in disgust. Tianming, still ignorant of what the youth was angry at, had only added fuel to the fire.

"I want you to die!" Yuwen Shengcheng roared as he pushed apart the beauties before him, charging at Tianming. He struck out full force with his palm, propelling it forward with the speed and pressure of a torrential river.