

The Ages 281

Chapter 281 - Goddess's Descen

Everyone within the hall of Fengtian Mountain started at the abrupt challenge issued by the white-haired youth.

"Did he hit himself in the head?" Yuwen Fengtian wondered. "Given his rate of improvement, he should have an eighty percent chance of becoming a prime disciple if he has a month to prepare, right? Why would he need to rush like this?" It really did seem like a fool's errand.

"You guessed wrong. I think he's pretty smart. Perhaps he knows he did too well and we have our eyes on him. That's why he wants to become a prime disciple as soon as possible," Su Yunchi said with furrowed brows.

"So he really looks down on Wuyou that much, eh?" Su Jiudao said with a cold chuckle and a look of displeasure. "Wuyou's at the ninth level of Unity, even stronger than Zhenxing!"

"So he's grown arrogant and proud after winning so many battles, eh?" Yuwen Kaitai mocked. "Young people are always this hot blooded. Doesn't he know that he only has one chance to make the challenge? If he loses, he'll have to wait three more years."

Everyone's gazes fell on Su Wuyou.

"Wuyou, teach him a lesson. If you have a chance, kill him. Your uncle won't stop you," Su Jiudao said. Su Zhen was his little brother, after all.

"Yes, Dad." She stood up, wearing a fierce expression. The scene where Tianming had cut off her little sister's pinky finger surfaced in her mind.

"You definitely cannot lose! Don't let him become a prime disciple, got it?" Su Yunchi said.

"Yes, Grandfather!" She looked down and glanced at Yuwen Shendu, who was watching Tianming emerge from the battlefield.

"Shendu, I'm going now."

"Okay."

"Won't you say anything?"

"No. Just do your best and kill him. The seniors will take care of the rest. I'm sure it'll be a piece of cake for you."

Hearing that, Su Wuyou finally smiled with confidence. "Come to think of it, it's the first time someone's looked down on me like that!"

Even she found it laughable. She had relied on her own efforts to become a prime disciple, rather than going through the backdoor her family had made for her. Even her faction relied on her for their prestige. She was the most talented female disciple at the ninth level of Unity, and she'd begun exploring the arcane mysteries of the Heavenly Will stage. Not to mention, she was the first female

prime disciple in three generations. Having heard Yuwen Shendu's words of encouragement, she stepped onto the battlefield.

Back at the First Grand-Orient Battlefield, everyone had their eyes wide open as the topmost beauty of the entire sect descended from the skies, her long white dress fluttering like the wings of an angel; she looked like a goddess descending from the heavens. The hair that danced in rhythm with her dress flowed like a waterfall and her tall, yet soft figure radiated charm. Her dainty physique only added to the cold way she carried herself.

"You're about to die. Guess I'll be able to fulfill your death wish before a month even passes." As she spoke, she drew a snow-white longsword that looked like a piece of gemstone, crystal clear and razor sharp. It was a grade seven bestial weapon: Paradisal Silk. It was just as beautiful as it was efficient at killing. Su Wuyou had relied on this blade throughout her path of slaughter to become a prime disciple.

Behind her, a gigantic, snow-white snake popped out of the lake. It was three times the size of the Hundred-eyed Winged Serpent and had a pair of white wings, which looked much better. Though it looked pure, it was rather terrifying due to the eyes all over its body that numbered at least ten times those of the Hundred-eyed Winged Serpent, making for quite an eerie look.

This was a third-order saint beast, much like the Bloodfiend Taotie, and it had thirty-eight stars. It was just a bit shy of being a fourth-order saint beast. It was called the Thousand-Eyed Winged Serpent.

White Thousand-Eyed Winged Serpents were considered oddities in the Su Clan, as most of them had joint fire and poison type beasts. However, this white serpent was actually an ice and poison type.

Su Wuyou, with Paradisal Silk in hand and her lifebound beast behind her, glared at Tianming. She seemed like a proud and aloof glacier that only melted for those she cared for. To other people, she was frozen solid.

When the two faced each other off, all the disciples watching forgot to breathe. Even the seniors watched them solemnly amidst the tense, silent atmosphere.

"Where's your lifebound beast?" Su Wuyou said as she charged forward like a fairy. The snake flapped its wings and descended above Tianming.

"They're still resting. I don't need them to deal with you," he said, squinting.

It was pure arrogance, thought most of the people watching. They were Unity stage beastmasters, so unity fields played a huge part in their fights. Fighting without lifebound beasts brought no advantages at all. This wasn't a challenge, it was child's play! He was wasting his challenge opportunity. Even Tianming's most devout fans watched with funny gazes as they wondered what kind of end he would suffer from his arrogance.

Though Tianming knew that Ying Huo and Meow Meow were indeed tired out from the fight with Yuwen Zhenxing and the rest, there was no point in telling them about it.

"I've overestimated you. Just now, I was feeling a little nervous about coming down. But now I see that you're nothing but a pathetic bumpkin who just got lucky." Su Wuyou looked at him like an elite would, when facing a person unbecoming of their status. At that moment, her sword came striking in tandem with her serpent's descent. The serpent's eyes let out a blinding white light that enveloped the whole

arena, turning Tianming's surroundings into nothing but a white void. It was as if he had returned to Prime Tower.

That was the effect of the serpent's spirit-source ability: Sky-piercing Aqualuna. As Tianming's vision turned white, it was as if he had arrived at a cavern. The ground beneath him was moist and chillingly cold. He looked up and saw a full moon that radiated a cold aura. Like tentacles, the frost enveloped his body.

"An illusion?" It appeared that the serpent was capable of that as well as using poisons. Sandwiched between the frosty swamp he found himself in and the moon above, he found it rather hard to move. However, he was well aware that the real killer move would come from Su Wuyou's sword, and the beast's other abilities.

"Li Tianming, I'll send you on your way to your next life!" The next instant, her dress fluttered like a blooming flower falling through the air. Countless sword strikes came striking down from the flower, putting Tianming in a dangerous predicament. Su Wuyou's methods were far more terrifying than Yuwen Zhenxing's brute force attacks. The illusion, coupled with the chill from his surroundings, made him feel like he was surrounded by a sea of poison and frost. Su Wuyou had unleashed her all to kill Tianming, concentrating all the fatal blows in one suspenseful moment.

Tianming looked like he had taken the full brunt of the strikes, unable to save himself, but was that really the case? When Tianming used his third eye to see, the world looked completely different. The illusion was gone and all he saw was Su Wuyou coming at him. The winged serpent above him used another ability, Sea of Death, and rained down poison from above.

"Nothing more than petty tricks to obscure my vision," Tianming said with a smile. Ying Huo and Meow Meow were indeed not needed to help, for Tianming would burst with power in the next moment. He pierced Onyx Dragon into the ground and summoned Archfiend into his hand, sending it whipping out to meet his foe's attacks.

Soul Hook! The chain was aimed at the serpent flying above that still thought Tianming was under the illusion's spell, only to be taken off guard and have its eyes pierced by the chain. It rapidly dodged to one side and the illusion crumbled.

However, the next strike came in quick succession: Death Requisition. Archfiend was too fast and fierce. The serpent attempted to use Sky-piercing Aqualuna once more to confuse Tianming, who simply used Celestial Wings and Spatial Wall to stave off Su Wuyou and countered the serpent with Bewildering Eye. It was one eye against a thousand, yet it caused all of the serpent's eyes to close. While Death Requisition didn't hit the serpent's vitals, it did shred its wings.

Right after that, Tianming withdrew the whip for the next strike. "Transcendence!" This was the most powerful move in the Life-Death Whip Art. The serpent's skin was immediately split open as all of Archfiend's spikes embedded themselves into it and the whip wrapped around the serpent's head.

"Come here!" Tianming pulled, sending the serpent crashing down in front of Su Wuyou. The pull was so strong that parts of the whip tore out, causing the beast to shriek in the most horrid voice imaginable as it blossomed with a fountain of blood. The struggles of the serpent only exacerbated its wounds, as it was still bound by Archfiend.

"Whiteriver!" Su Wuyou cried with rage as she paled. All she could do was watch her lifebound beast dance around like a pup on Tianming's leash, despite the fact that it was a few times his size.

"Impossible! Sky-piercing Aqualuna can't have not worked on you! How could you know where Whiteriver was?! Impossible!"

Su Wuyou was still coldly looking at the situation from above. She found it hard to accept the reality of the situation. What was worse was that Tianming had wrapped the serpent up with his chain-whip and was swinging it around like a bat toward her. Su Wuyou dodged, but her serpent was smashed against a boulder.

"So you're really confident and proud of yourself, eh? Wanna send me to the next life? Don't be afraid, Su Wuyou." He smirked and zipped toward her, dragging the serpent along the ground that was littered with chunks of jagged rocks and slamming it against boulder after boulder along the way, causing quite a lot of small rocks to be embedded in the serpent. All Su Wuyou could do was evade with a grim look. Soon, the serpent didn't even have enough energy to struggle. It was at its last breath. She didn't dare to look up for fear of seeing the disappointed looks others were giving her, as well as the looks of awe they were no doubt showering Tianming with. Her pride had been completely shattered!

"I dare you to let it go and fight me fairly!" she cried helplessly.

"Sure."

She didn't expect he would agree so easily. Tianming kept Archfiend away and drew Onyx Dragon, pointing it at her.

"You guys really are too weak. Aside from the time I had to fight myself, none of the fights I've been in have caused me to use this sword." His gaze taught the rest what ruthlessness truly was.

Faced with Onyx Dragon pointing at herself, and with her serpent on the brink of death, Su Wuyou felt her scalp numb. She would never dare act so arrogantly again.

"Die!" All she could do was yell to muster the courage she didn't have. She knew how humiliating it would be if she really lost. What was worse was she would be seen as a pathetic disappointment by Yuwen Shendu, and wouldn't be able to face him again! There was nothing left for her but to fight to the death!

Using Paradisal Silk, she executed a supreme unity-ranked battle art three times in succession: Godlure, Godchase, and Godslay. All three strikes came, each stronger than the last, and the final strike contained the will to slay a god. Thousands of swords manifested from the three strikes, turning the rocks on the ground into powder as they shot toward Tianming.

Tianming was as calm as a deity. Wielding his sword in both hands, he took a heavy step forward, concentrating his will and causing his ancestral blood to boil.

Voidgod Sword Intent, Starfall!

The strike ushered in countless explosions rising towards the sky. It was an attack meant to fell the stars themselves!

Chapter 282 - Prime Disciple Li Tianming

"Break!" With the Voidgod Sword Intent, Su Wuyou's flowery moves crumbled like dust. The single slash of divine radiance descended. Nobody would have expected a grade seven bestial weapon like Paradisal Silk would snap in half from Tianming's strike, causing a piece to break off and impale itself in Su Wuyou's lower abdomen.

Immediately, her face paled and she spun through the air and landed on the muddy ground. Blood splattered all over as her hair unfurled, making her look like a madwoman. The moment her sword broke, she felt the pride in her heart freeze and crumble to dust. Nothing was left apart from fear—fear of humiliation, fear of facing her seniors, fear of the cheers Tianming received, and worse, fear of meeting Yuwen Shendu.

She had seen Su Zhen step out to stop Tianming. That meant the battle had ended. It took her all to just get back up from the pain, chief of which came from her abdomen. She didn't dare pull the blade out herself, lest she cause herself to bleed out even more.

"I... I've lost..." It was an undeniable fact.

"No, you've been dominated." Tianming didn't continue his assault, but that didn't stop him from delivering yet another figurative blow that caused her to vomit out even more blood from rage.

"Li Tianming!" She grit her teeth, wanting to say more, but realized that her every word was shuddering; she didn't even dare to insult him. With the battle so horribly lost, she was swept up in currents of humiliation.

This wasn't even a fight. Tianming hadn't even been injured and had only used a few moves the whole time, fighting alone without his lifebound beasts. It took only the Life-Death Whip Art to defeat the Thousand-eyed Serpent. Then, he followed that up with one strike from the Voidgod Sword Intent and obliterated her. For her to lose like this, she was no longer befitting of the rank of prime disciple. To think that she had boasted being an unprecedented genius and the only female prime disciple in three generations.

She didn't dare look up, for she knew everyone only had mockery for her and praise for Tianming. She used to be hailed as the most beautiful female disciple and was even called the Snow Mountain Beauty for her cold, aloof demeanor. Nobody would have guessed she would end up so haggard.

Today, she felt horrid leaving the battlefield; her heart was crushed. Tianming had awed the audience and shattered their expectations once more. Before the battle, one of them had said, "For someone as scary as the junior sect master, there's no need for us to guess any longer. I bet he'll defeat Su Wuyou, since he was the one who made the challenge."

That man proved to be right, but only halfway. It wasn't even a battle; it was domination. Many immediately felt the same thing Ye Shaoqing did, that he was a monster.

"Prime Disciple Li Tianming!" someone shouted. Passion was like a poison that spread easily among crowds of people. Even many Grand-Orient guardians joined in the cheering. More than eighty thousand people cheered in unison, shaking the entire arena. Even countless lifebound beasts that lingered in the Grand-Orient Mountains turned toward the sacred mountain. The sect had never been so lively.

Tianming's reputation soared through the clouds, surpassing even that of Yuwen Shendu to a level no disciple had managed to reach. The disciples were filled with fervor for his sheer monstrous abilities. He was a man that could awe the world, move their hearts, and earn their respect.

In actuality, nobody thought Su Wuyou was weak. Even so, she agonized over it, feeling like Tianming had stomped her face into the mud and earned the crowd's cheers for that. She wasn't aware of how grim Yuwen Shendu's father, grandfather, and the other members of the Yuwen Clan were.

It was enough that Tianming had emerged from Prime Tower, but now Yuwen Shendu was probably utterly disappointed in her. That was the thing that made her shake the most. At least, she could already see that her uncle, Su Zhen's, face was so dark it was turning purple. He came to help her out, pulled out the sword fragment, and stopped her bleeding.

"I'm sorry," Su Wuyou said, tears flowing down her face. The battle wasn't scary; her utter defeat was. She wasn't even left with a shred of dignity.

"Tell your father and grandfather that. It's pointless to apologize to me."

"He's too strong..." she said, shaking.

"Yes." He didn't dispute that point. Even he had to admit that Tianming grew at an astonishing rate. Su Zhen brought her out of the arena and toward Fengtian Mountain's hall. She then recalled Qingyu and Yuwen Shengcheng's matter and felt much better. Turning back to Tianming, she suddenly smiled.

"Everyone will have a time when pain comes beckoning. I hope you don't rejoice just yet," she said softly. Tianming missed her words completely. He was being bombarded by cheers, after all.

"Big Brother, you're now a celebrity," Feiling said.

Becoming a prime disciple meant his standing in the sect was firm. Feiling felt moved to tears. They had taken one hard step after another to reach where they were today. He was now on the same level as an Elysian Child. It had only been three months since he left Ignispolis, but he was now on the level of Wei Zikun and the rest.

"From now on, our paths will be much easier. Ling'er, you also played a huge part in this," Tianming said.

"I was only there to cheer for you. You three are the truly strong ones," she demurred.

"What a sweet mouth you have. I must reward you when we're shielded from other people's prying eyes."

"I don't want it. Not to mention, your master will probably be staying by your side to protect you from now on."

"Well, I expect that much to be the case, but there's no way I'll let him stop me from teasing you, Ling'er." He knew that becoming a prime disciple meant everything was different now, and even more people saw him as a thorn in their eyes to be eradicated. But Ye Shaoqing would be there to defend him. As for Tianming, he had even more important things to consider, having achieved his goal.

"Now that I've managed to find some stable footing in the sect, you no longer need to hide, Ling'er."

She had remained hidden the whole time. While it didn't pose too many problems for her life, it was a little unfair for her. It was one of the reasons he had fought so hard. While their path from now on would no doubt be hard, he at least wanted her to be known to the sect.

"Okay," she said, uncharacteristically softly.

"Ling'er, it's a trick. This fellow wants you to undo the Spiritual Attachment so he can take advantage of you. If I were you, I'd continue hiding in his body so he can't touch anything," the little chick spouted at such a touching moment.

"Ying Huo, want me to make you a eunuch?" Tianming snapped.

"Oh? Turning to anger, I see. I guess that was your ploy after all."

"Hahaha..." Feiling couldn't hide her laughter. Her voice sounded ever so sweet and moving.

"I only want others to see Ling'er and decide who the true number one beauty in the sect is," Tianming said. Feiling felt overjoyed, hearing that, but she retained her cool.

Tianming smiled, knowing that they were the most important people in his life. To protect them, he would work even harder and smarter to let them enjoy peace and the adoration of the other members in the sect, as well as earn the elders' acknowledgment.

"Silence," Huangfu Fengyun said, immediately quieting the whole arena down. "Everyone, it doesn't bear repeating that Li Tianming's performance has astounded us all. He passed through the trial on the tower's third floor and defeated Prime Disciple Su Wuyou. By law, he is to replace her. As such, I represent the council of elders and the Grand-Orient Sect to grant Li Tianming of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain the rank of prime disciple!"

His declaration as the first elder was filled with authority.

"Congratulations, Li Tianming."

"Thank you, First Elder. I also thank the council for this honor," Tianming politely said as he formally bowed to accept the rank.

"Not bad. Your growth and safety will now be the council's concern," Huangfu Fengyun said, stroking his long beard with a smile. His words were filled with subtext. On the surface, it implied that the council would nurture him as a prime disciple, but hidden within was a warning to the faction that had grown within the council and considered themselves un beholden to it.

Everyone knew Tianming was Li Wudi's son, the son of a man who bore a blood feud with the Yuwen Clan. Now that the Yuwen Clan reigned supreme, they would never allow the son of their enemy to continue growing. Tianming's future was sure to be fraught with even more trials.

The Prime Struggle still hadn't ended, though, as Yuwen Zhenxing and the others still hadn't left the third floor. Everyone looked at Tianming and the first elder as they gossiped about what might've happened.

"Come to think of it, what kind of expressions would those of the Yuwen Clan, the Su Clan, and their allies be wearing on their faces?"

"I wonder how Su Wuyou will face them later... Hahaha...."

"I heard she's usually pretty arrogant, and even changed the name of the Fengling Faction to the Wuyou Faction. All the female disciples in the sect also have to pay respects to her."

"Who could imagine she'd suffer such a humiliating defeat?"

The thought of her loss brought smiles to many of their faces. Many people were already going to leave, even though the event had yet to conclude—some elders included. Tianming returned to Ye Shaoqing's side. Ye Qing, Ye Shaoqing and Ye Yuxi stood unmovingly, staring at him blankly.

"I understand. My handsomeness shocks even me from time to time," Tianming said. What he didn't expect, however, was that his master would come forward and hug him hard.

"My disciple, from now on, your life is my life," he solemnly said.

"Wait, why are you so serious? I knew you couldn't resist the temptation! My handsome face will bring me ruin someday! Woe is me and the sinful burden I bear!" Tianming mock mourned.

Ye Yuxi was the first one to burst out laughing. "You little brat, why are you no different from Li Wudi when he was your age? It's no wonder you became father and son," she said, shaking her head.

"Perhaps this is something shared by all handsome people. I suppose ugly people have it easy," Tianming said.

"Enough crap. You and your father look as good as I look taller than Azure Dragon Sword Mountain."

Ye Qing shook his head at the banter. While he couldn't include himself in their banter, he had been keen on observing Tianming's growth over the past three months. He patted Tianming on the shoulder without saying anything, but his gaze seemed to say that they would ensure that the pentabane of the Li Saint Clan would have no issue growing until the day they retook the Grand-Orient Sect.

"Is Qingyu not back yet?" Tianming looked around, but she was nowhere to be found. He was a little worried; he knew she wouldn't be one to miss his battle.

"That's right. Even at a snail's pace, she should've finished a round trip by now," Ye Yuxi said.

"Then I'll send someone to look for her. You two keep watch on Tianming," Ye Qing said.

"No need!" Ye Shaoqing said when he looked out the window. He vanished from Tianming's view, having zipped out of the hall.

"What's going on?" Tianming was shocked and worried at what that meant. He hurriedly looked outside and saw some Grand-Orient guardians entering First Grand-Orient Battlefield from the south just as the audience of a hundred thousand were about to leave. The guards numbered close to a dozen. Some pulled carts, within which were objects covered in bloodstained white cloth. The foremost cart was carrying three covered bodies!

At the very front of the group, two elderly guardians carried a girl between them as they entered. While her hair was messy, it was moon-white in color. Her body was covered in ropes and she could barely

move. While she had her head lowered, Tianming, Feiling, and the rest of the Ye Clan immediately knew she was Qingyu.

Chapter 283 - Li Qingyu the Murderer

"Qingyu!" Li Tianming had no idea why Qingyu was in this condition, nor how she had appeared here.

When she left, she'd just said she was going to help a friend and would be back within two days.

Tianming hadn't had time to make things clear before she was gone.

Yet here she was now, bound in ropes. Furthermore, those ropes were digging into her skin and drawing blood.

It was absolutely unacceptable to Tianming!

"What's wrong with Qingyu? Help her!" Jiang Feiling was even more anxious. Her friendship with Qingyu was no less deep than Tianming's sibling bond with her.

Tianming immediately rushed out of the hall.

He was just a tiny bit slower, and Ye Shaoqing had already arrived at the two Grand-Orient guardians.

"What are you doing! That's my direct disciple!" Ye Shaoqing made a move to retrieve Qingyu as soon as he landed.

This change immediately brought all the people who were in the midst of leaving to a halt, as they watched on with confusion.

"Please halt, Elder Ye! This is a murderer!" The two guardians retreated while pulling along Qingyu, keeping her shielded behind them and away from Ye Shaoqing.

"Murderer?"

"What does that mean?"

People began gathering, craning their necks to get a clearer look.

"Nonsense!" Ye Shaoqing barked as he advanced again.

"Ye Shaoqing, stand down!" It was at this moment that a new stream of people exited from Fengtian Mountain's hall. Amongst them was a group of seven or eight elders with Yuwen Taiji at their head.

Even Yuwen Shendu, who rarely showed his face, was included in their number. He was even faster than the elders, and was practically racing over.

"Whatever's the matter, we can say it after you release her!" Ye Shaoqing stepped forward again.

"Stop him!" The dozen guardians all stood in Ye Shaoqing's way. Although they weren't saints, they were still all at the peak of Heavenly Will. It would be difficult to seize Qingyu from them quickly.

Finally, Ye Qing and Ye Yuxi had arrived, along with Tianming.

"Don't be agitated, Elder Ye. We can talk this through." Even the First Elder, Huangfu Fengyun, had appeared.

So many elders had arrived already. That was because the frightening bloodstains on the white cloth were enough to make their imagination run wild!

When Yuwen Taiji's group landed, their imposing presence was obviously much stronger than Ye Shaoqing's faction. All of their gazes locked on to the carts, their expressions distorting.

"What, what is this!" Yuwen Fengtian bit his lips, staring at the guardians.

"Elder Fengtian!" These were obviously guardians belonging to their clan. Faces pale, they quickly knelt down.

"Elder, we were returning to the sect from Kunming City just a while ago, when we encountered some people fighting. So we stepped forward to resolve the situation. Alas, everything was over by the time we reached them, and we were utterly powerless to change things." An old man, mostly likely the head guardian, spoke up.

"What the fuck do you mean by powerless!" Yuwen Shendu roared, his eyes entirely red. He stumbled toward the frontmost cart, upon which three corpses lay, covered by white cloth.

"We beg the elder for forgiveness!" The guardians all bowed down, their foreheads banging on the ground.

Only the young girl was still standing. She lifted her head slightly and shot a helpless smile at Tianming and the rest.

Obviously, only the Yuwen clan knew who was inside the cart. Everyone else was still confused over what had happened, and who exactly Li Qingyu had killed.

Yuwen Fengtian took unsteady steps towards the cart. By the time he reached the cart, his eyes were utterly bloodshot. Then, with trembling hands, he removed the first white cloth.

Underneath was a young girl. Her corpse was already stiff, and there was a fatal spear wound in her chest. However, no one recognized her.

Li Qingyu turned around and almost drew blood from her parched lips.

Yuwen Fengtian lifted up the second cloth!

It was a young man dressed in light golden clothes. His body, covered all over by slash wounds, was a terrifying sight to behold.

"Xuanchen!" A trembling middle-aged man ran over from the seats. However, when he arrived and saw the corpse's state, he collapsed to the ground.

"Li Qingyu, you killed my son!" It was Li Xuanyi.

However, his words fell on deaf ears as Yuwen Fengtian was currently lifting up the third white cloth. His hand was shaking. When he lifted up the corner and saw the shoe, he already knew who it was.

The white cloth finally fell, revealing a corpse in an even more miserable state than Li Xuanchen. It was completely mangled beyond recognition. In fact, moving the white cloth even caused its head to come tumbling down.

Its eyes stared at the sky, full of resentment and fear. The head was quickly recognized by everyone present as Yuwen Shengcheng's.

Staggering backwards, Yuwen Fengtian coughed out blood and collapsed to the ground.

The area had gone completely silent, as everyone looked at the utter terror in Yuwen Shengcheng's eyes.

"Shengcheng, Shengcheng..." Yuwen Fengtian hurriedly got up and tried to put the head back. But what good would that do?

"Shengcheng!" A scream echoed out as a black-clothed young man knelt on the ground. Tears covered his face and the current him resembled a wild beast as he clenched his fist, his veins bulging all over his body.

Everyone who knew him was clear that Yuwen Shendu was a special person.

In ordinary cases, the eldest son of such a clan wouldn't care about his younger brother, or may even enter conflict with him. However, he was different and had heavily valued his brotherly relationship. Yet now, that little runt that never seemed to grow up had lost his head.

"Shengcheng!" Yuwen Shendu screamed again, then rose to his feet, blood leaking out of his eyes.

A burst of wind gushed out, causing his black hair to dance wildly. His eyes, dripping with blood, shifted to Li Qingyu.

The other horse carts were all loaded with the corpses of lifebound beasts, the Sixteen-Winged Gold Kunpeng and Eight-Armed Taotie. However, their corpses weren't whole either.

Clearly, Li Qingyu had killed the pair.

When everyone saw Yuwen Fengtian and Yuwen Shendu's reactions, they knew exactly how large a matter this was! Before this, the two sides were in contention, but they had been waiting for the Realm War to conclude. However, now open conflict might very well explode!

Chapter 284 - Make Her Entire Family Accompany Shengcheng In Death

No one could bear to look at Yuwen Taiji. He looked as indifferent as always, his heterochromatic pupils looking at the young man's corpse. However, the elders by his side stepped away from him, feeling a heart-palpating pressure from standing next to him.

"Hand her over! Make her entire family accompany Shengcheng in death!" Yuwen Fengtian roared. Yuwen Fengtian coughed out blood again. Yuwen Shendu had been trained by his father, but this grandson was the one he had raised. Of Yuwen Shengcheng's bad temper, at least seventy percent had been a result of his pampering!

Yet now he was a headless corpse.

"Halt! No one knows the truth yet. You have no authority to pass down judgement! Killing between disciples falls under the Hall of Inquisitors' jurisdiction. They'll get to the bottom of this!" Ye Shaoqing tried to step forward, but the elders, other than Yuwen Taiji and Yuwen Fengtian, blocked his path.

Their eyes were filled with fire; it was obvious that if Ye Shaoqing took another step, they would attack.

“Qingyu, say the truth!” Tianming had never expected things to devolve to this state. He had never even noticed any conflict between Li Qingyu and Yuwen Shengcheng.

Now, things had gotten troublesome. Tianming had never encountered such a problem before. Originally, things should have been smooth sailing after he became a prime disciple, but now this threatened to upend everything.

“Big brother....” Qingyu still seemed to be confused, but when she saw Ye Shaoqing and the rest still trying to fight for her, she knew this was her only chance to live!

She quickly grit her teeth and solemnly said, “It was Su Wuyou and the others. They used Xiaofu’s parents to threaten her and lure me out of the sect. Yuwen Shengcheng and Li Xuanchen had a carefree fruit. They weren’t only targeting me, but also killed Xiaofu! It wasn’t that I wanted to fight them, but they wanted to turn me into an idiot and never let me come back. I just wanted to get revenge for Xiaofu....”

At the corner of her eye, a tear formed. However, it didn’t fall in the end.

No one made a sound after hearing that. Some things were obvious, as long as you put some thought into it. Li Qingyu was part of the weaker side. If she wasn’t pushed too far, why would she take such dangers and offend the current Yuwen clan?

“So that’s how it is!”

“She must be telling the truth. I know her character, she’s not the sort to offend others. It’s Yuwen Shengcheng who’s arrogant and likes to use his family’s authority to bully others. I bet this isn’t his first time!”

“What an embarrassment. He went with Li Xuanchen and ended up getting killed instead!”

People had already been leaning toward Tianming’s side before. Furthermore, the Yuwen clan had bullied quite a few people in recent years, causing a lot of resentment to build up. Now, the boiling point had been reached. Although it wouldn’t matter if it was just one or two people, it was now a full seventy thousand people saying it.

“He deserved to die!”

“Where’s that Su Wuyou? What prime disciple! She actually used someone’s parents to threaten them?”

“What a joke. Two sixth-level Unity beastmasters, and they still got killed by Li Qingyu after using such schemes. They’re the jokes of our Grand-Orient Sect!”

“It’s obvious what Yuwen Shengcheng was trying to do. We all know what the carefree fruit does.”

“I feel ashamed to be a Grand-Orient Sect disciple like him!”

It wasn’t just the hot-blooded young disciples saying such words now. Many Grand-Orient guardians and exalted masters were adding their voices in, too.

Tianming had no idea Li Qingyu had gone through such things. Every time he'd met Yuwen Shengcheng, the Yuwen scion had never ever shown any such indication of interest in Qingyu.

Tianming wasn't a god; there was no way he could know what Yuwen Shengcheng and Li Xuanchen had said in private. He wasn't even aware of the arrangement Li Xuanchen had tried to make for Li Jincan's marriage.

Although Tianming understood he couldn't be faulted, he still felt some measure of responsibility after what Qingyu had encountered.

Fortunately, she had been able to make them pay the price.

However, he knew the Yuwen clan wouldn't let her off. It would be difficult for her to escape today. But that didn't mean he would just let it happen!

"Grand-Orient guardians, hand Li Qingyu over to the Hall of Inquisitors! They shall leave no stone unturned and seek out the truth. If her words are true, she is not guilty!" Ye Qing said, looking at Huangfu Fengyun. He hoped for him to put in a good word too.

However, despite Huangfu Fengyun's desire, he still held back out of fear of Yuwen Taiji obtaining the Grand-Orient Sword. He knew how resolute the Yuwen clan would be in their goal of killing Qingyu. It was different from when Tianming had become the prime disciple. If he stopped them now, even getting on his knees and begging them may not let him keep his life in the future.

Even though Ye Qing and all of the disciples present were pressuring the guardians to release Qingyu, they still didn't dare to. Because the Yuwen clan was right here!

The circumstances couldn't be any more tense.

The sky darkened slightly, and flashes of blood-red light could be seen in the clouds. No one noticed this omen. The only thing they saw was that Yuwen Shendu stepped forward, ignoring all the condemnation as he grabbed Qingyu by the neck and lifted her up.

One slight squeeze and Qingyu would die.

Chapter 285 - No Right to Kill Me

"Yuwen Shendu, stop!"

A sudden clamor arose from the audience. Many of them jumped from their seats in anger. Their attention was mostly concentrated on Yuwen Shendu. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the reputation the Yuwen Clan had arduously built up over the years had all been eroded by Yuwen Shengcheng.

Though they used to reign supreme and were respected by many of the strong who didn't mind them running the place, it was different now. Ever since Tianming's rise had brought hope back to the Li Saint Clan and Yuwen Shengcheng's humiliating antics increased, public opinion had taken a complete turn.

If Yuwen Shendu really overstepped the Hall of Inquisitors' authority and killed Qingyu, the Yuwen Clan would lose all their reputation among the members of the whole sect. The sect wasn't just comprised of the elites, but also its hundreds and thousands of disciples, guardians, exalted masters, hall prefects,

and elders. If more than half of them were dissatisfied with how the matter was handled, even taking over the council of elders would be pointless. The Grand-Orient Sword would not help much in that regard, either.

It would all go against Yuwen Taiji's grand ambitions.

"Let the Hall of Inquisitors investigate this matter and have Su Wuyou arrested. Nobody has the right to kill Qingyu. Yuwen Shendu, if you dare, you know what's coming! How embarrassing of you to force your way when the rules don't agree with you, huh?"

By now, neither Tianming nor his master needed to say anything. The moment Tianming had reached peak popularity, everyone would stand with him on the matter of Yuwen Shengcheng's vile deeds. Even so, Ye Shaoqing was anxious. Yuwen Shendu wasn't someone who could be normally reasoned with. His eyes were dripping blood as he choked Qingyu and raised her up high. Who knew if he would just go for the kill? Ye Shaoqing looked up to the skies and saw dark clouds above. It was a sign that he was there.

"No, he hasn't succeeded yet. If he forces himself and gets revealed, it would've all been for naught!" He glanced at Ye Qing and they both nodded at each other, then headed to stop Su Yunchi. Ye Yuxi hurriedly turned and left, probably having gone to get help from Huangfu Fengyun. Only if the whole council intervened would Qingyu be saved.

"Elder Yuxi!" Tianming called out to her.

"What?"

"Tell the first elder that Qingyu recently became a pentabane! She has five moons on her arm!"

Ye Yuxi looked at him with disbelief.

"She awakened it at the Imperial Ninefold Gates. You were there that day, too!"

"Understood!" Her eyes seemed much brighter than before.

Both Ye Qing and Ye Shaoqing had heard it too. Ye Shaoqing had been rather suspicious of the talent Qingyu had shown lately. After all, her rate of improvement was completely unlike that of a tribane.

This Li Wudi... he should've told me that first! he cursed in his mind, all the while being glad for her at the same time. However, that didn't change how perilous the current situation was. There was no saying for sure that the first elder could change the situation. With Qingyu's life now in Yuwen Shendu's hands, nobody could stop him from killing her.

"Ye Clan, leave now!" Su Yunchi came down from above and blocked their way. The unity fields of both saints clashed, making it hard for those around them to breathe. Even so, the white-haired youth standing beside Ye Shaoqing approached Yuwen Shendu. He could clearly see Qingyu's legs flailing in the air from the turbulence. Her eyes were now completely red.

The rage within him flowed through his body like molten magma. He had called Qingyu his sister and treated her like family. He said he would protect his family, so how could he just watch as his sister was about to be choked to death? No matter who stood before him, no matter how strong they were, that didn't douse Tianming's rage one bit. It wasn't just him; Feiling, Ying Huo, and Meow Meow rather liked Qingyu, too. None of them could tolerate her life coming under threat.

"Yuwen Shendu, let her go." It was Tianming's first time meeting the legendary Yuwen Shendu, but he could tell the black-clad youth was terrifyingly powerful. Perhaps he was just like Tianming. But the moment he threatened Qingyu, he was destined to stand against Tianming. While Tianming sounded calm, he was filled with killing intent that could burst out at any moment and usher in a river of blood.

"You know better than anyone that there was a good reason Yuwen Shengcheng died. If you have any shred of dignity left, don't harm a weak girl and let me look down on you. Let her go! Direct any hatred or grudge at me!" Both of his eyes were bloodshot. Within the storm, his white hair danced as one of his eyes flared up while the other crackled with lightning.

Two critters climbed onto his shoulders: a flaming chick and a black cat with narrowed irises, staring coldly at Yuwen Shendu. While they weren't a match for a saint, their willpower didn't waver.

"Big Brother..." Qingyu mumbled as she struggled to look at him and teared up. Her face was already pale.

"Don't cry."

"Okay!" She took a deep breath and looked down at her assailant from high up. "My Big Brother is right. So what if you kill me? I guess even you, Yuwen Shendu, is some weakling who only goes after people when they're weakened! Only bastards like you from the Yuwen Clan can do something so despicable! You may kill me today, but so what? Fight me fairly if you dare. Don't be arrogant just because daddy's here! Yuwen Shendu, I'm officially challenging you. Do you dare accept? The likes of you has no right to kill me!"

She was completely different from before. Even with her face pale from being choked, she still struggled to say all that. She was going to challenge the Yuwen Shendu as a mere sixteen-year-old girl! Other people at the brink of death would've been so badly terrified by now, but she issued her challenge with full determination.

"Yuwen Shendu, you're trash like your brother Yuwen Shengcheng! Your whole family are bastards! Fight me! I won't yield even if you kill me underhandedly like that!"

Her hair was messed up and there were traces of blood on her face, making her usual gentle self look uncharacteristically hot blooded. She didn't reveal an ounce of fear when glaring at Yuwen Shendu.

"Shameless! Only a bully like you would take advantage of people when they're weak!"

"Li Qingyu's right! Yuwen Shendu's behavior humiliates the name of our sect!"

"What kind of prime disciple is that? And he says he wants to take the Grand-Orient Sword back? Someone of his character will definitely die once he reaches Heaven's Elysium!"

"A coward like that isn't fit to wield the sword!"

"Yuwen Shendu, let her go!"

Humans were emotional creatures. The moment Qingyu had struggled against fate despite being a petite girl, criticizing Yuwen Shendu along the way, moved the hearts of many. The whole sect had gained a completely new recognition of her.

"How did Xiaofu offend you? Just because she knew me? You killed her, and even her parents! I swear I'll let your whole clan pay the price! I swear Xiaofu will see this from the Yellow Springs! Yuwen Shendu, I want to kill you! Let me go now!" Each word burned like fire into Yuwen Shendu's ears. She had gone all out and knew Tianming would be proud of her. She had never regretted being born into the Li Saint Clan. Her will and refusal to give up was befitting of her clan.

There was once a time when the ancestors of the clan founded the Grand-Orient Sect and dominated the Grand-Orient Realm with the families of the other elders. They had relied on that undying will to establish millennia of glory.

Even though Qingyu was struggling to speak and had bit her lip, causing blood to flow from it, her eyes burned with determination. People saw the willpower of the Li Saint Clan once more. Every one of their members were heroes that climbed out of any kind of predicament!

"Let her go!" the crowd chanted. That was the kind of prestige the Li Saint Clan had. The Yuwen Clan's reputation immediately fell so hard just because of Yuwen Shengcheng alone. In contrast, it only took Qingyu to rile the crowd up. It was a huge blow to Yuwen Taiji, and even Yuwen Shendu's hand was shaking. Had the one he was choking been Tianming, he would remain resolute, but this was Qingyu. Someone like her had dared challenge him to a death battle. Her will to live moved even him.

"Shendu, don't listen to her. Kill her now and we'll deal with the rest!" Yuwen Fengtian said, tearing up every time he saw Yuwen Shengcheng's corpse from the pain. That was the grandson he had raised! He taught him to speak, walk, run, and had seen him cry and laugh. He was even waiting for him to take a wife and have a child with her. Yet he was now a cold corpse. Even if others tried stopping him, he would kill Qingyu.

"Can you shut up now?" Yuwen Fengtian had never imagined these words would come from his son.

Yuwen Taiji shot his father a cold look and continued, "Dad, you're partly at fault for Shengcheng's death."

Yuwen Fengtian's face paled and he took a step back. He clutched his chest from the pang of pain he felt. Even worse, he knew Yuwen Taiji was right. If he hadn't spoiled Yuwen Shengcheng, the boy wouldn't have turned out to be a pathetic wretch that threw his weight around and eventually gotten what he deserved. He found it much harder to breathe.

Everyone had their gazes focused on Yuwen Taiji, knowing that he was the one who could truly decide whether Qingyu lived. By now, Huangfu Fengyun had heard about Qingyu being a pentabane. While he half doubted the veracity of it, he couldn't risk it. "This matter still requires investigation. We will apprehend Qingyu and let the council find a way to settle this. What do you think?"

The other elders were also there. However, none of them dared speak first. After all, their standing could affect the clans they represented. They all feared the Grand-Orient Sword.

Initially, they could've protected Tianming until the Realm Wars was over. But with Yuwen Shengcheng's death, even Huangfu Fengyun couldn't stay put. They wouldn't have hesitated if the Realm Wars were over. Elders behaving like that were truly undeserving of respect. Not even Yuwen Taiji cared much about what Huangfu Fengyun had to say. He stood in front of Qingyu with his different-colored eyes, looking at her. Perhaps her headstrong will reminded him of someone.

Turning back to Tianming, he said, "Li Tianming, you speak as if you're really great and courageous. I'll give you a chance, then."

"What chance?"

"Li Qingyu killed my son, so she must die today," Yuwen Taiji said. Him attempting to force his way caused many to grimace. It seemed that his clan's reputation was no longer his chief concern.

"So?"

"Since you seem to be acting like a good elder brother, I'll give you one chance. You may die in her place. Do you dare?" His intentions were known to all the moment he said that.

"Shameless!" cursed many. He was truly shameless. Now, only Huangfu Fengyun had been told about Qingyu being a pentabane. Not even Yuwen Taiji and the rest were aware of that. The way they saw it, trading a tribane's life for a pentabane's was much more worth it. After all, Prime Disciple Li Tianming was the true thorn in their eyes. They just lacked an opportunity to kill him. But if Tianming wanted to save her no matter what, he could trade a life for a life. Their reputation had gone down the drain anyway, so they might as well go all out to kill him, reclaim the Grand-Orient Sword, then dominate the sect all the same.

As long as Tianming was gone, they wouldn't need reputation if they had the sword. Those here, even the elders, would have to submit to the Yuwen Clan all the same. By then, taking out Qingyu, or even the entire Ye Clan would be a non issue. Killing her here and now wouldn't do much, anyway. Yuwen Taiji now understood what kind of person Tianming was and zeroed in on his weakness.

"Li Tianming, you seem to be the brave type who cares for your sister. So, I ask you whether you're willing to trade a life for a life and die for your sister." His cold voice once more resounded throughout the arena.

"Don't agree to him!"

"Don't fall for it!"

"Junior Sect Master, you still have a bright future! You bear the burden of reviving your clan!"

Quite a few people hurried to talk him out of it. They even cursed Yuwen Taiji at the same time.

"I'll give you ten breaths of time to consider. After that, I'll send your little sister to hell," he said with a sinister smile.

"So you've dropped all pretenses, huh?" Ye Shaoqing said.

"I have indeed."

Come to think of it, for someone who was able to betray his sworn brother and force his wife to take her own life, he was definitely nothing short of shameless. He then began plainly counting down. This was someone truly hard to deal with. At least Yuwen Shendu cared about his reputation, but his father didn't. Even when Yuwen Shengcheng's head was still rolling on the ground, he hadn't batted an eye.

"Yuwen Taiji, you disgrace the Grand-Orient Sect!" Everyone watched Tianming anxiously as his rage festered.

All of a sudden, Tianming stood up. "No need to count anymore!" He turned to Taiji and asked, "How will the trade work?"

"Any way you like, as long as you die," Yuwen Taiji said.

"Then I shall represent my sister in a battle to the death with Yuwen Shendu!" The words chilled many. Only one would survive the battle.

Chapter 286 - I'll Wait for You to Come Home

A fight to the death! Tianming would die standing, not on his knees!

"I know you're still dreaming of the chance to kill me. So, I'm giving you this one chance! Yuwen Shendu, let my sister go. You're someone with ambition. Don't abandon your ideals and become a coward. I never imagined I'd have to deal with you now. This might be the most foolish decision I'm making, but I don't fear you. If you have any ounce of dignity, fight me to the death in the First Grand-Orient Battlefield! Only the victor deserves the chance to take back the Grand-Orient Sword. The one who dies shall be buried here!"

Tianming wasn't being arrogant; he simply had no other way to save Qingyu, who could die at any time from having her neck crushed. That was especially the case with Yuwen Taiji's appearance. He would definitely make sure he dealt with Tianming here and now. The only thing he could do was change a trade for his life to a battle to the death. At least that way, there was a chance for both siblings to survive.

"Big Brother!" Qingyu hadn't shed a tear when faced with Yuwen Shendu, but her eyes were now flowing like a waterfall. While crying didn't look particularly good, a brave girl like her would look pretty no matter what. She had done well this time, and Tianming didn't think she'd gone into trouble on her own accord.

"Qingyu, you did me proud. These heartless people deserve a thousand times what you did to them! I want you to know that it's not just me, all of us love you dearly. Life and death is just that. Nobody can avoid it. We never wished for anything as grand as rising back to the top. All we want is to live up to our consciences!" As he spoke, he turned to Yuwen Shendu. "Now, what's your answer?"

As the audience watched, Yuwen Shendu finally opened his mouth. "Fine. Li Tianming, I'll fight you to the death! We won't stop until only one is left standing!" He then turned to the elders and said, "I hope the council will seal the arena with a heavenly pattern barrier. Do not let anyone enter before one of us dies. We'll fight with the thirty-three elders and hundred thousand audience members as witnesses!"

It was the first time Yuwen Shendu had decided something without his father's input. He turned to Yuwen Taiji, who stared back. "Dad, if I can't kill him and die inside, it'll be akin to me atoning for my weakness with my life. That way, I no longer owe you or the clan anything, right?"

Yuwen Taiji took a deep breath, patted Yuwen Shendu on the shoulder, and looked at Qingyu. "Let her go."

"Shouldn't we wait until we're inside the barrier?"

"There's no need. People who value their word so highly will go in and die sooner or later." Yuwen Shendu knew he was referring to Tianming. That youth seemed like the kind of person who would never run after giving his word.

The duel to the death had been formally established. At that moment, Tianming mustered his courage and fighting spirit to once more shake the whole sect. Everyone looked at him expectantly; not because of his talent, this time, but because of his bravado and sense of responsibility. It was a quality that one needed to truly command respect.

They all knew this was no different from a moth flying toward a flame, Tianming included. However, he felt it was worth it if he got his moment of burning bright with glory. So what if he died from the fire? At least he would go out with a bang in a way no one else could. There was no way he could live in peace if he ran away from his responsibilities, anyway. So he stood his ground. As long as he didn't leave the First Grand-Orient Battlefield, that would do.

"Tianming..." Shaoqing muttered as he watched him blankly.

"Master, that's enough. Just make something delicious for me to eat when I come back."

"I will! You definitely must walk out of here alive!" Ye Shaoqing had forgotten how many years it had been since he'd last shed tears, but he felt his eyes moisten up at this moment. Looking at the dedicated young man, he knew there was no way he could bring him away. The only thing he could do was respect his choice.

After that, the Yuwen Clan and their allies moved Yuwen Shengcheng's corpse away. Yuwen Taiji turned and left without delay. Only Yuwen Shendu remained. He put Qingyu down, and at that moment, Qingyu only just realized she had been sweating from anxiety. She felt as if she had escaped with her life.

"Your brother is rather decent," he said.

"You're rather decent, too. At least you're still human. However, you'll definitely die today!" Qingyu said. She turned and saw Tianming waiting for her.

"Don't cry and wait for me up there," he said before she'd had time to process her emotions.

"Qingyu, let's go," Ye Shaoqing said.

"Big Brother, live on. Otherwise I'll never feel happiness again."

"Looks like I'll have to pull out all my tricks to humor my little sister."

"I'll be waiting at home." She couldn't control her tears and turned to leave, not daring to look back. When the rest had left, only Yuwen Shendu and Tianming remained.

"Going home?" Wouldn't it be nice if he had one? Ever since he had come to the sect, he thought he'd have nobody to rely on. However, Fatepath Peak had become his home. Returning home alive was sufficient reason for him to try his best. Perhaps 'going home' was the only phrase that could spark someone's will to live so strongly. Nobody would want to go back as a corpse to the dismay of their parents, siblings, and friends.

But he knew Yuwen Shendu was supposed to be the one who would go take the Grand-Orient Sword from Heaven's Elysium. He had trained for years and fought hard since he was three, not stopping to rest one bit. His gaze radiated willpower. He was different from a prime disciple like Su Wuyou.

Only one would survive the battle. There was little chance it would be Tianming. He had only done this to help Qingyu escape the fate of death. It was the only choice he could make as an elder brother. However, there was something he still agonized over. A little shakily, he asked, "Ling'er, why don't you... leave now... I'm afraid I'll get you killed."

He had traded his life away himself without asking Feiling about it. If he died here, there was little chance she would survive. He had dragged her into this, despite having promised the Vermillion Bird King he'd protect her.

"Big Brother, you're making me mad."

He didn't expect that to be her reply. She really did sound rather angry; something that she had never shown him before.

"I'm only worried about involving you."

"What do you mean involving me? Remember when you said we would be together in life and death? Big Brother, you shouldn't treat promises like that as jokes. I was serious about what I said. If we only stay together when we live well, but have to part ways when you die, you'll have humiliated me by making me an oathbreaker. I didn't come here with you for fun. I really want to help you and stay with you. Big Brother, I know I'm weak, but I'm not spineless. I hope you can afford me this respect," she solemnly said. Tianming often forgot how serious a person she was, thanks to how cute and uppity she could sometimes be.

"Lately, I've experienced far too much, far more than I ever imagined I would in a lifetime. Oftentimes I think the time I've spent with you is the best part of my life. I finally feel useful. I appreciate all this, and love all of you. I'm willing to stake my life on yours because I want to be with you, not because I want you to defend me. Big Brother, I believe I've fallen in too deep. I don't know what else I'll have in my life if I lose you. You don't have to worry too much about me. I can fight, trust me. Also, Qingyu is my friend and I'm willing to risk my life for her, too."

Her words were more serious than ever. They greatly moved Tianming's heart. He'd always known she was someone he had to cherish at great cost, but what she said had proved him wrong.

"Actually, you're not wrong. You're just thinking too much like a man. What I'm trying to say is I don't want you to abandon me no matter what you do." She sounded far more relaxed now, without the slightest hint of blaming Tianming.

"I got it. There won't be a next time!" he promised. In fact, he found it rather heartwarming that she would be willing to enter the abyss with him despite his wishes.

"Brothers, what about you?" Tianming respected his lifebound beasts. This was a decision he had made himself, yet four lives, including his own, were involved. He wanted to ascertain their dedication one last time. He would never question their will ever again after this time.

Ying Huo, standing on his shoulder, chirped, "While it'll be nice to live on and all, the great Ying Huo doesn't want to do so as a bastard coward. I don't want to be a powerless person who can't protect who I cherish. It's only my life, so what's there to worry about? So what if I die? I'm not afraid. Not to mention, it's not even certain yet who'll die! I'm a Primordial Chaos Beast. I don't believe he can kill me!"

"What about you, Meow Meow?"

"If I get to sleep for ten days after this fight I think it's worth it."

Tianming finally smiled. Now that he had made his decision and involved them, he was going to make sure he'd have no regrets. It was but a simple conversation, yet it had tightened their bonds more than ever before. From now on, all four of their abilities and wills stood together; only then could they exert through power.

"I was lucky to have met you all. After today, I will make sure never to disappoint you!"

"Me too!" Feiling said.

"I'm with you."

"Meow!"

By now, a sturdy heavenly pattern barrier had sealed the First Grand-Orient Battlefield. All thirty-three elders sat outside the barrier to stop anyone from puncturing it, thereby ensuring the fairness of the duel.

They couldn't do much to remedy Qingyu's matter, nor solve it, as Yuwen Taiji had given them an ultimatum. Even Huangfu Fengyun had to leave it to fate. They had to prepare themselves for the loss of someone with so much potential like Tianming. If only he'd had the time to continue improving, he wouldn't have been forced on the path to death. Now, there was naught they could do but bemoan the loss of a genius like that.

It wasn't hard to understand that one would fear for one's life. However, they would never know where Tianming found the will to fight a foe like Yuwen Shendu. Tianming and his lifebound beasts approached him as the audience watched.

Tianming had always had a surprisingly strong fighting spirit. Now that he'd had a heart-to-heart with Feiling and his brothers, his will to live was further cemented and he was further driven to defy his fate. Their existences, their heartbeats, and their boiling blood made Tianming understand that he wasn't fighting alone. His lover and brothers were with him! None of them were cowards who would abandon him when the odds weren't in his favor. He couldn't have asked for a better entourage. Now, he had completely consolidated his willpower.

"Life and death are two sides of the same coin. There's nothing more invigorating than overcoming the fear of death for the sake of others. For their sakes, I'll bear this burden and fight to the end!" Tianming felt the blood in him boil. It was as if his ancestors were watching him, causing their clan's shared soul to resonate.

His foe stood there like a cold god of death. Even when he was facing Lin Xiaoting, Tianming had relied on absolute power to dominate. But Yuwen Shendu was out of his league. He had nothing but cold regard for Tianming's heaven-defying will. As he watched Tianming, he took out a dark grey warblade from his spatial ring and doubled down on his imposing stance. With his blade, he would claim Tianming's life.

A dark unity field sprung from his body, enveloping half the arena in darkness. The darkness was so deep that one couldn't see their own outstretched fingers. Countless unknowns lurked in the world of darkness. Within the field, a gigantic spiked beast crawled out. When it roared, the heavenly pattern barrier shook. This beast had forty-five stars in its eyes; it was a rare fourth-order saint beast, called the Saintfiend Taotie.

The moment it crawled out of the darkness, Tianming understood what a herald of death truly was. The taotie was humongous, and thick, spiked scales covered its whole body. Its mouth opened wide, revealing dense rows of razor-sharp teeth that numbered in hundreds, each as sharp as Meow Meow's electric fang. Its thick tail was spiked like a morning star, and its claws and limbs emanated an aura of death that swirled around his body like snakes.

This beast was a true fighting machine. It didn't seem to have any weaknesses, especially its thick hide that was seemingly impossible to pierce. Though fourth-order saint beast it was, it was still not quite mature. Even so, it was still enough to send chills down others' spines. The beast rested its head next to Yuwen Shendu, who stroked its chin with one hand. They were also brothers who had fought through countless life and death battles. At that moment, they stared coldly at Tianming.

Yuwen Shendu raised his warblade that sported black heavenly patterns—it was a grade eight bestial weapon called Necrodiabolus. A deathly aura circled the blade like a spirit with an unresolved grudge, wailing and shrieking nonstop. His blade, lifebound beast, and stage of cultivation were the reasons Yuwen Shendu was far stronger than normal prime disciples. Even ten Su Wuyous wouldn't be his match.

With the deathly grey aura circling around him, he looked even more like a god of death. When the taotie charged, he also came charging with Necrodiabolus raised.

"Li Tianming, you might've been able to take me on if you had two months' time. However, it's too late now."

"Aren't you declaring victory a little early?" Tianming said with a hoarse voice.

"Nope, not really." The reason he dared claim victory was his certainty that Tianming had no counter to his move.

"I just managed to master a true heavenly-ranked battle art, you see. I'll test it on you first. At least Shengcheng won't go to the grave alone. You better survive this, because I want to execute the battle art in full." He turned into a shadow that covered the skies as he closed in with Necrodiabolus.

Before the taotie reached Tianming, it shot out countless grey snakes from its spikes. They numbered in the tens of thousands and pushed against the heavenly barrier. Darkness gripped everything at that moment. The grey snakes resembled flames as they crackled and approached Tianming. This spirit-source ability was called Necrohell.

The field was now the taotie's home ground. It had impressive physical combat capabilities, and looked like a mountain that was trying to ram its way into Tianming.

Standing above it was Yuwen Shendu, wielding his warblade and unleashing the essence of Heavenly Will from his blade. The true extent of a heavenly-ranked battle art was definitely far stronger than Tianming's simplified one.

"Die!"

The audience watched anxiously as chaos unfolded.

Chapter 287 - Kill Them All

Meow Meow was so gutsy that it took the first step and shot a Chaos Voltball toward the Saintfiend Taotie that was a few times its size. Ying Huo and Tianming took the chance to engage Yuwen Shendu during the opening Meow Meow's Chaos Voltball had created. This was the time when their abilities would be tested. Faced with the attack, Yuwen Shendu smiled from atop the taotie's head.

"Is this the extent of your abilities?" He sounded far too relaxed.

"I'll use this chance to practice. I won't have an opponent like this before I fight at Heaven's Elysium." His blade, wrapped in an aura of death, came swinging down. "Darksoul Hellblade!"

One look was all it took for them to know this was a heavenly-ranked battle art. To master it was extremely difficult, requiring high levels of comprehension ability. Yet Yuwen Shendu had managed that feat in a short one month.

The first strike: Humanity.

The slash seemed to cut its way through mortal concepts that embodied what it meant to be human, symbolizing death's will as it crushed the world to claim what was due. The strike collided with Ying Huo and Tianming's Voidgod Sword Intent. The man and chick both used Countercurrent, forming two strong walls of sword ki.

Yet that blade swing was far too powerful. Tianming's strike attempted to intercept the swing while Ying Huo went for its weak point. They even thought that Yuwen Shendu wouldn't be able to take them both at the same time, but Tianming had underestimated him.

The power of that blow felt like the weight of an entire world of the dead pressing down on him. Not only was Spatial Wall broken through, it even shook Tianming's entire unity field. It was as if the force of death itself had sent Tianming and the little chick flying.

The disparity between the two parties had immediately been revealed. Now, Tianming was the one who was being completely dominated. He felt far more pressured than the time he had faced Li Xuanchen. Worst of all was the sheer killing intent Yuwen Shendu gave off.

Next came the taotie's other spirit-source ability: Claw of Purgatory.

The Saintfiend Taotie's claw burned with a grey flame. Coupled with Necrohell, the taotie was nigh invincible in a melee. If Tianming and the rest weren't careful, they might even suffer from the taotie's

spikes. There was nothing Meow Meow could do to it. In fact, they were busy running from the attacks and couldn't counter at all. Tianming seemed to see death before him as he got up.

"Big Brother, it looks like we can't win. Are you scared?" Feiling asked with a hint of a shiver in her voice. This situation wasn't far off from how Tianming had imagined it would play out. A real Heavenly Will expert was far stronger than him in terms of both battle arts and beast ki. Yuwen Shendu definitely had the upper hand against a fifth-level Unity beastmaster like him.

"Scared?" Even if he were on the brink of death, there was no point feeling afraid. At least, Yuwen Shendu hadn't managed to kill him yet. Now, Ying Huo and Meow Meow were barely able to hold off the taotie's attacks. With the situation playing out this way, most people probably believed he was destined to die.

"Everyone faces moments like this in their life. There's always someone stronger, so this was bound to happen. While I have to acknowledge their strength, that's no reason to give up. Not to mention, I can't afford to give up!"

It was fight or die.

"I don't want to lose either!" Feiling said calmly. All of a sudden, Tianming felt the same sensation he'd felt when he was fighting Mu Qingqing in the Abyssal Battlefield. That time, Spiritual Attachment had resonated the most strongly when Feiling was worried that Jiang Qingluan would die. This time, she was worried for the lives of Tianming and herself.

"I want us to continue living together! I don't want to die, and I don't want you to die either!" It all clicked at that moment. They had survived obstacle after obstacle. By the time Tianming was back on his feet, his body glowed brightly as a result of the Spiritual Attachment. While his power hadn't increased, it grew much more turbulent than before.

Feiling's fighting spirit had been stoked.

"Fight!" Tianming felt like she was fighting by his side. Her incredible abilities moved Tianming's body and ushered in unthinkable change. "Ling'er's giving it her all, so I can't lose to her!"

He didn't know how much more powerful Spiritual Attachment had grown; he just knew his body felt like it was going to explode.

"Yuwen Shendu!" Spiritual Attachment probably reached grade twenty synchronization.

Tianming shot toward the skies. When Meow Meow bloodily clashed once more with the taotie, Tianming came swooping in. Onyx Dragon roared as he used Starfall. The blade shone with thousands of beams of light as he shattered the ground into countless small rocks. The strike was beyond the level of the Unity stage, instantly causing the audience to watch with their jaws dropped. A fifth-level Unity beastmaster actually fought with the power beyond the Unity stage! Yuwen Shendu had just blocked Ying Huo's Skyscorch Featherblast and the taotie was about to swallow it entirely, but they failed thanks to Tianming's strike.

"Now this is getting interesting," Yuwen Shendu said with a cold smile as he jumped off the back of his beast.

Darksoul Hellblade, Pagoda!

This was the second heavenly-ranked battle art. As it was unleashed, the projection of a seven-story pagoda appeared and clashed with Tianming's godly glow. The energies of Heavenly Will exploded between the two combatants.

Quickly after, people saw Tianming crashing into the ground. As for Yuwen Shendu, while he was knocked back quite some way and his hands shuddered, he didn't spit out blood like Tianming did.

"This is getting boring. Kill them!" he instructed his taotie. He'd known from the beginning that he would dominate the fight.

"If I can't even kill Tianming, all my training over these ten plus years would've been meaningless! From the age of three, I persisted. I didn't do this to kill Tianming, but to go to Heaven's Elysium and fulfill my destiny. Give up! Die by my hand! Even a pentabane wouldn't be ashamed to die fighting me!"

Having forced Tianming back, he changed his target to Meow Meow. With but a single slash, the black cat suffered a bloody wound that revealed the bones underneath.

"Buzz off!" the little chicken chirped as it used all three strikes of Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven to get Yuwen Shendu to stop pursuing Meow Meow.

"You know how to use battle arts too? Interesting! I'll kill you first!" Yuwen Shendu let his taotie continue chasing Meow Meow and morphed into a shadow, then charged toward Ying Huo. At that moment, a blood-colored glint came from behind him, causing him to turn back and slash. He didn't think the red beam of light would be that fast. All he could do was dodge, but the sharp spike still managed to find its way into his arm.

It was Archfiend. Yuwen Shendu immediately pulled out the whip's spike. His eyes bloodshot, he let his terrifying unity field surge, turning the battlefield ten times darker. Right in front of him was the bloodied Tianming. He had stood up and wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth. Yuwen Shendu found it really hard to forget the gaze Tianming now cast in his direction; he'd never seen such fierce eyes apart from his own.

"Don't touch my brother! If you force me, I'll kill you even if it means I'll die!" Tianming raised Onyx Dragon and traced a bloody line on the ground.

"Are those your final words?" he calmly asked. One of Tianming's lifebound beasts had already been injured. The slash it took to its back had almost split its spine. Now, his Saintfiend Taotie could take on two enemies without issue.

"Very well, then I'll send you off to the next life. Best of luck, Li Tianming!" He took a single step on the silent battlefield, but instantly made his way to the front of Tianming. It was his most terrifying and fastest slash, and it struck Tianming's arm. It went without question that the arm would come off.

However, people were shocked with disbelief when they saw the black, scaled left arm take the cut without damage at all. Instead, Yuwen Shendu's grade-eight bestial weapon suffered a chip. Even so, Tianming still spat out fresh blood from the impact, making him look much worse for the wear. He tightly grasped Onyx Dragon and glared at Yuwen Shendu like a beast.

"That hand is pretty decent. I'm going to add it to my collection," Yuwen Shendu said, raising his blade for another slash.

Meanwhile, the Saintfiend Taotie was fighting against Ying Huo and Meow Meow. It had used another spirit-source ability, Palebone Mountain, to pierce through half of the arena. The taotie seemed to be having a hard time dealing with the two fast, little critters that were taking on a monster a few times their size and strength. Ying Huo even dared to charge into its mouth for some savage attacks.

"You want to kill me, eh? I'll make sure you'll have a hard time of it! An ugly monster like you shan't be the one to harm me!" Sometimes, its small size gave it a huge advantage.

Seeing that, the black cat cancelled its Regal Chaosfiend transformation and instead attacked between the spaces of the taotie's spikes. The taotie, in an attempt to swat it away, only hurt itself by smacking its spikes straight through its claws. As it shrieked in pain, the black cat appeared like lightning and sent a Chaos Voltball into its mouth, blasting its weak point—the tongue—apart.

Chapter 288 - Tianming on Overdrive

If even his lifebound beasts were fighting so hard to survive, how could Tianming let them do it alone? He took three slashes from Yuwen Shendu on his arm, causing him to tumble and roll from the force. This time, he was being horribly beaten up, but it only fueled him even further. He got up again with sword in hand. As long as he was still alive, he had a chance.

"Do you still want to hold on? Can't you tell I'm toying with you? You would've died otherwise," Yuwen Shendu said, snickering. He had never been a person like that, but this time, his heart was twisted.

"I heard those of the Li Saint Clan have an unyielding will that allow them to completely turn the tables. Li Tianming, I'd like you to show that to me. In this world, power dominates. There's no such thing as going against fate. That's why your vain struggle is only a joke at the expense of the Li Saint Clan. Otherwise, you wouldn't be in such dire straits that anyone can push you around like that. Changing fate is nothing but a fool's dream."

He was fully capable of saying that, as he currently held an overwhelming advantage. His next sword strike targeted Tianming's chest, parting his skin and revealing his ribs. Even so, Tianming still stood back up and glared coldly at Yuwen Shendu. He moved his hand as well as his sword.

Tianming was completely immersed in his own world. Nobody knew how he still managed to muster that kind of willpower. Even when blood was spurting out of his chest nonstop, he didn't so much as furrow his brow. Not to mention, they couldn't see the tower within his lifebound space letting out a warm, white light that stopped his bleeding and was gradually healing his wounds.

"Big Brother, can you let me go all out?" Feiling asked. She, too, had felt the pain of the cut in her chest. Seeing him get physically hurt made her feel even more pain than he did. Her eyes in her spiritual form shone with radiant, fiery brightness. It was a golden glow that had never been seen on her before. What was she going to do?

"Ling'er, it's fine. I'm only one step shy. As long as I can take that step, we'll survive!" He was now putting up his last stand. Nobody could suppress the rampant emotions he was feeling.

"I know. I don't want to die either, Big Brother. Let me give you a push for that last step, alright?" she asked with a shaking, but determined voice.

"Is grade twenty synchronization not enough?" Tianming knew that had it not been for her help, he would've long been killed.

"No. I can go one step further, but...."

"But what?"

"I'm afraid I'll be in deep sleep for some time. But at least it's better than dying!"

"What do you mean?"

"My fifth ability just awakened. It's called Soulburn. It's a little like Spiritual Attachment, but used on the enemy's body. I'll be able to burn up most of his beast ki and greatly weaken him!" It was unquestionably a strong ability.

"So there's a side effect?"

"Yes. After Soulburn, I will be forced to remain dormant in spiritual form for a time. Thankfully, I have a suitable vessel to inhabit: Ling'er's Love." She knew what he was worried about and clarified immediately.

"I got it." The speed with which he communicated with her was much faster than even his telepathic communication with his lifebound beasts.

"Big Brother, while I might have to leave your side for quite a while, at least we'll survive. It won't be the perfect ending we were hoping for, but I know you well enough to know that you'd pick this over anything else, right?" She knew how much he must be agonizing over her, but they didn't have the luxury of choice this time around. At the brink of death, there wasn't much else to consider.

"I hope that when I wake up next time, I'll be able to see how strong you've become." It seemed she wasn't going to give him a chance to refuse. This was their only hope!

"Guess I'll be imposing on you for this. Don't use it again without my permission, alright?"

"I know. I'll definitely ask you whenever I want to use it." She smiled. Even in her spirit form, that didn't detract one bit from the radiance her eyes were emitting. There was nobody who looked nearly as stunning as her. Even though Tianming had basically chosen suicide, she was no different. Even so, she shone far brighter than ever. It was utmost bliss for her that she could manage to contribute to those she cared for. Before now, she wasn't powerful enough with only her four abilities. But now, when the seal on her thumb was finally removed, this golden flame was her first ever fang.

Soulburn! The moment Yuwen Shendu came in for another slash to kill Tianming for good, a golden flame gathered on Tianming's body and shot toward him.

"What's this?!" he said with a start, then circulated his beast ki to force the flame back. Little did he expect that his beast ki would fuel the flame even more. What was worse was that the flame immediately seeped into the forty-five spirit sources in his body, setting them alight. As he burned, his beast ki deteriorated at blinding speeds. This was something he had never experienced, nor even heard

of all his life, yet it was happening. Soulburn was a nightmare for beast ki; it was even more powerful than Spiritual Attachment.

"Yuwen Shendu, the world is filled with all kinds of possibilities. You thought you had our lives in your hand, but we'll show you that underestimating us will cost you!" said the flame. It was the voice of a brave girl who had finally bared her fangs. In the next moment, the flame swallowed the last of his beast ki, making him feel true fear for the first time. When he looked back up and saw Tianming's gaze, he shuddered.

"I swore I wouldn't let anyone harm her, but today I had to make her risk her life for my survival. Yuwen Shendu, there are many different kinds of people in this world. Don't think you've seen through all of them already."

Tianming had seen how fiercely Meow Meow and Ying Huo had fought to protect their family, to the point that they had to stuff their leaking innards back in to continue fighting. He had seen Feiling consume herself to burn Yuwen Shendu's beast ki and give him the slightest chance of survival. None of them were people he could afford to let down. Tianming felt like he was a volcano that had lain dormant for ten thousand years; the magma was gathering at his chest, and it all burst out this moment.

He clasped Onyx Dragon with both hands, his blood flowing down and fusing with the sword. Looking up, he saw the Prime Tower, upon which the countless heroic ancestors of the Li Saint Clan were sitting, observing him. Soulburn could only lower Yuwen Shendu's level. If he wanted to survive and not waste Feiling's sacrifice, he could only rely on himself. His body burned and surged with countless bolts of lightning.

"You called the Li Saint Clan a joke that can be pushed around by anyone. You said that changing fate is just a lie I tell myself. That only shows that you've never truly understood our ancestors. You've done nothing but cultivate and think yourself above others, yet you don't know the kind of struggles mere mortals have to face to resist their fate.

"Yuwen Shendu, you've never been able to see their hardship, training on your privileged pedestal the whole time. What's worse is that you don't understand how people like me have to forge our own path to cultivate and break the chains of fate. Since you don't know, you have no right to comment on our path, nor mock our fighting spirit. Ignorance is no excuse. Not everyone can afford to master the life and death of others from up high! You'll never understand how people like me can change our fates by fighting to survive to the point we're able to stand here and face the lofty likes of people like you!"

He wasn't trying to preach to Yuwen Shendu. Instead, he was reminding himself that the Li Saint Clan never cowers in the face of death. That had been the case since the founding ancestor had fought to form the sect through five decades of turbulent hardship.

"Without the Li Saint clan, the Yuwen Clan would never have come to exist as it does today!"

Tianming had joined the fight to trade his life away. From the very beginning, he had shown more courage than Yuwen Shendu, challenging someone far beyond his league. The whole time, he'd been considering what he needed to go from Starfall to Cosmic Break, and now he understood.

The moment Yuwen Shendu looked down on his clan's heroic spirits—even mocking them—the moment he told Tianming that he could control and toy with his life, Tianming finally crossed the last divide. With

his mortal body, he transcended life and death, went against the current of nature, felled the stars, and broke the cosmos!

It wasn't just him; Feiling was also a mere mortal, an existence not unlike that of an ant. But now, the both of them together showed Yuwen Shendu what fighting spirit, courage, mastery over fear of death, and changing their fates looked like.

The audience saw Tianming fearlessly charge toward Yuwen Shendu with Onyx Dragon raised in both hands and cheered. Right now, he was without Feiling's Spiritual Attachment. Even so, the will of the Voidgod Sword Intent soared to a hitherto unimaginable peak. The ancestral blood in the Kunpeng Sacred seal gathered into his sword intent. Even the ten bane-rings eerily glowed, as if they were about to be torn apart by Tianming's will. He unleashed Cosmic Break, sending sword ki bursting out. His sword intent took the form of a divine black dragon charging out of its prison, a sight that shocked even Yuwen Shendu.

"Go away!" He hated the feeling of being suppressed. It was as if he was the weakling even though he hadn't lost yet. He was once more fueled with unending rage.

"Li Tianming, it's over!" He used the strike he'd just comprehended a few days ago: Darksoul Hellblade, Rebirth!

This strike was even more fearsome than Pagoda. It embodied the will of a reaper harvesting droves of souls. It was just like Yuwen Shendu, who loftily decided the fate of the so-called mere mortals. This slash symbolized his endless pride.

But when he struck out, he immediately winced as he noticed there was barely any beast ki he could utilize for the move. This was the greatest mistake he had ever made. He had underestimated Soulburn and Cosmic Break's might, but the power behind his strike was still substantial. The grey aura that surged from it crushed many rocks to dust.

Even so, it was no match for Cosmic Break when it came crashing down.

"Dieeeee!" Tianming roared. Everyone watched as the strike came crashing down, breaking through Yuwen Shendu's slash like it was bamboo and sending Necrodiabolus flying. Right after, Onyx Dragon speedily cut into Yuwen Shendu's head.

The audience immediately fell silent. Yuwen Shendu had blanked out the moment his blade was knocked from his hands, then again when Onyx Dragon cut into his head. He had never felt this pressured before, but it looked like it had all ended. Everything disappeared with an instant of pain—he had been completely bisected by that strike and died, just like that.

That strike was too fast, fierce, cruel, and explosive. If Yuwen Shendu had a move just as powerful, Tianming would've died long ago. He could never understand to what extent someone fighting for their survival would go, and Tianming didn't even give him an instant to make his peace. He ended him with a strike without any hesitation at all. Yuwen Shendu wasn't even given the chance to feel fear, nor speak a single word. Even if he had, nobody would find out about it, for it was all over.

The bisected corpse blasted apart and let out rivers of blood, staining the only youth that remained standing red. Tianming breathed out deeply, picked up his sword, and turned to charge at the Saintfiend Taotie without so much as sparing Yuwen Shendu's fresh corpse a glance.

By now, he had dominated the battlefield in its entirety.

Chapter 289 - The Ancient Black Book

As the Saintfiend Taotie roared in rage, eager to slaughter the two annoying flies buzzing about before it, its spiritual connection to Yuwen Shendu was suddenly cut off. It dully looked over, only to see Yuwen Shendu's bisected corpse flying in opposite directions. Meanwhile, Tianming was charging towards it. At that moment, the Saintfiend Taotie issued an earth-shattering roar, heartache, misery, and disbelief apparent in its voice.

Yuwen Shendu had spent ninety percent of the battle crushing Tianming. Just a moment ago, it was Tianming who was headed for death, so how had Yuwen Shendu died instead? The Saintfiend Taotie felt its world collapse. By the time it reacted, a monstrous rage filled its being.

But did that matter?

In the time the Saintfiend Taotie took to respond, Ying Huo had flashed towards it. The little chick was covered in blood, but a blazing flame burned in its tiny eyes.

Voidgod Sword Intent, Starfall!

The Saintfiend Taotie's eyes were its target. The little chick's move was both swift and ruthless, reminiscent of Tianming. Seizing the opportunity, the little chick violently slashed across and pierced the taotie's eyelids.

At the same time, Meow Meow's Chaos Disaster split open its wound, nine thunder serpents exploding as countless black lightning bolts rushed crackled in it.

Throughout the battle, the taotie had had the upper hand. This was the first time it had been injured. Obviously, the attacks weren't enough to slaughter the taotie, only serving to anger it instead.

Full-blown hatred erupted from it.

Through its remaining eye, the taotie spotted the white-haired man before him. It roared once more and countless grey flames burst toward Tianming, each sullied—Necropossession!

In that instant, the black cat transformed into its Regal Chaosfiend form and struck from the side. The black cat wrapped its body around the taotie's head, electric fangs chomping down on its unwounded eye.

"Die!"

As soon as the taotie opened its gigantic mouth, Ying Huo stormed in and wedged itself between the taotie's teeth, blasting Infernal Blaze right down its throat. The raging flames spread into the taotie's stomach and intestines. At the same time, the taotie exerted its ability and Necrosynthesis and Infernal Blaze collided in its throat. The collision between the two forces caused an explosion that blasted a huge

bloody hole in its neck. Its spirit interlinked with Ying Huo's, Meow Meow's three-pronged electrospike plunged into the bloody hole, stabbing the taotie's internal organs.

Although the two Primordial Chaos Beasts were still younglings, half of their combat prowess was influenced by Tianming while the other half originated from their own aggressive nature.

"Hold it down!"

In the blink of an eye, Tianming flew toward them. Upon hearing his words, Meow Meow roared, exerting all its strength to pin the taotie's head to the ground.

Tianming soared into the sky, both hands grasping his sword, then struck out with Cosmic Break! This strike was every bit as brutal as the one that killed Yuwen Shendu.

The attack landed squarely on the taotie's wounded eye, and Onyx Dragon pierced through its thick flesh.

Meow Meow finished the taotie off by smashing its head into the ground. Its neck severed, the Saintbeast Taotie leaned back, collapsing with a thunderous roar that swept the dust from the ground into the air. Blood gushed out like a geyser, dying all three brothers red.

The Saintbeast Taotie had breathed its last.

In the battle of life and death, the brothers acted in sync up until the last moment. They could feel the surge of passion within.

"Tianming, not bad! You've convinced me!" Ying Huo laughed, despite an almost completely severed wing.

"You too!" Tianming wiped away the blood from his lips, breaking into a breathtaking smile.

"Enough with the nonsense. Since we're done here, I'm going to sleep."

Meow Meow climbed to its feet. Due to the taotie's sharp spikes and claws, Meow Meow was covered in blood. During the last moments, as it held down its opponent's head, the latter's claws almost tore through its abdomen.

In fact, it wasn't just sleepy, but badly wounded as well.

Fortunately, they had the aid of the Prime Tower, otherwise Tianming would be lost.

"Meow Meow, come back and recuperate." Glancing at Meow Meow, Tianming revealed a smile. This guy was innocent and lively, lazy and frustrating, but in fact, its heart was like a mirror. In the battle of life and death, it had fought fearlessly, never once considering retreat.

"What's that look!"

Vigilantly glaring at Tianming, Meow Meow soon returned to his lifebound space, tail wrapped around his balls to prevent Tianming from messing with his family jewels.

Tianming threw his head back in laughter. What an interesting little thing.

"I need to recuperate as well. You can handle the rest," Ying Huo said. Although Yuwen Shendu was dead, the subsequent consequences would be a challenge.

Outside the barrier, a fight was close to breaking out. After a brief spiritual communication, Tianming had the beasts return to his lifebound space. As soon as Ying Huo and Meow Meow returned, light from the Prime Tower enveloped them. Although they weren't immediately lively and hopping, they would recover in time. Tianming noticed that the light had the ability to remove the residual death energy, similar to purification.

"The Prime Tower is amazing! Not only can it heal their injuries, it also provides endless spiritual energy for my lifebound space. I can't help but wonder how remarkable the Grand-Orient Sword is."

The Grand-Orient Sword was likely a weapon for attacking.

Outside the barrier, the audience was buzzing, adding to the chaos. However, Tianming turned a deaf ear and stood there waiting with Ling'er's Love in his hand instead.

Right then, two light rays emerged from Yuwen Shendu's body that eventually combined and flew straight toward Tianming. The brilliant light rays paused, and in that moment, Tianming seemed to catch a glimpse of Feiling's beautiful smile. When the light entered Ling'er's Love, a golden symbol appeared on the gem, magnifying its brilliance.

"What's this symbol?" It appeared to be an amalgamation of the seals on Feiling's fingernails. "I wonder what sort of secret could be hidden within Feiling's body...."

Although Feiling was weak and possessed no lifebound beast, Tianming was convinced there was more to her birth than met the eye.

"Ling'er, sleep well. You mustn't use Soulburn without my consent in the future," he said, lovingly caressing the necklace. With how long they had been together, being unable to see or speak to her for a whole month would be almost too much for him to bear.

Fortunately, Soulburn wouldn't cause any damage to her.

The necklace trembled slightly, as if responding to his reluctance. Although she was sleeping, she wasn't fully unconscious. Perhaps she could even perceive Tianming's thoughts in this state.

"Too bad, I wanted to take advantage of your absence to flirt with a few other girls. I didn't think you'd be able to monitor me after falling asleep," teased Tianming.

The necklace smacked his palm several times, as if to vent her dissatisfaction. And this was called lying dormant? It was equivalent to resting from an injury. Fortunately, recovery was possible.

"Ling'er, rest well." Upon wearing the necklace around his neck, Tianming felt as if they were joined to each other. It seemed he had taken advantage of her.

Such a beautiful necklace obviously looked sissy on a grown man.

"This time, we worked together to escape from peril." If it weren't for Feiling's Soulburn, Tianming might have failed to defeat Yuwen Shendu, even if he employed Cosmic Break.

"Soulburn's power is outrageous, but she can't take any more risks." This was Tianming's principle. Although men and women were equal, he would rather risk himself a thousand times than allow her to take risks.

"The desperation I faced today wouldn't have happened if I was strong." The battle deepened his insight. After undergoing the metamorphosis of life and death, both feelings between Feiling and Tianming, as well as the wonderful connection between beastmaster and lifebound beasts, were strengthened.

Right then, the conflict outside seemed to intensify. But at present, the barrier remained intact.

"I'm afraid the Yuwen clan will shed all pretense of cordiality." Tianming fled in Ye Shaoqing's direction, in fear of losing his life.

"What's this?"

As he was about to leave, he discovered Yuwen Shendu had something in his hand—a black book. With a flick of Archfiend, the book reached his hand. Upon closer inspection, he realized it was covered in heavenly patterns.

Could heavenly patterns be drawn on a book? Who could have created this?

He sensed a terrifying power from the book, similar to the heavenly pattern barrier. Perhaps it possessed special effects.

"Just before I slaughtered Yuwen Shendu, he urgently pulled out this book, as if to save his own life. Unfortunately, he wasn't fast enough." Perhaps this was the trump card he was prepared to use in the Realm Wars.

"Unfortunately for him, he died before he could use his trump card." Tianming shook his head. Indeed, those who defied destiny would never underestimate their opponents, much less allow them to seize an opportunity. Once that happened, only one ending awaited them: death

Just as he put away the ancient black book, the heavenly pattern barrier above his head finally shattered.

"Danger!"

Most of the thirty-three elders had joined forces to stabilize the barrier, so Tianming had the chance to slay the Saintfiend Taotie and secure the book. However, the heavenly pattern barrier was now broken, and the ones behind it were of course the Yuwen clan and their cronies.

How would they feel now that Tianming had killed Yuwen Shendu?

However, Tianming couldn't care less. At the exact moment the heavenly pattern barrier was broken, he darted toward Ye Shaoqing.

Chapter 290 - The Yinfiend Taotie, Yangfiend Taotie, and the Azureflame Dragon

Ye Shaoqing and Ye Qing had prepared themselves for a battle. As soon as the barrier shattered and Tianming approached them, Ye Shaoqing handed him over to Ye Yuxi and stood in front of them.

"Go!"

The corners of Ye Yuxi's eyes turned red and she pulled Tianming's hand, hastening in the other elders' direction. A scan of the audience revealed the passion in their eyes—not hatred, but fanaticism and admiration.

As soon as Tianming left the heavenly pattern barrier, what he heard was an avalanche of cheers.

"Junior sect master!!" The entire Grand-Orient Sect was roaring for him!

Their fiery eyes expressed exactly how they felt witnessing Tianming defy destiny and killing Yuwen Shendu—the rush, the burst of excitement, the disbelief.

From the very start, the audience could see just how big a gap lay between the two. Tianming's death was certain. They shook their heads and sighed, helpless as they watched Tianming step into the fatal fight.

But who would argue after the display of boldness, staking a life for a life? Watching Tianming being forced to the end of the line invoked feelings of remorse and regret, even more so than Li Wudi's tragic accident. Li Wudi had never shown such admirable heroism and boldness. Who would risk death and challenge their own limits just to keep their sister alive?

All these regrets turned into shock and admiration the moment Tianming had killed Yuwen Shendu, reversing destiny in that instant. However, with the barrier in place, Tianming hadn't heard a word from the audience until he stepped outside.

The slash of his sword was unparalleled. Even though many had failed to clearly observe how he slaughtered Yuwen Shendu, it didn't matter anymore. What mattered was that Tianming had survived a battle of life and death against impossible odds. Going into the battle, no one could have predicted today's outcome, certainly not the Grand-Orient Sect disciples or Yuwen Taiji and company.

As they watched Tianming being tyrannized by Yuwen Shendu, their faces lit up in undisguised schadenfreude, well aware of Tianming's impending demise.

Yet such a scene suddenly appeared.

Meanwhile, Yuwen Fengtian was still in the middle of declaring that Yuwen Shendu should take his time to honor the memory of Yuwen Shengcheng. But with a turn of the sword came instant death.

For a moment, Yuwen Fengtian had stared blankly. He rubbed his eyes. No mistake; Yuwen Shendu was split in two. Next, he had watched Tianming slay the Saintfiend Taotie. He rubbed his eyes again, but it was indisputable. Looking up in astonishment, he recognized the same look on Su Yunzhi and the others' faces—pale, livid, and even unstable.

"That's strange. Did someone cast a smokescreen?" asked Yuwen Fengtian. However, he received no reply.

Just then, an earth-shattering roar shock shook the Grand-Orient mountains.

"Yuwen Shendu is dead!"

Those words pierced his heart like hundreds of millions of swords. As the rage welled up inside him, Yuwen Fengtian spat a mouthful of black blood, crumpling to the ground in that instant. His head banged against the ground and his vision turned black.

Everyone knew what these two grandchildren meant for the Yuwen clan, who planned on dominating the Grand-Orient Sect in the future; especially Yuwen Shendu. For so many years, Yuwen Taiji had specially trained him for the Realm Wars and winning the Grand-Orient Sword, so their clan could completely control the Grand-Orient Sect.

How much had the Yuwen clan sacrificed to produce a descendent strong enough for the Realm Wars? Yuwen Shendu was only present today to watch the Prime Struggle, but as a result, he had lost his life.

This outcome didn't call for mere distorted expressions; it was the collapse of their entire world.

Face ashen, Yuwen Kaitai knelt on the ground, his eyes almost blinded by excessive rubbing. Elders Su Yunzhi, Su Jiudao, Chen Nantian, and the others were bereft of speech, the old men shocked witless.

This was all due to Yuwen Shendu's significance. He, the core of all their plans, was now gone! Even Elder Su Zhen couldn't wait to slap himself and prove that he was only dreaming.

The magnitude of this blow was equivalent to killing them. Without Yuwen Shengcheng as backup, there was no chance to remedy the situation. If they learned Yuwen Zhenxing had been burnt to ashes, perhaps Yuwen Fengtian would vomit blood and faint all over again.

But who could they blame for today's outcome? Who had raised the headstrong, arrogant, and mindless Yuwen Shengcheng? Who had demanded Tianming stake his life for another life? Was it wrong for Tianming to survive?

Finally, they turned to Yuwen Taiji with trembling eyes. Even when they recovered Yuwen Shengcheng's body, he seemed to show no reaction.

And now? His dream vanished in an instant!

While they gaped, Tianming chopped off the Saintfiend Taotie's head. Yuwen Taiji's black and white eyes remained an expressionless mystery, but a trickle of fresh blood from his lips blatantly stood out, his murderous intent bursting at the seams.

Without so much as a word, he pounded his fist into the heavenly pattern barrier. Despite shaking, the barrier remained intact. Huangfu Fengyun and the other elders exchanged meaningful looks, stabilizing the barrier through this crisis.

If it weren't for their sheer numbers, the barrier would have broken. How would Tianming find the opportunity to flee to Ye Shaoqing? Once the barrier was broken, Tianming would be taken away. However, would the Yuwen clan stop at that? Yuwen Taiji was obviously crazy.

For many years, he had never revealed such a ferocious expression. Now that his world collapsed, he came forth as a God of death.

Two gigantic lifebound beasts appeared behind him, one pure black and the other pure white. Yuwen Taiji was a twin beastmaster. Each of his lifebound beasts were five times the size of the Saintfiend

Taotie, with more than fifty stars in each eye, indicating they were fifth-order saint beasts that had matured and were at their peak.

The Yangfiend Taotie, the white one shrouded in mist, was as apathetic as the heavenly laws. The black Yinfiend Taotie wrapped in dark fog almost resembled the Saintfiend Taotie, suggesting it had evolved from said beast.

One black, one white, they towered beside Yuwen Taiji, their eyes filled with bloodlust. In that instant, chaos ensued. Who would still care about the Realm Wars?

Wiping the blood from the corners of his lips, Yuwen Taiji locked on to Tianming, heading straight for him with the two fifth-order saint beasts. Even from a distance, those cold eyes caused goosebumps to pickle across Tianming's skin.

"Don't look at him!" In a show of dominance, Ye Yuxi pulled Tianming into her arms, blocking Yuwen Taiji's sight.

Yuwen Taiji swooped in for the kill. After a moment's hesitation, the other elders behind him followed. However, they didn't summon their lifebound beasts for the time being.

On Tianming's side, Ye Shaoqing stood at the forefront, sword in his left hand. An azure beast suddenly appeared in the First Grand-Orient Battlefield.

"The Azureflame Dragon!"

The audience recognized it at once; it was Ye Shaoqing's lifebound beast, another fifth-order saint beast. The azure dragon befitted its name. On its head were a pair of authentic dragon horns and azure scales burning with blue flames covered every inch of its body. Its fiery eyes were as big as copper bells and its size was similar to Yuwen Taiji's taoties.

Both mature beasts circled in the sky, while Ye Shaoqing leaped on the back of the dragon, sword in his hand. In the face of Yuwen Taiji's terrifying force, one man and one dragon stood fearless.

A cacophony of voices rose among the audience. Such beasts were a rare sight to behold.

"How dare you stop me! Die!!" The thousand-meter-long blade in Yuwen Taiji's hand sliced down decisively. Wherever it swung, people hastily retreated.

The lone Ye Shaoqing split the air with his sword. Cosmic Break! The power from his sword far surpassed Tianming's.

Blade against sword resulted in a deafening boom.

"He deflected it!" The disciples couldn't help cheering for Ye Shaoqing.

"Yuwen Taiji! You're the one who insisted on a battle to the death! Since Yuwen Shendu lost his life, you can only admit that he wasn't strong enough. As the ninth sect elder, instead of keeping to your word, you flew into a rage from embarrassment. What about your dignity?" Ye Shaoqing was every bit as imposing as he resisted the attack.

Ignoring his words, Yuwen Taiji steered his lifebound beasts for another attack. Everyone was well aware he had gone mad and dropped all pretense.

"How overbearing! If Li Tianming dies, Ye Shaoqing would be completely helpless."

"Yes, the junior sect master defeated Yuwen Shendu fair and square. A defeat is a defeat, how can Yuwen Taiji behave so shamefully?"

"Does Yuwen Taiji regard the Grand-Orient Sect as his? Doesn't he know he's doomed to never acquire the Grand-Orient Sword?"

The words served as a reminder to many. Without the Grand-Orient Sword, Yuwen Taiji's deterrence would decline, at least in the eyes of the elders.

"Yuwen Taiji, stop at once!"

The voice of an elder drifted into Tianming's ears. He looked up and saw a white-haired figure appear beside Ye Shaoqing. It turned out to be the first elder, Huangfu Fengyun. As part of the older generation, his reputation was naturally unmatched.

Besides, he wasn't alone. The fourth elder, Shangguan Jingshu, appeared beside him. Next, the fifth elder, sixth elder, and the rest made their stances known.

Out of the thirty-three elders present, eight of them were standing on Yuwen Taiji's side. Among the other twenty-five elders, some were neutral, while others had secretly turned to Yuwen Taiji. However, they all stood together now on the opposite side.

How truly terrifying these elders were when they possessed the same resolve!