

The Ages 241

Chapter 241 Prime Struggle

The next day, the siblings set off for Azure Dragon Sword Mountain, arriving early in the morning. The mountain was straight and steep, like a long sword piercing the sky. A monstrous sword intent was contained within the rocks and soil of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain. On the highest peak stood Azure Dragon Sword Hall, the residence of Elder Ye Shaoqing and the core of the mountain.

In fact, just the day before, the mountain and hall weren't known by their present titles. As for what they used to be called, that was no longer important. From this day forth, as long as Ye Shaoqing remained a sect elder, Azure Dragon Sword Mountain would remain so.

In Azure Dragon Sword Hall, the ten great hall prefects, numerous exalted masters, and inner disciples of excellent talent were gathered. They had been left behind by the previous elder and now belonged to Ye Shaoqing.

For several years, the peak had had no master. However, today was the day a new elder took over and officially met them. It was also the day Ye Shaoqing would accept his new disciples. After the death of the previous elder, Azure Dragon Sword Mountain had no longer accepted direct disciples.

Tianming and Qingyu stood side by side in the hall. On the high seat above them sat Ye Shaoqing. When a new elder succeeded to the position, he must set rules and impose strict penalties to convince the masses.

Ye Shaoqing had performed well in this matter. Although he had taken over from someone else, the overall situation was set and his position well-cemented. Few would dare disobey him, at least on the surface.

"Is Hall Prefect Yuan Huitian at odds with our master?" Scanning the crowd below, Tianming focused on a tall man in black.

"Yes, Yuan Huitian is the youngest hall prefect here, and also a direct disciple of the previous elder. There are many people here who wanted him to succeed as the elder. However, Master is stronger and younger than him. In the final election, Master defeated Yuan Huitian in three moves, gaining the votes of the other elders."

Qingyu had both respect and admiration for Ye Shaoqing. Although they had just assumed a master-disciple relationship, Ye Shaoqing had often guided her over the years.

"I see."

If Yuan Huitian hadn't suffered defeat at the hands of Ye Shaoqing, he would certainly challenge him today. After all, having grown up on the mountain, it was what the masses expected of him.

"There's one last thing I'd like to say. Although I'm new to Azure Dragon Sword Mountain, I'll be responsible for everything here in the future." Ye Shaoqing rose to his feet.

"Yes, Elder!"

Since Ye Shaoqing's position had been determined, Yuan Huitian acted appropriately, bowing along with the other nine hall prefects. When Ye Shaoqing defeated him in three moves, whatever reluctance he'd had had fizzled out. With the support of the prefects, Ye Shaoqing sat firmly as elder of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain.

Pleased with the progress, Ye Shaoqing smiled and waved at Tianming and Qingyu. Next up was the disciple ceremony.

"In honor of today's occasion, I shall accept two direct disciples. Henceforth, let the entire sect know that Li Tianming is my senior disciple and Li Qingyu my second disciple." Announcing it on Azure Dragon Sword Mountain was tantamount to announcing it to the entire Grand-Orient Sect.

From now on, Tianming and Qingyu's statuses were superior to all disciples in the hall.

"Take out your Azure Immortal Mountain disciple token," said Ye Shaoqing.

"Yes, Master."

Putting aside the old token, Ye Shaoqing handed them a new direct disciple token created from a high-tier spirit ore.

"Keep these safe. These are the first and second direct disciple token from Azure Dragon Sword Mountain," said a smiling Ye Shaoqing.

Naturally, the siblings would take good care of their tokens, which were symbols of their identities. Even the position of Grand-Orient sect master garnered no such politeness from the disciples. However, every disciple of the sect revered the direct disciples, who were only inferior to the four prime disciples.

"Elder, I refuse to accept this! Of your two direct disciples, one is merely at Unity, while the other is mediocre and lazy. What qualifications could they possibly have to be worthy of their positions?"

A discordant voice rang through the hall. Beside Yuan Huitian stood a thin boy dressed in black. Despite his small stature, the young man's eyes gleamed, his temperament overbearing and features powerful. Among all the disciples of the mountain, he was the most conspicuous.

Known as Gu Yu, the black-robed young man was a disciple of Yuan Huitian. Merely fifteen this year, he had cultivated to sixth-level Unity and was comparable to Qingyu. He was originally waiting for the day his master became elder, so he could be promoted to a direct disciple. His talent and strength were certainly worthy of that position.

Unfortunately, Ye Shaoqing had messed up his plans.

"Gu Yu, silence!" reprimanded Yuan Huitian.

Forced to bow his head in hatred, Gu Yu's dissatisfaction was evident by his clenched fists. From within the hall came a cacophony.

"What a pity for Gu Yu. He could've been a direct disciple."

"If only the new elder was willing to accept him as his disciple. But even so, I doubt Gu Yu would be willing. He's one who respects his master and is set on Hall Prefect Yuan."

"Even if Gu Yu doesn't become a direct disciple, I don't think we're all convinced about Li Tianming and Li Qingyu's strength."

"The junior sect master has just recently emerged. He's Li Wudi's illegitimate child. Apparently, he defeated the ninth elder's disciple, Li Xuanchen, shocking many onlookers."

"Well, I've got nothing to say about him. After all, he's a pentabane. But Qingyu, on the other hand, is at fifth-level Unity, yet a year older than Gu Yu. If you look at it that way, Gu Yu is better than her."

"But then again, many elders accept their descendants as disciples, even those whose talents are far inferior compared to Li Qingyu. I think the main reason Gu Yu failed to become a direct disciple is his own unwillingness to worship another master."

"Well, there's no way out of that."

Though the words were whispered, they echoed through the hall. They represented the thoughts of most of the Azure Dragon Sword Mountain disciples.

In the face of such confusion, Ye Shaoqing smiled, his gaze fixed upon Gu Yu. "Do you think they aren't qualified to become direct disciples because they're inferior to you?"

Gu Yu glanced at Yuan Huitian, who didn't seem to stop him from speaking. Plucking up his courage, he said, "Yes, Elder"

"You've never fought them. How are you certain they aren't as strong as you?" asked Ye Shaoqing.

"That's why I'm pleading for a chance to prove myself," replied Gu Yu.

"If you defeat them, will you worship me as master instead of Hall Prefect Yuan Huitian?" added Ye Shaoqing.

After a moment's struggle, Gu Yu was well aware the new elder had given him an opportunity to become a direct disciple. However, one glance at Yuan Huitian reminded him of the unforgettable grace and kindness he had been shown over the long years.

"No. Once a teacher, always a father. Even if my master isn't an elder, he is my master for life!" As soon as he said that, appreciative gazes fell upon him.

It took courage to express gratitude and remain loyal to one's master.

"You don't want me as master, yet you'd like to prove that you're better than them. Isn't it meaningless? If you defeat them, you'll only prove my weakness in vision. What good does it bring you?" chuckled Ye Shaoqing.

"Um...." This time, Gu Yu was speechless. He was still a little nervous in the face of an elder.

Ye Shaoqing waved his hands and said, "Young man, don't worry. I also appreciate your show of backbone. You're a good disciple, which makes me envy Hall Prefect Yuan. However, I won't grant you the opportunity to provoke my disciples today, not because I have no confidence in them, but because it's meaningless. Believe me, you'll see clearly in the future. When that happens, you'll apologize to them on your own accord. Do you understand, Gu Yu?"

Ye Shaoqing's lighthearted reply had gone against the norm. The others in the hall assumed he would have disciples defeat Gu Yu, simply to justify his vision. However, the opposite was true.

"I shall wait for that day, Elder." Gu Yu gritted his teeth.

"It won't be long. The Prime Tower will soon be opened. As my direct disciples, they'll both participate in the Prime Struggle five days from now. When the time comes, just watch. Gu Yu, you're not their opponent." Ye Shaoqing's words stirred a bout of whispers and discussion among the crowd.

The Prime Struggle? Prior to this, Tianming had never heard of it. He looked at Ye Shaoqing in confusion.

"Elder, have you decided just like that?" asked Hall Prefect Yuan.

"What else could it be? The participants of the Prime Struggle must be direct disciples. Every elder is allocated two places, and I just so happen to have two direct disciples. Is there any reason for me to forfeit? Besides, Gu Yu isn't willing to become my disciple and challenge Prime Tower."

"As you wish." There was little Yuan Huitian could do. Suggesting he worship a different master went against Gu Yu's one-track mind. With Gu Yu's mediocre talent, even if he participated in the Prime Struggle, he might not gain anything.

"Having said that, I hope they won't perform too poorly and embarrass Azure Dragon Sword Mountain," said Yuan Huitian.

His words reflected the concerns of the newly-formed Azure Dragon Sword Mountain. The elders of the other thirty-three main peaks had direct disciples who had received their guidance over many years, all of them peerless geniuses.

Never mind if Tianming and Qingyu failed to reap any benefits, but bringing shame to Azure Dragon Sword Mountain was something they feared.

"Yes, the Prime Struggle is a well-recognized event."

Whispers, like flies, resounded in the Azure Dragon Sword Hall, proving one thing: time would be required for Ye Shaoqing to completely subdue this group of people.

Since Ye Shaoqing was impeccable, the only weaknesses that could be exploited were his disciples. Whatever Tianming and Qingyu did would be magnified under the intense scrutiny. One mistake was all it would take to invite criticism. Although they couldn't get rid of Ye Shaoqing, these people knew exactly how to give him a hard time.

As long as Ye Shaoqing was unhappy, they were delighted.

Chapter 242 - One Saintbeast War-Soul Per Person!

No one had expected that Ye Shaoqing would choose to ignore all the gossip.

"Tianming and Qingyu, today, you've become my disciples. Let me know what gifts you want." An enviable scene occurred. How could the gift a sect elder gave out when they accepted a new disciple be anything shabby?

"Master, you being willing to accept us is already the greatest gift possible." Qingyu said.

“That’s not acceptable! If this spreads, people will call me stingy. How about this, I’ll gift each of you a Saintbeast War-Soul,” Ye Shaoqing said, his words immediately inciting a commotion.

All of the inner disciples looked at the siblings, flames of jealousy burning bright in their eyes.

Even Gu Yu froze, his expression conflicted. He was aware that if he chose Ye Shaoqing, he would definitely have been able to obtain this treasure too.

After coming to the Grand-Orient Sect, Li Tianming had learned that Saintbeast War-Souls actually came from demon beasts that had died at least a millenia ago.

A wildbeast could only become a demon beast when they entered sainthood, and would have abilities roughly on par with the senior generation of saints. The Saintbeast War-Soul was actually their beast soul, without the slightest relation to lifebound saint-beasts.

For beast souls obtained immediately after they died in battle, they would only submit to the expert that slew them. A member of the junior generation would have a chance to refine them only when a millenia had passed and the consciousness in the soul had vanished.

That was the exact situation Li Tianming had had with the Devil Monarch Wildsoul.

Put simply, it wasn’t hard for saint stage seniors to kill a few demon beasts and obtain beast souls to refine. However, if they wanted them for their juniors, they would need to give it a thousand years, by which point the junior would likely have already passed on!

Saintbeast War-Souls could create premier spiritsource abilities, and were items of at least a millenia in age. With their scarcity, how could they not be valuable? In the Grand-Orient Sect, they were even more valuable than terrestrial manna that could help lifebound beasts evolve into saint beasts.

Yet here, Ye Shaoqing was giving out two just as welcome gifts for his new disciples. However, in the end, they were his own personal belongings, so it was no one else’s business if he chose to give them away.

The disciples could only watch on with red eyes as the goods changed hands.

“These two Saintbeast War-Souls are ownerless items. As their first owners, it’ll be easier to absorb them.” Ye Shaoqing smiled as two mahogany boxes appeared in his hand, ancient auras seeping out from the two of them.

“Master, the pressure seems to be a little overwhelming when you give such huge gifts as soon as we meet.” Tianming stared at the boxes unblinkingly.

“Is that so? Then I guess I won’t be giving this gift,” Ye Shaoqing said.

“That won’t be right! As a man and an elder, your words are worth their weight in gold. You can’t go back on them so easily.” Tianming replied hurriedly.

Honestly, such War-Souls weren’t of much use to saints. If they needed beast souls, directly going to kill some demon beasts would be enough. The value of War-Souls lay in their usability by juniors.

For juniors of the same level, the side with a War-Soul would have a stronger spirit-source ability, hence greater odds of winning a battle. It was for that reason alone that Lin Xiaoting had been qualified to join Heaven's Elysium.

Laughing, Ye Shaoqing finally handed the War-Souls over to the siblings!

"Thank you, Master!"

"No need to be polite. Just remember to be filial in the future. At the very least, you have to uphold Master's honor up on the Prime Tower, and attain glory for Azure Dragon Sword Mountain."

Five days would be long enough to refine their Saintbeast War-Souls, given that they were ownerless and had been dead for over a millenia. Even the Tianming of three years ago would have been able to do it, much less the current Tianming.

"Alright, it's over. Time to break this up!" Ye Shaoqing spoke to the hall prefects, exalted master and inner disciples present.

"We look forward to the direct disciples' performance in five days." Yuan Huntian had a thoughtful expression as he left.

Finally, peace and quiet had returned.

Li Tianming temporarily stowed the War-Soul away, before asking, "Master, I haven't heard of this 'Prime Tower' before."

"Don't worry, I'll explain it to you now." Now that everyone was gone, Ye Shaoqing took the highest seat and flicked open his fan, twirling it around. On one side, it read 'Confident, Elegant', and on the other, 'Handsome, Suave'.

It was utterly and completely shameless.

"The Prime Tower is a holy land of our sect, and a divine item. Usually, only sect elders and prime disciples can cultivate inside, and it's sealed off for everyone else. Only on one special occasion every three years will it open up. Each sect elder will have two slots for their direct disciples to enter the tower. If they can pass the three floors of the tower and reach the top, they can become a prime disciple! Tianming, do you know what a prime disciple is?"

"I know. It's the highest peak a disciple can reach. Only sect elders surpass them in status, while hall prefects and chiefs are their equal," Tianming said. And, they're the equal of Heaven's Elysium's 'elysian children'.

Elysian children were ridiculously overpowered, and it was unexpected that it hadn't even taken even one month for Tianming to gain a chance to compete for an equivalent status.

"Correct. Only elders have jurisdiction over prime disciples, and even then, they have to go through the council. Furthermore, prime disciples enjoy the greatest of the sect's resources, like the right to enter the Prime Tower." Ye Shaoqing nodded.

However, Tianming wasn't particularly interested in that, believing that the Li Mausoleum was probably even better. However, he definitely had a strong thirst for the status, because it would grant him a much more stable footing in the sect. Anyone who wanted to touch him would have to think twice.

People like Li Xuanyi would only be able to give a polite bow to the prime disciples when they met them!

"Is this Prime Struggle in the Prime Tower hard? Of sixty-six people, generally how many succeed?" Tianming asked.

"Hah, usually, it's considered good if even one comes out. It's normal for there to be zero successes," Ye Shaoqing chuckled.

"Is it so difficult?" Tianming asked.

"Yes. The Prime Tower is split into three floors. The first two are still alright; they were designed by elders. However, the third floor is the true holy land of the tower. Even the elders aren't sure what disciples will encounter inside!"

Ye Shaoqing's tone turned serious, and he continued, "It's a miraculous place that was designed by the ancestors of the Li Saint Clan. Danger abounds, but so does great fortune! Even stranger, the test doesn't look at strength. I wouldn't be confident of coming out uninjured if I myself were to go in."

"My ancestors?" Tianming hadn't expected that there would be other mysterious areas left behind in the Grand-Orient Sect by the clan's ancestors. Then again, it wasn't surprising, considering the whole sect had once been the clan's turf.

"Right. Maybe you'll come across something special, given that you're a pentabane. Anyway, of the sixty-six, usually not even five can enter the third floor, or sometimes not even one. The Grand-Orient Sect has pretty strict expectations for prime disciples.

"I'll be honest. I know roughly who the sixty-six are going to be. I don't think even one has any qualifications to be compared to the current four prime disciples," Ye Shaoqing said confidently.

Tianming now understood how difficult it would be to become a prime disciple.

"Still, you don't actually have to get to the third floor, nor do you have to become a prime disciple."

"Why not?"

"The Prime Struggle this time round isn't really about who can become the next prime disciple, but rather the treasures in the first and second floor," Ye Shaoqing said.

"Treasure? Treasure treasure!" Li Tianming grew excited.

"Right, the first disciples to pass the first and second floors will each get a first-rate treasure that'll be even more valuable than the War-Soul I gave you."

"The prize for the first floor was jointly decided by the thirty-three elders. I was in that meeting yesterday, so I know what it is." Ye Shaoqing waved his fan.

"Then, Master, can I ask what prize for passing the first floor is?"

"It's a high-tier terrestrial manna that can help your lifebound beast evolve into a third-order saint beast!"

Tianming froze up. He had never ever seen a terrestrial manna yet, but he knew they were divided into low-, mid-, and high-tier. Low-tier terrestrial manna could produce first-order saint beasts, mid-tier could create second-order saint beasts, and high-tier would birth third-order saint beasts!

The limit for beastmasters with third-order saint beasts was peak earth saint.

As for celestial manna, and the fourth-order saint beasts it could produce, they allowed beastmasters to become sky saints!

In the entire Grand-Orient Sect, high-tier terrestrial manna was something many hall prefects and chiefs could only dream of obtaining. Its value was countless times that of the high-tier profound manna Tianming had obtained in the Abyssal Battlefield.

Furthermore, that was just the prize for passing the first floor.

"What about the second floor, then?"

"That one was decided by the ten foremost elders. I'm not qualified to know, but it has to be at least three times the value of the first prize. All you need to know is that everyone will go green with envy if you get the second floor's prize," Ye Shaoqing said.

It sounded very enticing, even just the prizes for the first two floors.

Desire welled up in Tianming when he considered the third floor and the ties it held to the Li Saint Clan, and he was already mentally prepared to join the struggle!

Chapter 243 - Radiant Moon, Ninefold Disasters

"In other words, while it's really hard to make it through the three levels of the tower to become a prime disciple, the treasures in the first two levels alone are much more enticing, right?" Tianming asked, going deep into the details.

"That's right. After all, the elders decided that each generation shall have no more than four prime disciples. There's already four now, so if you can climb up Prime Tower, you'll only instigate another fight," Ye Shaoqing said.

"What fight?"

"We'll talk about it when you stand a chance."

"Alright."

"Master, will we go straight to Prime Tower in five days? I recall that three years back, there was a fight at the First Grand-Orient Battlefield before that." Qingyu said.

"That's right. Only seventeen will be allowed to enter Prime Tower. According to the rules of the previous years, sixty-six direct disciples will be sent to the First Grand-Orient Battlefield for two rounds of elimination fights. The first round will select thirty-three, one of whom will automatically gain qualification based on their performance. The remaining thirty-two will fight for the sixteen remaining

slots. Seventeen in total will be allowed in the tower for another round of fighting. That's the complete Prime Struggle."

It all clicked together in Tianming's head. The rules didn't sound too complicated.

"Based on our current capabilities, it'll be hard to gain that honor, huh?" Tianming said, fully aware of the extent of his skills. In this struggle, he would be fighting everyone beneath the rank of prime disciple, most of whom were kin of the elders, and had started cultivating at the age of three. They were sure to be near the peak of Unity in power, far stronger than the likes of Li Xuanchen and Gu Yu.

"Of course. I'm only sending you there as a bet. As long as you don't lose too badly at the First Grand-Orient Battlefield, that's fine. After all, only two will be able to gain those treasures, or maybe even only one," Ye Shaoqing said.

It seemed that he had taken it for granted that there would be no new prime disciples this generation. After all, he was quite familiar with every one of the sixty-six candidates.

"Alright. We'll do our best to not embarrass Azure Dragon Sword Mountain in the battles," Tianming said.

"Tianming you're only sixteen. You'll have another chance three years from now. Given your talent, you'll stand a far better chance of becoming a prime disciple in the next selection. I'll make sure you're well prepared by then. This time around, just participate to experience it for yourself. It would already be lucky if you reach the Prime Tower stage."

It wasn't that Ye Shaoqing underestimated his disciple, Tianming merely had trained for too short a time. Five days later, the Prime Struggle would take place. Given Tianming's track record of having only beaten a sixth-level Unity beastmaster, he was considered below average among the sixty-six, while Qingyu was ranked even lower.

"Three years?" Tianming was stunned. Given the rate he was aging, he would look fifty in three years' time. Appearance-wise, he would look more like Ye Shaoqing's master. There would be no chance for him to win the Prime Struggle then.

"You've been improving way too fast lately, but you're still at Unity. For each level you break through, it'll get even harder. It isn't likely you'll be able to maintain this rate of improvement. Given your talent, I believe you'll be able to catch up to the four prime disciples, or perhaps even supersede Yuwen Shendu. You only need three years!"

Ye Shaoqing was quite confident in Tianming, though he didn't know that Tianming didn't have three years' time.

"Thanks, Master. I will do my best," Tianming said. He wouldn't admit defeat. Now that he had a chance, he would give it his best. "Master, do the selection battles at First Grand-Orient Battlefield and the Prime Tower challenge take place one after another?"

"No. The first round of the selection battles to choose the first thirty-three takes place five days from now. After that, there's half a month's time for rest and recovery before the second round. These battles are only warmups for the Prime Struggle. There's enough time to prepare for it. A month after

the selection battles, the Prime Tower challenge will take place, but this time, it'll be held in one go, lasting several days in total," he explained.

"I see." Tianming made some estimations. In other words, the true Prime Tower challenge would start a month and a half from now. That was when he would get a chance to get those treasures, and perhaps even ascend to the third floor of the tower. Given his rate of cultivation, he felt he at least had a chance. He would see the Prime Struggle through to the end, though he didn't tell his master of his intentions.

On the path of cultivation, vain ambitions and elaborate plans weren't conducive to success. What one should focus on was taking it one step at a time, and the first step he would be taking was the first round of selection battles to take place in five days.

"If it works out, I'll be a prime disciple the next time I meet Elysian Long." Tianming wondered what her face would look like when the nobody she hadn't taken seriously back then suddenly came back to her as a prime disciple with equal standing to her.

For an outsider like him, the rank of prime disciple was far too important. If the title of junior sect master of the Grand-Orient Sect was mocked by even the outer disciples, the prime disciple rank was its complete opposite—every disciple aspired to become one. Even Exalted Masters and Mountain Chiefs had to treat them respectfully.

This test would be a risky endeavor indeed. Tianming's eyes burned with ambition. Back then, he hadn't managed to break through in time, so he'd fared a little worse in his fight against Li Xuanchen. Fortunately, the battle had allowed him to catch up considerably. From now on, he would advance at full speed with every ounce of talent he had.

"Meow Meow."

"What's up?"

"From now on, you can't sleep for fifty days straight. You can't even take naps."

"Huh?" Meow Meow was stunned, then it threw a tantrum and rolled around on the ground. It was almost as if it had been neutered. The little chick watched and relished in the schadenfreude.

"Meow Meow, since you look so pitiful, I'll give you the Saintbeast War-Soul this low-level mount of ours just received," Ying Huo said.

"I don't want it! I just wanna sleep! I wanna sleep, damn it!"

To be frank, Tianming couldn't wait to see what his new Saintbeast War-Soul was.

Qingyu and he got new residences on Azure Dragon Sword Mountain. Every need a direct disciple had was catered to there. The siblings were assigned quarters next to each other. Tianming had a hole opened in the wall that separated their quarters, so Feiling could freely move about.

Most of the time, however, Tianming would be at the Li Mausoleum. As for Qingyu, she wouldn't have to go home every day, since she would mostly be training under Ye Shaoqing's guidance. Jingyu wouldn't be bored either, since she could visit her grandchildren at Azure Dragon Sword Mountain or Li Wudi at Fatepath Peak. Since Qingyu's marriage matters were settled, she could finally relax. Nowadays,

she sang and danced at Fatepath Peak, scaring the fish in the rivers, beasts in the forests, and birds in the skies.

"Ying Huo, have you really decided to hand the Saintbeast War-Soul to Meow Meow?" Tianming asked.

"Of course! I keep my word. Since my little brother is a little weak and only relies on brute force, I want to make sure it stays alive. Don't worry about me," it said.

"What little brother? Meow Meow's my little brother," Tianming said.

"In your dreams. You're my little brother, too. Can't you tell? All you can use is battle arts, while Meow Meow only uses spirit-source abilities. I, however, can use both, so I'm the boss." His logic was surprisingly impeccable.

Even though Meow Meow had the Regal Chaosfiend War-Soul, the three of them were actually one unit. If Meow Meow, being the main tank, got stronger, the amount of punishment the three of them could take would increase. For instance, in the fight against Li Xuanchen, Meow Meow took the full brunt of the Sixteen-winged Gold Kunpeng's attacks, which was the key to Tianming's victory.

Since Ying Huo was so generous and didn't care about items like war-souls, choosing to focus instead on training beastial arts, Tianming didn't hesitate to give the Saintbeast War-Soul to Meow Meow to refine. On the wooden box was the name of the Saintbeast War-Soul: 'Ninefold Disasters'. He wondered if Meow Meow could break another one of his bloodline shackles and get a new ability.

"What's Qingyu's Saintbeast War-Soul called?" Tianming asked, seeing Feiling come his way. It appeared that Qingyu had begun to help her kunpeng refine the Saintbeast War-Soul.

"It's called Radiant Moon. It fits her to a tee. Perhaps your master prepared it for her specifically," Feiling said.

"It's that good?" Tianming felt a little overwhelmed by Ye Shaoqing's generosity.

"I think so too."

"Perhaps it's because he once had some ties with Li Wudi. The people of the Ye clan, Ye Ziyi aside, are rather decent."

Meow Meow had begun refining the Saintbeast War-Soul. Since Qingyu would be staying back to train, Tianming wanted to try bringing Feiling into the Li Mausoleum. He later found that when Feiling was attached to him, the Bloodbane Barrier couldn't tell. They were easily able to enter the mausoleum.

"It feels really wondrous here, as if your ancestors are alive," she said with a bit of fear. Her unique eyes allowed her to see what most people missed.

"That's right. While all people must die, the strongest of wills won't be extinguished."

They eventually made their way to Li Shenxiao's tombstone.

"Tianming, my son, you're going a little too far. Come here to train if you must, but why bring your little wifey here?" Li Wudi said drunkenly.

"How did you know?" Tianming asked, shocked. Nobody had been able to detect Feiling in her spirit form before. As Tianming approached him, Li Wudi fell to the ground snoring once more.

"Your godfather is more than meets the eye," Feiling said.

"How so?"

"I can feel that his body is enduring a really terrifying force."

"Is that so? I wonder why I can't tell at all." No matter how Tianming scrutinized him, Li Wudi looked no different from a lazy pig. But it didn't matter.

Tianming needed to charge ahead and prepare for his battle in five days.

Chapter 244 - Grand-Orient Sword, Prime Tower

Fengtian Mountain was located incredibly close to Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain. Near its midpoint was a beautiful courtyard called Faircloud Gardens. Within it, a black-clad youth sat on a long bench with his eyes closed and arm outstretched. His hand didn't move the slightest bit. The fine hair on his hand danced with the ruffling of the wind at a set rhythm.

"Heavenly Will... the will of the heavens..." His hand closed and opened mid air nonstop. One would be mistaken if they thought he was trying to grasp the air itself. Instead, he was trying to feel for the will of the heavens. He held a precious gem in his other hand, a fire spirit gem with red heavenly patterns.

Heavenly patterns were said to be the embodiment of heavenly will, one of its arcane manifestations. The appearance of heavenly patterns on a normal rock turned it into spirit ore. He started grasping in mid-air from the simplest of heavenly patterns, red ones.

"Big Brother!" a young man excitedly called. The gates of Faircloud Gardens were pushed open, letting a white-haired youth haphazardly run in. His expression was one of excitement and agitation.

The black-clad youth crushed the red spirit gem in his hand; his cultivation had been interrupted at a crucial point. Normally, he would be really mad at being interrupted, but knowing who was coming, all he could do was quietly shake his head and smile. When he opened his eyes, he stood up and turned to the youth with a smile.

"Shengcheng, did it work?" he asked.

"It did, Big Brother! It evolved into a second-order saint beast! I also managed to break through to the sixth level of Unity during bloodline cultivation!" Yuwen Shengcheng said with a face full of smiles.

"Not bad. You've finally caught up to where I was at the age of thirteen."

"Big Brother, you're a whole different beast. I don't want to be compared to you. Even so, this improvement will surely prove really useful for me!" he said with both hands clenched tightly. His new front teeth had only just sprouted, so he still couldn't enunciate his words well. The thought of his teeth only darkened his mood.

"Big Brother, is dad aware of Li Tianming?" Yuwen Shengcheng asked worriedly.

"He is."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing."

"What do you mean? Don't you want to kill him while he's still fresh? He just became the direct disciple of Ye Shaoqing!"

The black-clad youth merely chuckled.

"What does that mean?" Yuwen Shengcheng asked.

"Shengcheng, this is different from tens of years ago. Dad is already on a different level and has more important things to deal with. Tianming isn't Dad's match, nor is he mine. He is your opponent to fight."

"I still don't get it."

"Basically, in the eyes of our father, there are no geniuses, only weaklings. Even though Li Tianming is a pentabane, it'll still be tens of years before he meets Dad," the youth in black said.

"In other words, no matter how talented he is, Dad can just easily kill him, so he doesn't need to care about him now?"

"That's right."

"What about you, Big Brother? Will you not avenge me?"

The youth chuckled again. "Shengcheng, I am about to take on the most important mission ever. I've prepared all my life for this battle. There's no longer anyone in the sect that is worthy of being my opponent. It sounds like Li Tianming is a pretty decent rival for you. You must rely on your own abilities to defeat strong opponents. This will be really helpful to mold your spirit for your future cultivation.

"You haven't experienced much hardship, so you have to start by taking care of this by yourself. Shengcheng, the Yuwen Clan will not rely on only me in the future. You have to grow up quickly, and take out those who get in your way with your own abilities. I have high hopes for you.

"Your recent breakthrough makes it so that you stand a chance at becoming a prime disciple in three more years, but Grandfather and Mother spoil you too much. So, I hope you can prove your growth magnificently. You must remember that no matter what you do, the Yuwen Clan will stand behind you and support you," he said with a passionate gaze, looking at the thirteen-year-old before him. This was the most crucial moment of his growth; nothing could be better for his training than a troublesome opponent.

"I get it, Big Brother! It's not that you don't want to kill him, he just doesn't even matter enough for you to bother. Even if there are ten thousand geniuses, they won't matter if you can just easily squash them. Big Brother, you're really thinking in the best interests of the family to even consider letting me face such an interesting rival as Tianming to hone my skills!" Yuwen Shengcheng praised with fervor.

"That's right." Seeing his brother reminded Yuwen Shengdu of his old self. However, he had to bear far more burdens as the eldest son. He had come all the way from the depths of slaughter.

"Shengcheng, I have a list of those participating in the Prime Struggle. Dad wants you to participate in it for training, so you can become a prime disciple when you turn sixteen," he said with a smile.

"Really?" He knew his father had many talented disciples, yet he'd chosen to let his own son take one of the participant slots.

"I already have the whole list. Tomorrow, the battles at First Grand-Orient Battlefield will start. Dad has already made sure you'll face Li Tianming."

"Oh, is that so?" Yuwen Shengcheng cracked a smile, but his eyes suddenly turned red and furious. "Li Tianming... I bet you would never imagine how much stronger I would get after my breakthrough! Both Li Xuanchen and you will have to kneel before me! You'll be powerless to do anything else! Karma really does come fast. I'll make you pay ten times the price for humiliating me tomorrow!" Even he was impressed how much stronger his lifebound beast grew after it evolved into a second-order saint beast.

"To think I had wanted Big Brother to kill you.... Since he and Father hope that I can train myself with this opportunity, I'll have to rely on myself tomorrow! You humiliated me by knocking my teeth out, so I'll make sure to poke your corpse full of holes and mutilate it!"

His newfound grudge condensed all at once. "It's too strong! Too strong!" he said, filled with confidence for himself. Even his big brother had said that Yuwen Shengcheng stood a real good chance at victory tomorrow.

"Big Brother, can I kill tomorrow?"

"You can if you're quick about it. Dad will be there tomorrow. With him there, nobody will dare act carelessly."

Yuwen Shengcheng was relieved to hear that.

"Who would dare stop me from getting Li Qingyu after Li Tianming is dead?"

Qingyu was the daughter of the woman even his father couldn't get. The more he thought about it, the more his blood boiled. It felt like he was about to prove himself to his brother and father.

"By the way, who did Dad give the other slot to?" he asked.

"Your elder cousin brother, Yuwen Zhenxing."

"It was him after all! That murderous madman.... Even if he doesn't become a prime disciple, the treasures in the first two floors of Prime Tower might as well be his already!"

"Shengcheng, how could you describe someone from our family like that?"

"How else would you describe him?"

"Not every instance of killing can be called murder. Hunting is also a form of killing. Zhenxing is a natural-born hunter."

"Hunting? So what you did with him in your childhood was hunting, eh?" Yuwen Shengcheng said, giggling.

"That's right. Third Uncle wanted to hone his son into the sharpest weapon possible. He'll be the one who kills the people that are too troublesome for us to touch."

Their third uncle was none other than Yuwen Kaitai.

"Big Brother, leaks of the first floor's reward say it's a terrestrial manna. Do you and Brother Zhenxing know what the second floor's reward is?"

"We do."

"What is it?"

"I'll keep that secret for now. You can never keep your mouth properly shut. I'll tell you about it later."

"Alright. Then... is it precious?"

"You think? It was prepared for Zhenxing. It is definitely something that you'll hold with shuddering hands."

"Ah, I wonder when will it be until it's my turn...."

"Just train properly and overcome the junior sect master tomorrow. Three years later, when your turn comes, we'll prepare a celestial manna for you!"

Yuwen Shengcheng nearly burst with bliss. He knew it was none other than the Grand-Orient Sect's celestial manna that could turn his lifebound beast into a fourth-order saint beast. It would be his, with some minor machinations. Now, he was filled with hope and anticipation for his own bright future.

"Big Brother, there's something I still don't really understand. Why is Dad so strict on you so as to not even allow you to make a single mistake in cultivation?" Though the sun had already set, Yuwen Shengcheng still hadn't decided to leave.

"You will find out in time. Ever since I was three, I've cultivated nonstop in anticipation of that day! By then, I'll take the Yuwen Clan on a path against the heavens to obtain something even more important. That's the most important step I can take in my life, something I've been preparing for since I was only three years old. Shengcheng, you'll definitely see how I sacrifice myself to fight for our family." The black-clad youth looked to the north. All of a sudden, Faircloud Gardens turned a little warmer.

"Big Brother, is that called the Grand-Orient Sword?" Yuwen Shengcheng asked fearfully.

"That's right. The Grand-Orient Sword and Prime Tower are the two godly items that the Li Saint Clan used to dominate the Grand-Orient Realm!"

Yuwen Shengcheng's eyes were filled with endless yearning for that sword. He could never forget it. His brother tightly grasped his shoulders and said, "Shengcheng, even if I have to bleed every single drop of my blood out and burn my flesh and soul, I will obtain the Grand-Orient Sword for the Yuwen Clan!"

Chapter 245- The First Grand-Order Battlefield

The First Grand-Orient Battlefield was easily the most volatile location in all of the sect. Most of the grand sect events were held there, whether they were yearly evaluations, outer disciple promotion

battles, or even fights between seniors. Too many births of monstrous geniuses had been witnessed there over the past millennia.

Most of the legendary figures that emerged there were the ancestors of the Li Saint Clan, who had spread their name far and wide at the battlefield in their youth. From a distance, the chaotic battlefield was covered by forests, rivers, and lakes and surrounded by a heavenly pattern barrier. On some of the blades of grass and rocks was the blood of those that came before that hadn't been cleaned up even now.

Around the battlefield were ten thousand seats, located high up so they had a good view of the battlefield. Being able to show off their skills in front of an audience of so many people was the dream of every disciple.

From a vantage point at the north end of the battlefield, a tall, white tower stretched high into the clouds, giving off an ancient and arcane sensation. The disciples of the sect knew the tower was the sect's treasure and holy ground: the Prime Tower.

The Prime Struggle would be taking place there. Two precious treasures had been hidden within for the most powerful disciples' taking, and today, the first battles would take place. There were sixty-six participants and thirty-three battles in total.

Currently, the seats had all been filled, and booming cheers from the audience resonated throughout the arena. All ten thousand of the audience members were inner disciples or above. Many seniors of the sects such as chiefs, hall prefects, exalted masters, and mountain lords were there to observe the battles. As for outer disciples, not a single one of them was qualified to watch the Prime Struggle.

For instance, Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's Yuan Huitian could only bring his disciples and hall prefects to watch the battles from the normal seats. Nowadays, Azure Dragon Sword Mountain was rather low profile, preferring not to antagonize disciples from other mountains or be compared with them. It was mainly due to the ones that would be representing them in the Prime Struggle, which turned out to be quite the laughingstock.

To most other disciples, Tianming was too foreign, and Qingyu didn't even qualify. Gu Yu, who was just barely acceptable, didn't get a chance to join, which was why this affair was so awkward. As such, Yuan Huitian took the initiative to sit at the corner to avoid any embarrassment.

"To be honest, it would've been better if he just gave up on the prime struggle than doing this, as he only recently became an elder," Yuan Huitian said with furrowed brows.

"Master, we will definitely have our chance!" Gu Yu said. He was quite dissatisfied with the turn of events. Turning back, he saw the other exalted masters and hall prefects of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain watching with their arms crossed, as if they dreaded the start of the Prime Struggle. Some would've not come at all if they could.

"Let's hope it ends quickly. I still have to go back to train."

"That's right. Nowadays, the standards of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain are falling. Those of our generation should snap out of it and rise back up again."

"I really don't know what this elder has planned. Isn't it a little bit of a waste for him to just give out two Saintbeast War-Souls like that?"

The chatter revealed their displeasure with the whole matter. It had been a long time since the disciples of that mountain could stand proud before the other disciples, yet it didn't seem like that would change even with their new elder.

The participants in today's battles didn't only include the elders' direct disciples. Instead, it was a matter of pride for all thirty-three mountains. Yet most of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's disciples were already crestfallen before the battles had begun. At least it wouldn't be as embarrassing as losing without even putting up a fight.

The most eye-catching thing apart from the Prime Tower was no doubt the thirty-three large halls built upon the battlefield. Each of them had a large sign with the name of their mountain. For instance, the hall right in the middle had a plaque with the words 'Fengyun Immortal Mountain' written on them.

Fengyun Immortal Mountain was founded by the first elder, Huangfu Fengyun, who was already more than a century old. He was the eldest in the council of elders. During his youth, he had earned much merit for the sect and had often defended their borders from their oppressive foes. Even now, he still held a large sway over the whole sect, his authority eclipsing even the third elder, Yuwen Fengtian.

The hall behind that belonged to Fengtian Mountain. To its right was Taiji Mountain, and the rightmost hall was one with a brand new sign with 'Azure Dragon Sword Mountain' inscribed on it. The halls were where the elders and their family members would watch the battles from.

At this moment, First Elder Huangfu Fengyun was seated in a tall seat at the very center spot beneath the tower. At the age of hundred, even saints would look old, but his age belied his actual bodily condition. His eyes were still sharp and beaming, and it seemed like he would live for decades more.

Among the thirty-three elders, only the fourth elder was of the same seniority as Huangfu Fengyun. She was Shangguan Jingshu, the highest-ranked female elder. A few years back, she was ranked in third place, but Yuwen Fengtian had replaced her after his grand contributions to the sect. Shangguan Jingshu sported white hair, just like Huangfu Fengyun, but she seemed really charismatic for an elder. Each of her steps and movements were filled with vigor.

Before the battles began, Shangguan Jingshu came over to Fengyun Immortal Mountain's hall to visit the man himself.

"Old Fengyun, I hope you don't mind my intrusion."

"Oh, it's you, Jingshu. Long time no see." Huangfu Fengyun smiled and waved. "The Grand-Orient Sect hasn't been this lively for a long time. Sit down, Jingshu, and watch this spectacle with me. Let's see how the young'uns of the new generation perform."

"That was my intention as well."

Being roughly the same age and two of the most reputable figures in the sect, they had few others to hang out and chat with. Even the second and third elders were considered their juniors by age. The two old elders sat in their tall thrones and patiently awaited the start of the battles.

"Jingshu, I've been hearing something interesting lately," the old man began.

"Is it about Li Wudi's illegitimate son, the pentabane?"

"That's right. Ye Shaoqing even took him as his disciple." The old man squinted his eyes. Given their age and vast experience, there were few things that perplexed them.

"I asked Ye Qing about it, and heard that the child broke through two levels in half a month. He can even fight opponents three or four levels above him. Also, he only started cultivating half a year ago and had never touched cultivation before in his life. Ye Qing thinks he's unquestionably a pentabane," Huangfu Fengtian said.

"Then he probably is. The Li Saint Clan's ancestors have finally decided to bless them," Shangguan Jingshu said as she quietly scanned the arena. They seemed rather calm about pentabanes.

In the eyes of these people, even the likes of Li Wudi, or other geniuses on his level, were mere bugs they could squash if they wanted. All they treasured were those belonging to their families. Killing anyone else was of no huge consequence to them, regardless of how ridiculously powerful they were.

"What do you think about that, Jingshu?"

"We'll see how it goes. I don't really intend to meddle. Yuwen Taiji's family, on the other hand, will definitely not let him live."

"No, I was asking what you thought about Ye Shaoqing taking disciples."

"I'm rather troubled by it as well. Yuwen Taiji had given him face and wanted to rope him in to their side. Why would he do something against the Yuwen Clan like that?"

"I really don't know what's up with Ye Shaoqing. Perhaps Ye Qing is problematic as well. Don't tell me they really intend to work toward the revival of the Li Saint Clan. I know that isn't beyond Ye Qing, but I still can't really figure this out. I have a feeling we're missing something even more crucial."

"I think I can accept that result," Shangguan Jingshu said.

"What do you mean? The two from the Yuwen Clan aren't happy with the current state of affairs. They want to reclaim the Grand-Orient Sword at all costs, and the moment they do, the council of elders will be destabilized."

"Come to think of it, I find it quite laughable that I'm actually hoping Heaven's Elysium will retain the Grand-Orient Sword," Shangguan Jingshu said with a pained shake of her head. "The moment Yuwen Taiji gets the sword, the council of elders will fall to ruin like all other things in the sect before it. I really don't know if even the two of us will survive it."

"We'll see. These matters aren't ours to interfere with. The Realm Wars must be fought fairly. Additionally, Heaven's Elysium has managed to produce monstrous geniuses. While Yuwen Taiji said he prepared his son, Yuwen Shendu, to fight, it sounds like a wasted effort."

In relation to the battle to reclaim the Grand-Orient Sword, Ye Shaoqing's pentabane disciple paled in importance.

"The Grand-Orient Sword and Prime Tower are relics the first ancestor, Li Shenxiao, fought to obtain from the Theocracy of the Ancients. It's said that they're the handiworks of gods themselves! If Yuwen Taiji manages to obtain it, even being able to use a tenth, or two-tenths of its power will be terrifying enough. Historically, only those of the Li Saint Clan could use them... but now...."

At that thought, the two elders looked each other in the eye.

"Talented people are sprouting in every empire. We'll let things go their natural course. If Shendu really can do it, I'll give the top seat to Yuwen Taiji as a gesture of goodwill. What about you, Jingshu?" He looked at her with a complicated gaze.

"What else can I do?" Shangguan Jingshu looked at the arena solemnly, having accepted her fate.

Chapter 246 - Taiji Mountain Versus Azure Dragon Sword Mountain

The fourth great hall to the right of Fengyun Immortal Mountain's was Taiji Hall. In it were three men. Among them were two youths, one dressed in black and the other in white. The white-clad youth was Yuwen Shengcheng. He sat in the corner and quietly watched the other two without even daring to breathe heavily.

His elder brother, the black-clad youth, was prostrating himself toward the only other person in the hall who sat tall on a throne. Half of his silhouette was hidden under the shade.

The low light made it hard to see him clearly, but that didn't detract from how scary he seemed; one of his eyes was pure black and the other was pure white. His inky black eye radiated a sinister aura, while his snow-white eye seemed cold and detached, not to mention the eyeballs themselves seemed to be slowly rotating.

The man sat there like an idol to be worshipped, so lofty and high up that normal people wouldn't dare take a peek at it. Just as Yuwen Shengcheng shuddered from the tension in the air, the heterochromic man spoke.

"Shendu, it's about time. Given your current level, our clan is still some ways off from glory."

The black-clad youth shuddered. One could see that his eyes were bloodshot when he raised his head to speak. "Dad, I understand. I'll give it my all at the final moment!"

"Do you remember what I told you most often during the past ten years?"

"Of course! It's burned into my memory! I didn't forget it for even a moment!"

"Then repeat it for me."

"Father, if I, Yuwen Shendu, fail to obtain the Grand-Orient Sword, I will pay for my failure with death."

"That's right. You must atone for your sins with death before the ancestors of the Yuwen Clan," the man coldly said.

"I will definitely not die! I will not betray the hopes you and the clan placed on me!" he swore in a low voice, his gaze revealing his iron dedication.

"Not bad. Shendu, you seem rather spirited. If you succeed, you'll be the hero of the clan. Our empire in the Grand-Orient Realm will one day belong to you."

"Yes, Father!"

"But if you fail, you'll be condemned by the clan!" His voice weighed on Yuwen Shendu's shoulder like a mountain.

"Yes, Father!"

From a distance, Yuwen Shengcheng shuddered and gasped.

"Shengcheng," the man said as he turned around.

"Yes, Dad!" Yuwen Shengcheng hurriedly kneeled.

"I'll give you a chance to kill your rival today."

"Dad, I will definitely finish it."

"If you can't, I'll give what I have prepared for you to Zhenxing."

"Understood, Dad!" While Yuwen Shengcheng was swimming in cold sweat, his eyes seemed sharp and savage. He could no longer back down. If he failed, his father would be utterly disappointed in him and divert the resources reserved for him to Yuwen Zhenxing, which was a serious matter for Yuwen Shengcheng. He had never thought his rematch with Tianming would require him to sharpen his killing intent to this point.

Li Tianming is Ye Shaoqing's direct disciple, yet Father wants me to kill him. It looks like Father's authority in the sect is higher than anyone can imagine! That meant he would be able to do whatever he wanted later. At the very least, he knew that Elder Su Zhen, the organizer of the battles, was on his father's side.

At that moment, Su Zhen's voice spread throughout the First Grand-Orient Battlefield. "The participants of the first match are Taiji Mountain's Yuwen Shengcheng and Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's Li Tianming!"

The Prime Struggle had officially started.

.....

When Tianming heard the elder's announcement, he was still standing by Ye Shaoqing's side along with Jingyu and Qingyu. As Ye Shaoqing had obtained the name list beforehand, Tianming knew he would be fighting Yuwen Shengcheng.

"Tianming, don't underestimate your opponent. I heard Yuwen Shengcheng broke through to the sixth level, and his lifebound beast has also evolved to a second-order saint beast. Even though he's only thirteen, his cultivation even rivals many of his elders!" Jingyu had been nagging so much that Tianming felt like his eardrums were going to shrivel up.

"Granny, let me tell you something," Tianming said. "What is it?"

"Nobody has ever caught up to me after tasting defeat at my hands."

"Oh, my grandson is a feisty one, I see," she said with a smile. She hated the Yuwen Clan with a passion. "If possible, help me beat up that useless wretch. The harder the better."

"Deal." After Tianming nodded to Ye Shaoqing, he stepped into the battlefield.

"I, Li Tianming, direct disciple of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain, am ready to fight!"

This was the first time Tianming had appeared in front of a crowd this huge that included even the most powerful people within the sect. Most of them had heard of their new junior sect master, but haven't seen him personally yet.

"Rumors say that he knocked four of Yuwen Shengcheng's teeth out right after he broke through to the first level of Unity. Is that him?"

"This is Yuwen Shengcheng's rematch. I heard he's far stronger than before."

"Now the junior sect master is at the second level of Unity. It's also said that he's a pentabane."

"But Yuwen Shengcheng has a second-order saint beast, and he's now at sixth-level Unity and is still younger than the junior sect master!"

While most thought the age gap was three years, it was actually seven. However, the time it had taken Tianming to recultivate was less than a tenth of Yuwen Shengcheng's entire cultivation journey so far.

"For them to be fighting in the first battle.... It seems that the matches are rigged."

"The two elders of the Yuwen Clan definitely had a hand in it."

"It's starting with a bang! Nice!"

"Since the Yuwen Clan had made this happen, they must be really confident in Yuwen Shengcheng. I bet there's a ninety percent chance this will work out."

"Yuwen Shengcheng just stepped into the battlefield. How terrifying. It's only been two years since I last saw him, but he already looks like an adult."

"Given his background and talent, he's sure to become a prime disciple in three years. One of the four prime disciples in the current generation will have to make way for him."

Praises rained into Yuwen Shengcheng's ears, making him feel rather satisfied with himself.

"I, Yuwen Shengcheng of Taiji Mountain, am ready to fight!" he yelled. Stepping into the limelight, he fixed his bloodshot eyes onto his opponent. Tianming was standing atop a boulder and looking down on him from up high, as a calm beast would gaze at its prey. He could tell Yuwen Shengcheng hated him with passion.

I didn't think I'd have a chance to get revenge, Yuwen Shengcheng thought.

The first battle was already enough to get the audience riled up. Too many had heard of Tianming's amazing talent, but most still had their doubts. At least eighty thousand of the hundred thousand audience members were paying attention to him, talking about him nonstop.

"Li Tianming, if you dare, face me in a death battle. This won't end until one of us perishes!" Yuwen Shengcheng stomped forward, each of his steps leaving a deep imprint in the ground. He didn't care about the gazes of the other thirty-one elders, nor the opinions of the audience members. All he wanted to do was to secure his future and his father and grandfather's opinion of him.

"In your dreams. If you kill me, someone will take care of the aftermath. But if I kill you, I doubt I'll be left alive for long." A death battle meant nothing when their standing was so different.

"You're a bastard who knows nothing but how to find excuses for your cowardice. I hope you don't surrender and crawl out of the battlefield with the blood of the Apex Branch flowing through your veins!" Yuwen Shengcheng was already right in front of Tianming.

"Oh?" So what if he was from the Apex Branch? Tianming shot a glance at Elder Su Zhen. He was now allowed to start. "Then I'll let you have a taste."

"Die!" Yuwen Shengcheng charged toward him with murderous fervor. It seemed that his willpower had improved after his breakthrough. At that moment, his lifebound beast charged forwards and roared, shaking the entire arena.

"A second-order saint beast, the Eight-armed Taotie!" Cries of awe and shock reverberated throughout the battlefield. Tianming squinted and noticed that the beast's aura seemed more imposing after its evolution. It wasn't just its additional arms; it had also doubled in size from the evolution. Each of its arms were much bigger and thicker, not to mention it was much uglier and more fearsome than before.

The taotie opened its bloody mouth and terrified the crowd, in stark contrast to Yuwen Shengcheng's handsomeness. Even Tianming had to admit that his foe was much stronger than before.

He wielded a large, thick blade in his hand. It wasn't the Nine-ring Bloodblade from before, but rather a new, completely white bestial weapon that seemed to be forged from a large piece of bone. The pale white seemed rather unnerving to look at. The blade wasn't one smooth parabola; it had a sawtooth edge instead. It was definitely a weapon capable of causing huge bleeding wounds. Tianming saw some violet heavenly patterns on the weapon—a sign that it was a grade-seven bestial weapon like Archfiend. It was stronger than his Grand Thunderflare Sword.

"Yuwen Shengcheng can finally master the power of a grade-seven bestial weapon."

"This is the Heavenly Bone. It's best at drawing blood."

"He really did undergo a complete makeover! Thanks to his beast's evolution, he seems far stronger than before."

As they cheered, Yuwen Shengcheng stood imposingly on the taotie.

"Die!" Man and beast roared as they charged toward Tianming.

"Ying Huo, Meow Meow."

"Let's go!" Ying Huo's gaze burned bright as it excitedly looked at the Eight-armed Taotie. "How many stars does it have?"

"Twenty-three," Tianming said.

"Now that makes me mad. Meow Meow, let's tear his eyes off!" Ying Huo was truly envious to see someone's eight-star lifebound beast evolve into having so many stars.

"Meow!" After the black cat leaped out of Tianming's embrace, it immediately turned into a Regal Chaosfiend, roaring and sending thousands of bolts of lightning all over the battlefield. It was said that Tianming might have a fourth-order saint beast as he managed to train at the ninth gate. But now, it was apparent that his lifebound beasts only had eight stars. The rumors were immediately shattered.

"How can eight-star lifebound beasts compete with one with twenty-three stars?" Despite Meow Meow's imposing form, it only had half as many limbs as the Eight-armed Taotie. The little chick, on the other hand, was so small it was easy to miss.

The battle was nothing short of chaotic. Beastmasters had to fight in teams, after all. Tianming's double unity fields fused with Ying Huo and Meow Meow's, allowing his huge nexus to gather spiritual energy within the fields.

However, Yuwen Shengcheng and his taotie's combined field was even larger. But, so what?

Ying Huo, hiding behind Meow Meow, ordered Tianming and his brother to attack. "Brothers, charge!"

Chapter 247 - The Black Cat's Chaos Disaster

The lifebound beasts on both sides unleashed their spirit-source abilities, creating a chaotic mess. Li Tianming loved this kind of coordinated battle and the feeling of being mentally connected. The Unity stage was truly miraculous, with understanding becoming more tacit the further you progressed in it.

The Infernal Blaze sizzled as a fiery phoenix whistled through the sky. White hair flapping in the wind, Li Tianming mixed in with Meow Meow's lightning and rushed at Yuwen Shengcheng right behind a Chaos Voltball.

The Grand Thunderflare Sword hacked down, unleashing Hell-Shaker. A streak of fierce sword-light swept out, lightning and fire intermingled within!

Yuwen Shengcheng was full of killing intent as he used his white bone blade to block, but the end result was that he was directly knocked away, his arms turning numb.

He's become stronger again! Yuwen Shengcheng's heart trembled. However, how was he to know the nightmare had only just begun?

In the instant he was knocked away, Tianming quickly overtook his beasts and bore down on him while the two beasts tied down his second-order saint beast.

That was how damn refreshing it was to be a dual beastmaster!

Despite its diminutive size compared to its opponent, Meow Meow still rushed in. However, it was met with the unexpectedly sharp claws of the taotie.

The darkness the Eight-armed Taotie released also filled the air, but in comparison to Meow Meow's demonic ki, it was still inferior.

"Big brother Chick, help me!" cried Meow Meow.

A fiery blur immediately rushed to the taotie's back.

The taotie was covered in scales and had tough flesh, and had only been enhanced after its evolution. However, that didn't stop the little chick from quickly zeroing in on its weakness.

The little chick quickly aimed its Skyscorch Featherblast... directly at the taotie's genitals.

"So what if you have scales everywhere, that area isn't protected!" the little chick sniggered. As Meow Meow and the taotie entered melee combat, all of Ying Huo's needle-like feathers unloaded right at the taotie's weak spot.

"That's how I roll! Kneel for granddaddy chick!" Up in the sky, the bald chick laughed maniacally.

Despite the taotie already being on guard against him, hundreds of needles still buried themselves in their target. The taotie let loose a mournful cry as its genitals were immediately burned up.

"Big brother Chicken...." Meow Meow retreated, shivering as it swore a solemn vow to never ever offend that which could not be offended. It was obvious what the taotie was going through from its expression.

"Meow Meow, let me see your new spiritsource ability!"

"Roger!"

The Regal Chaosfiend let loose a howl, causing the clouds above to gather. Everything, be it rocks, rivers, soil, or even trees began crackling with multi-colored electricity. Countless serpents of lightning were drawn out of the electricity that naturally existed in every bit of matter. Ordinarily, the amount would be insignificant. However, it was terrifying when you added all of it together from across the entire First Grand-Orient Battlefield.

The multi-colored electricity gathered and churned within the clouds, transforming into nine long serpents of black lightning, each larger than the taotie and made of millions of tinier serpents.

Then, staring at the Eight-armed Taotie, it came crashing down with a deafening boom!

This was a Saintbeast War-Soul, yet it had surpassed the power of normal Saintbeast War-Souls. Ninefold Disasters had transformed into Meow Meow's new ability: Chaos Disaster. With Regal Chaosfiend and Chaos Disaster, Meow Meow had already caught up to Ying Huo in strength.

The taotie was still enduring the pain of its genitals being burned off when it saw a fiery flicker in front of it; it was the very first claw of Ying Huo's Life-Death Whip Art, Soul Hook. Fortunately, it managed to dodge in time, turning what would have been the loss of its eye into a giant gash on its face.

However, Ying Huo was intelligent. The true purpose of this attack had been to stop it from escaping the Chaos Disaster.

The next moment, the Chaos Disaster landed right on the taotie's body.

Lightning exploded as countless electrical serpents writhed around in the air. The power of the Chaos Disaster filled its body and its internal organs, causing the taotie to shriek as it collapsed convulsing onto the floor. Froth was coming out of its mouth and its eyes showed their whites.

The scene lasted for a full ten seconds, then the great second-order saint beast fainted. Still, the pain inflicted by Ying Huo would likely be more memorable for it.

This was a cooperative battle between Ying Huo and Meow Meow! It was definitely shocking to the audience, and it made all the men watching instinctively clamp their legs together.

In the end, the black cat reverted from its Regal Chaosfiend state and looked as harmless as ever, while the little chick extended a wing and leaned on the cat's head, with a leaf in its mouth.

Its behavior was simply too human-like.

They were watching the show, and had zero intention of helping Tianming fight.

But in truth, Tianming didn't need their help in the slightest. Even before he had broken through, not even the sixth-level Unity Li Xuanchen could handle him. Now that he had broken through, how could Yuwen Shengchen—who was at that level too, but no longer had the aid of his saint beast—have the slightest hope of stopping Tianming?

From start to finish, Tianming completely dominated his opponent.

Demise of Heaven, Divine-Fury swept out, and Yuwen Shengcheng was forced to retreat over fifty meters away to avoid the boundlessly majestic Grand Thunderflare Sword Ki.

Fully aware of the consequences of losing, Yuwen Shengcheng started getting anxious; at this rate, his future would be ruined by Li Tianming. "I can't lose. I cannot lose!"

Yuwen Shengcheng's willpower was too weak, and his upbringing too pampered compared to his older brother. Tears were already starting to spill, and all of his killing intent was already gone. His mental state had broken down as soon as Tianming started overwhelming him.

"If I lose, I lose everything! Blacktooth, why aren't you here to help me yet!" Yuwen Shengcheng was waiting for his beast to join him. When he looked over, he caught sight of his collapsed beast. At that moment, for Yuwen Shengcheng, it was like the Chaos Disaster had landed on him, too; his greatest ace had been lost.

The same fear as he had previously felt filled him again, but it was even more all-consuming this time. He wanted to roar and go out in a blaze of glory, but nothing came out when he opened his mouth.

As for Tianming, his sword struck out with unstoppable force as it unleashed Demise of Heaven, Heavenly-Judgement. Just like Chaos Disaster, this attack descended from the skies as sword ki came crashing down.

Yuwen Shengcheng gathered all of his strength to block this attack, but his legs nearly gave out.

However, Tianming still had one more attack left.

Demise of Heaven, Apocalyptic-Will!

While this stance looked the simplest, it was actually the most terrifying. It knocked Yuwen Shengcheng's blade away and carved a huge wound in his chest as it directly destroyed his armor! If it weren't for his armor, it was likely that Yuwen Shengcheng wouldn't have survived the attack.

Tianming lashed out with his leg and connected with Yuwen Shengcheng's face. His face, that had just recovered once again, had its nose broken and the teeth in its mouth all shattered.

This time, it was no longer limited to just four broken teeth.

“Waahhhh!”

In front of everyone, Yuwen Shengcheng coughed out countless shards of teeth. His mind had gone completely blank as he disconnected from reality. When he looked up, he saw at least ninety thousand people staring mutely at him, all kinds of emotions playing out on their features. Confusion, pity, sympathy, and more were displayed on the faces of the shocked audience.

The pity and sympathy cut Yuwen Shengcheng the deepest, being looks he had never ever imagined would be directed at him.

He also saw how they looked at Tianming, with shock, respect, appreciation, and curiosity!

Clearly, Tianming had shown them all exactly what kind of person their new junior sect master was, and at his expense, no less! Was the Grand-Orient junior sect master a joke? No, it was him, Yuwen Shengcheng.

He had clamored for a life and death match, but was easily crushed by his opponent.

“Father...”

However, none of this pain compared to having to face his father after this. Yuwen Shengcheng shook when he recalled how his big brother had knelt in front of their father and swore to make up for failure with death. His father had already said that if he lost, everything that was meant for him would be given to his cousin, Yuwen Zhenxing. Those words continued repeating themselves in his mind over and over.

Yuwen Shengcheng sat in the mud, not daring to look at Taiji Hall.

“Li Tianming, I will definitely have you meet an end even worse than what I'm experiencing now!”

Tianming saw that Elder Su Zhen had already appeared above them. “Stop,” the man said coldly.

Now that victory had been decided, Tianming no longer had a chance to continue beating up Yuwen Shengcheng. It was a shame through and through. Tianming had planned to continue until he made an honest man out of the boy.

“You? Save it. Go home and drink some milk instead,” Tianming said dismissively, turning to leave. Yuwen Shengcheng continued staring at him, his gaze turning progressively chillier.

When Li Tianming returned to Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's hall, Yuwen Shengcheng still hadn't left. Elder Su Zhen was forced to declare, slightly embarrassedly, “The winner is Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's Li Tianming! He will continue to the next round.”

The First Grand-Orient Battlefield was silent, as if no one was there. Everyone watched as Yuwen Shengcheng crawled out of the battlefield with no one to receive him.

Elder Su Zhen declared the next round was to begin. This was still only the opening match, after all, and there were still more shows to watch—though they weren't likely to be as mind-blowing as this one.

However, the ones most taken aback were actually those from the Azure Dragon Sword Mountain. They were wholly unprepared for the admiring gazes sent their way.

Yuan Huitian hadn't expected it.

And for Gu Yu, his face burning up, definitely hadn't seen it coming.

Chapter 248 - The Youth Walking on a Blade's Edge

"Master, does this mean the junior sect master really is a pentabane?" Gu Yu asked, looking at the youth who had so easily defeated his foe. Initially, he himself had been terrified of Yuwen Shengcheng's second-order saint beast; even he had had to admit that he was no match for it. Yet Tianming had managed to humiliate Yuwen Shengcheng so badly. To think that Gu Yu had even provoked Tianming back then. Had the new direct disciple accepted his challenge, he would've lost horribly.

"Are you convinced now, Gu Yu?" Yuan Huitian asked with narrowed eyes.

"I am. I heard he only began cultivating half a year ago," Gu Yu said.

"That's right. From today onward, nobody will suspect his monstrous pentabane talent to be fake any longer. The only thing he lacks is time spent cultivating. In three years, he'll definitely be Yuwen Shendu's match!"

"Actually, this is a good thing too. By then, he'll become our legend, the legendary figure of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain. To be honest, he's far more capable than I am to support the mountain." Gu Yu sighed.

"Gu Yu, being able to learn to respect your betters is a great ability to have. Nowadays, I've let it go and learned to respect Ye Shaoqing. The more skilled he is, the better it is for the mountain."

"That's right. Now, the junior sect master will make the rest of the disciples of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain proud," Gu Yu said passionately. He also yearned to fight.

As they hadn't gone out of their way to hush up their conversation, quite a number of exalted masters and hall prefects also heard their words.

"Since that's the case, let's all work together to support our new elder."

"That's right. If we stand united, Azure Dragon Sword Mountain will thrive!"

All that happened just because Tianming won his duel. His fame soared immediately after the battle. Back when he had gone to the Imperial Ninefold Gates, there were many who scoffed at and mocked him. Today, however, many of them retracted their statements and mentally apologized to him. From today onward, the senior disciple of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain, Tianming, would be as famous as Li Wudi once was. As for whether Tianming would survive his actual ordeal, it would depend on himself. At the very least, he had Ye Shaoqing as his master.

Perhaps he really stood a chance at defying his fate.

"This youth is walking on a blade's edge."

"That's right. Yuwen Shengcheng's defeat must be a warning to the Yuwen Clan."

"Since Elder Ye is protecting him, I feel like a big show is going to play out."

"As expected of a clash of geniuses in our sect!"

"The storm is brewing...."

Everyone knew that this was only the start of many things to come. At the very least, they had the Prime Struggle to look forward to. It had nothing to do with many of the elders' families, disciples, exalted masters, and sect guardians.

They couldn't wait to see how it played out.

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Yuwen Shengcheng felt the chilly atmosphere as he stepped into the hall of Taiji Mountain. His father and elder brother were speaking and he stood there shivering, not daring to take another step.

"Kneel there and don't come here," said a deep voice. It terrified him so much that he hurriedly plopped to the ground with a look of despair. He didn't dare to speak, only listen.

"Ask Zhenxing to come see me tonight. I have a small assignment for him."

"Yes, Dad. Dad, Shengcheng has never endured such hardship before. As his elder brother, I want to stand up for him. This son of Li Wudi's seems rather interesting. I truly underestimated him," Yuwen Shendu coldly said.

"Don't involve yourself in this. Let Zhenxing handle it. All you have to do is to focus on your grand mission, Shendu."

"Understood, Dad," he said through clenched teeth.

"You're right. This person is rather interesting, but he's not Li Wudi's son."

"Why?"

"Because nobody knows him better than I do," he said with a chuckle, his white-and-black eyes letting out a cold glint. "Even if he's a decabane, he's merely a fly before me. All I have to do is to let Ye Shaoqing know the consequences of going against us and I can kill him anytime I want. If I obtain the Grand-Orient Sword, I can even dominate the entire Grand-Orient Sect. Son, do you know how crucial this is now?" His eyes were like vortexes, sucking away all the air and making it hard for even Yuwen Shendu to breathe.

"I understand, Dad. As long as we have the sword, even ten thousand pentabanes would stand no chance against us."

"It's good that you understand. You may leave."

"Understood." Yuwen Shendu left with clenched fists, sighing as he passed his kneeling brother. He knew Yuwen Shengcheng had nothing but days of pain before him; however, there was naught he could do but leave.

After Yuwen Shendu left, Yuwen Shengcheng saw a pair of black and white boots before him.

"In the coming three years, I'll be giving Yuwen Zhenxing everything I'd prepared for you. Three years from now, I want you to become a prime disciple and follow in your brother's footsteps. Otherwise, I'll have you atone for your shame with death before our ancestors. Failures don't deserve to be pioneers for the Yuwen Clan!"

Those words sent chills down the boy's spine.

"Yes, Father!" he cried, slamming his head against the ground. By the time he cracked his skull, the man before him was gone. He looked up with a gaze not unlike that of a beast.

"Li Tianming, I have to suffer like this because of you! Don't celebrate just yet! I will definitely make you regret coming to this world! I will make sure you live the rest of your life in pain and despair!"

He coughed out another mouthful of blood and some more shards of teeth.

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"He's unquestionably a pentabane, based on his performance just now. He has even more potential than Li Wudj," Huangfu Fengyun said with a shaking voice.

"Perhaps this will be the member of the Li Saint Clan that changes its fate..." Shangguan Jingshu replied.

"It might be possible. However, he was born in an unfortunate time."

"That's right. The Li Saint Clan is so beaten down now that it only has one saint. There's no way Yuwen Taiji will let them go during such a crucial point in the Realm Wars. I just wonder how dedicated the Ye Clan is to protecting him," Huangfu Fengyun said.

"To be honest, if we stand up for him, he'll mature with no issues if he's careful enough. The key, however, lies in constantly protecting him. If he comes face to face with Yuwen Taiji, or if the Yuwen Clan manages to obtain the Grand-Orient Sword, the Huangfu and Shangguan Clans are done for."

They figured there was less than a thirty-percent chance for Yuwen Shendu to succeed, but that was still enough to make them agonize over the decision.

"Let's drag it on then. We'll keep this going until the results of the Realm Wars are decided," Huangfu Fengyun said.

"Makes sense. Before that happens, we should be fair. The Ye Clan is still supporting them, after all, and Yuwen Taiji has to focus his attention on the Realm Wars."

"That's right. It's been far too long. I myself am quite curious to just what extent this pentabane can grow...."

"If he really has only cultivated for half a year, he's sure to soar. Even Elysian Children and prime disciples won't be able to compete!" she exclaimed. They knew how truly terrifying those from the Li Saint Clan could be.

"The Realm Wars start after the Prime Struggle ends. At that time, the Yuwen Clan will definitely head to Heaven's Elysium. Let's see if Tianming can survive the Prime Struggle. There's still Yuwen Zhenxing,

right? I heard he's killed more than nine hundred people during his time training outside. Yuwen Taiji trained him exclusively to be the killer of his son."

"What level is he at?"

"Eighth level of Unity, or perhaps even ninth."

"Then we'll see if Tianming is smarter than Li Wudi. Either way, we won't meddle in it."

"That's right."

The two elders looked each other in the eye, having made a decision.

"Those standing on our side number fewer and fewer."

"That's right. The three elders from the Su Clan, even Second Elder Su Yunchi, are willing to bow down to Yuwen Taiji, not to mention Tenth Elder Su Jiudao and Eighteenth Elder Su Zhen. Apart from them, there's Seventh Elder Chen Nantian, Thirteenth Elder Sun Shengji, and Twenty-first Elder Qin Wulie who've allied themselves with the Yuwen Clan and fully support its hegemony over the sect.

"Many of their descendants will participate in the Prime Struggle, like the little sister of Prime Disciple Su Wuyou, Su Yiran, and Chen Xiaoji and Gongsun Chi, not to mention Yuwen Zhenxing."

"The trials in Prime Tower were designed by them, right? Tianming will be in deep trouble after all. It's best if he doesn't make it through the next round of battles so that he won't enter the tower."

"Should we tell the Ye Clan to ask Tianming to throw the match?"

"Forget it. Didn't you say we should be fair? We'll only observe without interfering."

"I guess that's all we can do."

Fengyun Immortal Mountain's hall fell silent after that conversation. The battles continued being carried out in the arena. Qingyu was fighting in the fifth battle against another girl called Su Yiran.

"Su Yiran's a seventh-level Unity. You're not her match, so surrender. Let's not fight meaningless fights," Ye Shaoqing said.

"That's right. Su Yiran was taught by three elders, growing up. It's no surprise she's two levels above you. However, Qingyu will definitely catch up in a year!" Jingyu confidently said.

Tianming watched as Su Yiran stepped into the battlefield. She seemed really charming, gentle, and soft, but she showed cold expressions from time to time.

"Li Qingyu, come down. I won't hurt you," she gently said, her charming voice attracting many a young man.

"I surrender," Qingyu announced.

"This is no fun..." Su Yiran sighed, but was happy she qualified so easily. "It's a shame I can't avenge Little Brother Shengcheng...." She had been fully prepared to give Qingyu a beating when she came down.

Since Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's battles had concluded. Ye Shaoqing stood up and left with them.

"The next round starts in half a month. It's not a lot of time, so we'll see how you progress, Tianming," Ye Shaoqing said.

"No problem, Master." He turned to the battlefield and saw signs of a storm brewing. It was like a bloodthirsty beast, waiting to swallow many victims.

Perhaps a lot of lives would be lost there.

Chapter 249 The Most Frightening Man In The Grand-Orient Sec

Tianming returned to Azure Dragon Sword Mountain with Ye Shaoqing and Qingyu. The first round of battle was over, but the second round would be carried out in a fortnight. Two weeks would pass in the blink of an eye.

"Master, what are you thinking about?" Tianming asked.

"I'm wondering if you should advance to the next round in a fortnight," Ye Shaoqing frowned.

"What do you mean?" Wasn't the original plan to temper himself so he could become a prime disciple in three years?

"I can't explain for the time being, but I'm afraid entering the Prime Tower will be dangerous," Ye Shaoqing replied.

"Yuwen Taiji dares to kill me?"

After defeating Yuwen Shengcheng today, the atmosphere in the entire Grand-Orient Sect seemed different. This was the first time he had made an appearance on such a grand occasion.

"He won't; he can't be bothered to deal with you. But the disciples of the Prime Struggle might. Once you enter the third floor of Prime Tower, it'll be difficult for me to protect you."

"If it's another disciple, you don't have to worry, Master," assured Tianming. What other choice did he have? With only two or three years left to him, there was no way he could overcome the curse if he avoided dancing on the edge of death.

"Only in the face of death can a genius rise to true power. If I can't cope with other competing disciples and choose to escape, others will only kill me in the future," said Tianming.

"You're courageous. Your father was just as daring in the past, but he was too impatient, had none of your meticulous thinking, and was afraid of hardship," Ye Shaoqing lamented.

And in the end, he had suffered an entire life of ruin.

Just then, Tianming felt a sudden discomfort, a sort of creepy coldness that went all the way down to his soles.

Ye Shaoqing turned around, his eyes filled with solemnity—the exact look a lion would have when it met a tiger!

"Is someone coming?" Tianming turned around, only to see a young man who looked no more than thirty, dressed in white robes with an ancient Yin Yang fish embroidered on the chest. The most conspicuous thing about him was his eyes—one was black, the other white, and both were stained with coldness.

The man's momentum was extremely strange; though uncruel, wherever his gaze landed came an icy chill. This sort of divine-like aura made Tianming subconsciously take a step back.

He's the most frightening man I've ever seen in Grand-Orient Sect!

The man merely glanced at him, his attention directed at Qingyu instead.

"Qingyu, now that you're all grown up, you've become more and more like her." He was obviously referring to Mu He.

The moment Qingyu set her eyes on him, she boiled with more than ten years of hatred and anger, all of which completely broke out at once.

"Shut up! You don't deserve to talk about her!" Qingyu's eyes turned pale blue.

"Yuwen Taiji, enough," Ye Shaoqing stood in front of the siblings. Then, whispering to Tianming, he said, "He's here for me. Take Qingyu away."

"Yes," Tianming nodded.

From the moment he first appeared, Tianming figured out who he was: the ninth elder, Yuwen Taiji. Seeing was believing. The man was truly extraordinary! He was visiting Ye Shaoqing today because of his new disciples. This was clearly a shrewd man. From beginning to end, he merely spared Tianming a glance.

"Qingyu, let's go."

Since Yuwen Taiji's presence infuriated Qingyu, it didn't make any sense for them to stay. Though she was unwilling to leave, Qingyu knew it was the right thing to do. Right now, she was placing all her trust in Ye Shaoqing.

After the siblings left, Yuwen Taiji began, "He isn't Li Wudi's son. Where did he come from?"

"What makes you so sure he isn't?" asked Ye Shaoqing.

"What's the point in lying? You can fool anyone but me," Yuwen Taiji retorted.

"Suit yourself. Anyway, he's my disciple, so it's got nothing to do with you."

"Disciple? Ye Shaoqing, what exactly are you planning? Now that you're a sect elder, your ego's puffed up, is it?" snapped Yuwen Taiji.

"Whatever you say," said Ye Shaoqing.

"I see. You're trying to stop me. Unfortunately, what can you do with just a child? It'll take ten years for him to become strong enough, but all I need is two months to seize the Grand-Orient Sword! When the

time comes, what's a little boy worth? If the Ye Clan doesn't behave, then don't blame me for being ruthless," threatened Yuwen Taiji.

"Shendu wants you to bring back the Grand-Orient Sword?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll wait until after the Realm Wars. If you are master of the Grand-Orient Sword, I will obey you," assured Ye Shaoqing.

"No. Before that, you have to tell me what the hell you're trying to do with this kid," Yuwen Taiji demanded.

"He's Li Wudi's son. I just want to help him based on our past friendship," Ye Shaoqing explained.

"Ye Shaoqing, you should know what kind of person I am. Once I'm set on something, I'm determined to see it to the end. I won't allow the slightest flaw! Over the next two months, I'll have to ensure I succeed in seizing the Grand-Orient Sword. So don't push me into a corner, or there's no telling what I might do!" he chuckled.

The implication of his words was obvious; it didn't matter if Ye Shaoqing accepted his disciples. With Tianming's strength, he couldn't make waves. When Yuwen Taiji came to power, he could even kill patriarchs if he wanted, let alone a mere junior sect master, and there was nothing Ye Shaoqing could do to protect them.

More importantly, Yuwen Taiji wouldn't allow any mischief from the Ye family that might throw a wrench in the works. Otherwise, it would be an all-out slaughterfest.

In the face of such overbearing threats, Ye Shaoqing smiled. "I wonder, are you really that great?"

Yuwen Taiji froze for a moment, then burst out in laughter as he pointed to the distance. "It's been a while since I taught you a lesson. It seems you've forgotten the consequences of provoking me. In that case, let's take a trip to the Abyssal Battlefield." He fixed a cold gaze on Ye Shaoqing, clasped his hands behind his back, and walked away.

Not to be taunted, Ye Shaoqing's eyes shot daggers. Without another word, he followed him. Clearly, he was a proud man.

While Li Wudi was crippled, both of them had become the youngest sect elders, competing all the way to the present. It had been a long time since the two had fought, and Ye Shaoqing was no longer convinced.

"After four years, I'd like to see what skills you have that're worthy of your wild ambitions!" Ye Shaoqing sneered.

"You're wrong, they're grand ambitions!"

Chapter 250 Heaven-Defying Sword Intent!

After returning to Azure Dragon Sword Hall, Tianming stood waiting at the entrance while Qingyu sat restlessly in the inner hall, looking uneasy.

"Big Brother, master will be fine. He's powerful and an elder, and holds a status equivalent to that man," comforted Feiling.

"I'm sure it's nothing, but he was probably threatened. Yuwen Taiji must be wondering why he's sheltering me," replied Tianming.

"Actually, I'm puzzled as well. Judging from the current situation in the sect, going against the Yuwen Clan requires a lot of courage," Feiling remarked.

When Ye Shaoqing had first accepted him as his disciple, Tianming hadn't contemplated as much.

"Master is fearless." A man of such backbone was admirable indeed.

A moment later, they noticed a man in white from a distance; it was Ye Shaoqing. His face was ashen, body covered in blood, and lips pale. All signs pointed to a fight with Yuwen Taiji.

"Master!"

Aware that he was the reason Ye Shaoqing had fought Yuwen Taiji, Tianming felt his heart tremble.

"Don't overthink this. I couldn't stand the sight of him so I thought I might as well see how strong he is now." A smile rose to his pale lips.

"And the result?"

"He's good, but I'm not bad either," said Ye Shaoqing.

Tianming wasn't an idiot. He could tell that Ye Shaoqing was in a sorry state.

With his sharp eyes, the blood on Ye Shaoqing's right finger was no secret. His little finger was broken, severed at the base. For a sword-wielding man, losing his last finger meant recovery was impossible. Although it was only one finger, his future battles would be affected.

This wasn't just any injury; it was a punishment for defeat!

"Your finger...."

"It's alright, I can still use the sword with four fingers, perhaps even better than before. Don't worry, he didn't benefit either. I've upheld the Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's reputation," Ye Shaoqing laughed.

Tianming nodded, well aware that Ye Shaoqing had suffered a defeat. The severed finger was a warning.

In truth, he respected and liked his master. He had originally been unhappy with Yuwen Taiji for oppressing both his godfather and master, on top of his arrogant son, Yuwen Shengcheng.

"Yuwen Taiji!"

Neither Ye Shaoqing nor Tianming would forget this enmity!

As his gaze focused in the direction of Grand-Orient's first battlefield, his eyes flashed with a vicious glint.

"Tianming, don't overthink this. Act as planned—fight your battles and look forward to the Prime Tower. As for the rest, you have my support." Ye Shaoqing patted him on the shoulder, his eyes burning with passion.

"I understand." Tianming nodded. For now, the future remained to be seen.

"Go, cultivate. Your current strength won't save you in the Prime Tower. Show me how much you can grow over the next forty-five days," said Ye Shaoqing.

This time, Tianming said nothing. He wanted to show Ye Shaoqing that his broken finger wasn't for naught.

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Outside the Azure Dragon Sword Hall, it was raining cats and dogs. Ye Shaoqing sat in the highest tower, circulating his ki as he tried to force out the black and white ki. As the poisonous, snake-like ki exited his body, his complexion turned ruddy once more.

Unfortunately, without his little finger, there was something lacking as he waved his sword in his right hand.

His brow wrinkled deeply.

"Yuwen Taiji."

How could the humiliation of losing his little finger mean as little as he feigned before Tianming?

He embedded his sword into a stone pillar, leaving half of the hall shaking.

Right then—

Out of the window appeared a figure suspended in mid air, as if descending from the dark clouds in the sky. Ye Shaoqing looked up; from his point of view, bloody hair more than ten meters long stretched from the figure. With a roar of thunder, a bloody aura enveloped Azure Dragon Sword Hall.

"You're crazy! We're just one step away. Don't ruin everything for this!" urged Ye Shaoqing.

"He broke your finger. How can I bear it!" the bloody-haired man growled.

"You've endured it for fourteen years, can't you endure just a little longer?" Ye Shaoqing persuaded.

"I'm just so furious. Thank you, Brother." The bloody-haired man gritted his teeth.

"Forget courtesy. Go back to your kennel and stay out of the way," chided Ye Shaoqing.

"Just give me a little more time. When the time comes, I'll avenge both new and old enmity!"

"Fine, I'd like to see how powerful you can be. I tested his strength today. Even at my current realm, he's a tough opponent. If Yuwen Shendu obtains the Grand-Orient Sword, he'll only grow stronger," said Ye Shaoqing.

"The Grand-Orient Sword?" asked the bloody-haired man, his voice laced with fear. Still, he declared, "It belongs to the Li Saint Clan. Even if he successfully obtains it, killing him is nothing!"

"Oh come on, stop bragging. If the Grand-Orient Sword was that easy to deal with, it wouldn't be coveted by the Yuwen family. I'm counting on you. Don't you dare let me down."

"Just wait and see!" The dark clouds began dissipating and the bloody hair outside the window furled.

"By the way, that son of yours isn't bad. He's dissolved Qingyu's marriage agreement so you can take that last step with a peace of mind. I like his temper." At the thought of Tianming, Ye Shaoqing couldn't resist a smile.

"He's a miracle. His future is beyond your imagination!" Azure Dragon Sword Hall echoed with the bloody-haired man's voice.

"Bragging again?" Ye Shaoqing chuckled.

"I'm certainly not. If you don't believe me, teach him your Heaven-Defying Sword Intent and tell me if his talent amounts to that of a pentabane."

With that, the bloody-haired man finally disappeared and the sky suddenly cleared up.

"Shameless man! Isn't he trying to trick me into teaching Tianming the Heaven-Defying Sword Intent?" To be honest, he was tempted and just as eager to test Tianming's limits!

He was well aware that Tianming alternated between the Li Mausoleum and Azure Dragon Sword Mountain, basically cultivating in the former at night and the latter during the day.

"From tomorrow onward, I'll teach him the Heaven-Defying Sword Intent. Since this kid likes challenging destiny, I'd like to see just how strong his spirit of defying heaven is. Right now, I'm betting on Yuwen Shendu's failure to obtain the sword...."

Otherwise, they were headed for turbulent times.