

The Ages 291

Chapter 291 - Realm Wars, Yueling Long

Tianming watched it all in shock; the twenty-five elders seemed like they were trying to protect him. He recalled that back before he had engaged in the life and death battle, he had asked them to help Qingyu and not a single one of them had bothered.

"This is just how it is. Don't think too much. Just know that from now on, they'll fervently protect you," Ye Yuxi proudly said. She seemed to adore him more and more as her gaze seemed to suggest.

"Why's that?"

"It's simple. Back then, they were afraid of the Grand-Orient Sword. Not only could it greatly raise Yuwen Taiji's power, it's also a symbol of authority. Once he gets the sword, the elders in his hidden faction would surface and proclaim their support for him. The elders themselves aren't even sure who belongs to the secret faction supporting Yuwen Taiji, so they're all afraid. But with Yuwen Shendu's death, it's no longer possible for him to get the sword.

"Not to mention, you're the junior sect master and you've taken Yuwen Shendu's place. Coupled with the fact that you're in the Li Saint Clan's Apex Branch, they have a reason to side with you now. A Yuwen Taiji without the Grand-Orient Sword isn't capable of facing off against the combined might of those twenty-five. Basically, you're the key. Without you to be their beacon of hope, even they wouldn't dare strongly oppose Yuwen Taiji as long as he doesn't possess the sword."

Tianming's performance had been far too impressive lately. As long as his rate of growth could keep up, he would be the foundation upon which the sect's rise back to dominance would be built. He was far more promising than the Yuwen father and son, given that he was no doubt a person on the level of the founding ancestor. If the ancestor could achieve that much, Tianming would at least be able to match his legacy.

Given the tumultuous relations between the Yuwen and Li Saint Clans, when it came time to pick a side, they would definitely choose the rising Tianming over the Yuwen Clan that had lost two of its heirs. Thus, the council of elders had decided to resist the Yuwen Clan and protect Tianming. The eight elders on the Yuwen Clan's side stood no chance.

"Yuwen Taiji, that was a battle to the death with all the elders here as witnesses. You personally agreed to it, so you'd better not cause any commotion now!" Huangfu Fengyun said charismatically, belying his usual appearance of a relaxed old man.

"Old fool, have you gotten sick of living?" Yuwen Taiji said, stopping his movements.

"Impudence!"

"How dare you talk back to the first elder?"

"Yuwen Taiji, you'd better shake your head awake. Think about your current situation."

"It's over for the Yuwen Clan. Time to wake up."

For all anyone knew, the ones who spoke out could be the elders that secretly supported the Yuwen Clan.

"Leave, Yuwen Taiji!"

They were joined by the audience in the arena. More than their two heirs, the Yuwen Clan had lost the entire sect's respect. It was clear from the moment the audience members had dared to loudly call them out for angering the sect with their behavior.

Currently, Su Yunchi felt rather awkward. He had never imagined there would be a day he'd be asked to scam by the entire sect. It felt like the sect they had built up was crumbling to pieces all from the actions of the younger disciples. Tianming had completely turned the tables against them, causing twenty-five elders to side with him instead.

"Go back and contemplate your mistakes!"

"If you still care about your reputation, own up to your losses. At least you'll still be able to remain in the council. Otherwise you're going against the whole sect!"

"Li Tianming is the descendant of the Li Saint Clan, and his talent is truly shocking! Him being able to kill Yuwen Shendu is proof enough. From now on, he'll train at the sacred mountain. We twenty-five elders will protect and nurture him to become the future leader of the sect. He is the one who will lead us back to glory, and nobody is to touch even a hair on him!"

These elders were rather rational. Initially, they hadn't picked a side, wanting to wait for the Realm Wars to be over. But now, they weren't sparing any sympathy for Yuwen Taiji. Most of them were sick of having to bow down to him over the past few years.

With the first elder leading them, they were united. Huangfu Fengyun also had another reason to defend them—he had seen that even Qingyu was a pentabane. For the sect to have two existences on the level of the founding ancestor of the Li Saint Clan in the same epoch was nothing short of a miracle that even an old man like him could never have imagined. How could he not stand out and protect Tianming at a time like this?

Currently, the whole sect stood with them. There was no need to fear Yuwen Taiji, especially when he could no longer obtain the Grand-Orient Sword.

The overturn of the status quo was so unthinkable that even Tianming hadn't expected it. He and Qingyu were now symbols of the sect's hope. Currently, the twenty-five elders knew that she was a pentabane as well, so there was no longer a reason not to protect them. Even one person with the potential to reach the founding ancestor's level would be enough to shake the Grand-Orient Realm, let alone two.

This was the third knife to embed itself in Yuwen Taiji, with the first being Yuwen Shengcheng's death, and the second, Yuwen Shendu's. Not to mention, the Prime Struggle had just officially ended. Huangfu Feifei and the rest were already out, but there were no traces of Yuwen Zhenxing and Gongsun Chi.

"No need to look for them. I killed them," Tianming calmly said, but his words shook the First Grand-Orient Battlefield once more.

Now, the last hope for the Yuwen Clan's current generation had been extinguished before Tianming challenged a prime disciple. They finally knew why he was so reckless and made the challenge right after emerging from Prime Tower.

A genius only represented potential. When a genius died prematurely, it would all be for naught. Even then, individual geniuses wouldn't be able to affect the major matters of the sect. Yet today, Tianming alone had completely reshaped the sect. His talent caused the twenty-five elders to side with him. This was already far beyond the treatment a prime disciple deserved; only his position as junior sect master could justify it. Tianming was the first junior sect master in a millennium to not be a laughingstock, and truly deserving of his position.

All of that made it so that there was no way Yuwen Taiji could kill Tianming. Let alone the eight of them facing off against the other twenty-five elders, there were at least seventy thousand seniors, including Grand-Orient guardians, mountain lords, chiefs, exalted masters, and hall prefects among the audience. Their combined might would dwarf the eight's. It didn't help that Yuwen Kaitai was now catatonic and slumped on the ground after hearing about the death of his son.

It had only taken one Yuwen Shengcheng to cause the Yuwen Clan to come tumbling down from the high ground.

"Taiji, let's head back for now. We've lost this round," Su Yunchi advised, being the senior here.

For more than a decade of effort going down the drain, nobody could imagine what Yuwen Taiji was currently feeling.

"At least you still have your strength. You're still the strongest person in the sect, and it'll take at least ten years for Tianming to grow. We will continue supporting you."

"Most of these people are just opportunists. If we get the chance to kill Li Tianming, the sect will immediately be yours once more."

"We have all the chances in the world, so we just have to be patient now."

The others came to convince him as well. They couldn't afford to kill Tianming today.

"I don't believe the twenty-five of them will be by Li Tianming's side the whole time. There will be a chance," Yuwen Kaitai finally said, his eyes bloodshot.

"We'll kill Huangfu Fengyun and the Ye Clan first. The rest won't have a choice, and will kneel to beg us for forgiveness," Su Jiudao hatefully said.

Yuwen Taiji didn't say a word, but recalled his lifebound beasts and put away his blade. One could tell from his gaze that he wouldn't just let things go like that. Yuwen Shendu's death didn't affect his own capabilities, after all. As long as these people were still in the sect, there would be no peace. Tianming's life would always be at huge risk.

They were now a cancerous growth that the sect could still not remove, at least not before Tianming matured. But his path would be fraught with dangers. Once Tianming died, the malignant tumor would overtake the sect, sooner or later. While victory hadn't been decided yet, they were safe for the day at least, much to Tianming's relief.

At that moment, Huangfu Fengyun came to him and teared up. "Junior Sect Master, this old one greets you."

With the first elder paying respect, the others behind him followed. That marked the moment when the position of the junior sect master was held in higher esteem than the elders themselves.

"Please, seniors, there's no need for this. I should be the one paying my respects for being saved instead." Tianming turned and saw that Yuwen Taiji was preparing to head off. The last gaze he shot him filled him with a sense of danger. He would have to tread carefully from now on.

"Yuwen Shendu is now dead. Half a month from now, will you take his place in the Realm Wars and reclaim the Grand-Orient Sword?" Huangfu Fengyun asked.

Having experienced the effects of Prime Tower, there was no way he wouldn't want the sword for himself. It was part of the founding ancestor's legacy, along with the tower, yet it had fallen into the hands of Heaven's Elysium. It was a mark of shame to the founding ancestor's legacy. The Realm Wars would start after the Prime Struggle, so there wasn't much time left. They would soon be headed toward Heaven's Elysium.

"Of course," Tianming said.

"Once you get it back, your position as junior sect master will be even more secure," said Shangguan Jingshu.

"Shaoqing, explain what the Realm War is to the junior sect master. Make sure to tell him about Heaven's Elysium's seven Elysian Children as well," Huangfu Fengyun instructed.

"Rest assured, I will," Shaoqing said as he smiled at Tianming.

"Seven Elysian Children? Is Elysian Long among them?"

"You know her? Yueling Long might be the strongest participant in the Realm Wars," Ye Shaoqing said.

Tianming recalled what she had said back then, as well as how she had taken away five of Feiling's sealed abilities.

"Yueling Long, it's been three months since I left Ignispolis. I'll show you the new me."

She had never seen him as anything more than a minor character. But now, he was the junior sect master protected by a hundred thousand people. When they heard he would be participating in the Realm Wars, they were all rather excited. Yuwen Taiji, however, suddenly stopped in his tracks and turned back to Tianming.

"Hand the Spiritburn Tome back to me." He was probably referring to the trump card Yuwen Shendu was about to use in the battle. It was probably the key for his chance to reclaim the sword.

"Give it back," Ye Shaoqing said.

"Sure." Tianming didn't let greed consume him. He tossed the book back to Yuwen Taiji.

"All the best in reclaiming the Grand-Orient Sword," he said, then left with his entourage.

Chapter 292 - Heavenly Pattern Tomes and Patternscribes

After Yuwen Taiji and the others left, the first battlefield finally quieted down.

"We'd better be wary of them from now on. Half of us should stay with Qingyu and Tianming the whole time to guide them," Huangfu Fengyun said.

"Now that the council of elders has fractured, the junior sect master is the cornerstone of the sect's revival. His growth will be of the highest concern for us over the next two decades and we can't take this lightly," Shangguan Jingshu said.

Whether or not they supported Yuwen Taiji, they knew better than to not support the cause in front of the public like this. Given how important Tianming was to the sect, the twenty-five elders came to a unanimous conclusion.

As hyperbolic as having half the elders around the two at all times may sound, they couldn't risk leaving the slightest opening for Yuwen Taiji to make the kill. There was no precedent of a genius being protected like this in the sect's history. This was the miracle Tianming had ushered in; nobody other than the witnesses here today would believe something like this.

But if one were privy to the details, they would know why Huangfu Fengyun and the rest chose to do so. They had also been forced to a dead end and had to make a choice. It was a choice between Yuwen Taiji, who had lost the Grand-Orient Sword, or Tianming, who was essentially the second coming of the founding ancestor. The Yuwen Clan head's arrogance and authoritarian tendencies only made the choice even easier. Not to mention, if they managed to score brownie points with Tianming by helping him grow, the Li Saint Clan would surely treat them well if they rose back to prominence.

"That's a given. We must prioritize coming up with several measures. Ideally, Ye Shaoqing should hold the Grand-Orient Sword," Huangfu Fengyun said considerately.

While Ye Shaoqing wasn't the strongest swordsman in the sect, he was Tianming's master. Tianming would naturally be more willing to hand the sword he fought so hard to take back to his own master.

"With Shaoqing's impressive talent and growth, he might stand a chance against Yuwen Taiji if he can grasp the sword's mysteries," Shangguan Jingshu said.

Tianming didn't have any thoughts about it. It was a given that Yuwen Taiji would definitely come to take the sword from him once he got it, so handing it over to Ye Shaoqing would make him rest more soundly.

"The issue is the sword won't be easy to reclaim. It might be even harder than the feat Tianming just pulled off today," Ye Shaoqing said.

"You don't have to be humble for his sake, Shaoqing."

"I'm not trying to be humble at all. Even a Heavenly Will beastmaster like Yuwen Shendu needs the Spiritburn Tome, so his success rate might only be forty percent. That's why he wasn't willing to use it today. He wouldn't have lost otherwise."

"Shaoqing's right. With the Realm Wars about to start, Tianming doesn't have as much time to prepare for it as he did for the Prime Struggle. Tianming, you only have to try your best; don't worry about how

it'll turn out. Given your rate of growth, nobody will be able to stop you in twenty years anyway, so you'll be able to take the sword back then," Ye Qing said. He and his son were the ones who cared most about Tianming.

"It's fine. I'll do my best to fight. If I luck out and get it, I'll let my master hold onto it," Tianming said.

"That's right. Just do your best, but don't overstress its importance."

"True. After all, even if we don't mention the seven Elysian Children, the other three sects have quite a number of talented disciples too."

"If we have the Spiritburn Tome, the junior sect master would have a better chance."

"But if he didn't return it, Yuwen Taiji would never back off."

"Such a shame."

For them to be able to drive Yuwen Taiji away was already a good thing.

"Is the Spiritburn Tome that strong?" Tianming asked. It appeared that he was exceedingly lucky to have managed to kill Yuwen Shendu in the first place. He reckoned that the tome should be a one-use item that didn't have a lasting effect, hence Yuwen Shendu's hesitation to use it. Thankfully, Tianming had had Soulburn to cement his victory.

He chuckled at the thought of them crying over his corpse, had he lost the battle. Having lived through this ordeal, however, his mindset had evolved yet again. It was just like the time he killed Lin Xiaoting.

"Master, what in the world is that tome?" he asked while the elders were still discussing his security arrangements.

"The Spiritburn Tome is imbued with heavenly patterns just like spirit ore, herbs, and hazards. They range through the seven rainbow colors all the way up to black, and beyond that, the saintly heavenly patterns. While heavenly patterns can be classified using these categories, even those in the same category have slight differences. For instance, each red heavenly pattern has distinct shapes and effects.

"Our ancestors in the Flameyellow Continent learned to understand and fuse the mysteries of the heavenly patterns once they reached the Heavenly Will stage. By transcribing these complex arrangements of patterns onto the world, the ancestors created heavenly pattern barriers. There's countless varieties of these barriers, the most famous of which in our sect is the Bloodbane Barrier.

"Heavenly pattern barriers are chaotic and majestic in equal measure. They're a phenomenon that arises from the transcription of heavenly patterns. Heavenly pattern tomes, on the other hand, concentrate the arcane effects of heavenly patterns and can be used to unleash them.

"The Spiritburn Tome, for instance, allows the user to strengthen themselves using beast ki for a time. The difference between tomes and barriers is that barriers use the natural energy in the environment to remain active, while most tomes can only be used once, or for a limited time. They're convenient, portable consumable items.

"Most high-level Heavenly Will beastmasters can rely on certain methods to transcribe simple heavenly patterns and create barriers. However, one needs special talent with regard to spiritual matters to be able to make tomes.

"Only if you're able to make tomes will you be considered accomplished in this area and earn the title of a patternscribe. Currently, there's no more than three patternscribes in the entire sect, and even then they're pretty average."

Ye Shaoqing knew he would be interested in this, so he quickly gave Tianming a comprehensive briefing.

"Patternscribes, huh." A new world of cultivation had opened up to him. Apart from the martial aspect, he could also delve into the study of heavenly patterns at the Heavenly Will stage. The world was truly wondrous.

"The formation of heavenly pattern barriers and tomes are the results of millennia of trial and error by our forebears. They're just like medicinal recipes," Ye Shaoqing said.

Tianming hadn't had any interaction with this aspect before, but he had opened the Spiritburn Tome and taken a look of the complex heavenly patterns in its pages. It even contained some beast ki within. With a fuller grasp of the context of his fight, he was even more thankful that he hadn't given Yuwen Shendu a chance to use the tome, something that he had planned to use to boost his abilities in the Realm Wars.

"The Spiritburn Tome probably costs far more than the celestial manna you got in Prime Tower. Nobody in the sect is capable of making such a tome," Ye Qing added.

By now, Huangfu Fengyun and the rest finished planning how to proceed. The twenty-five of them would be split into two groups, and take monthly shifts. Half of their time would be spent defending Tianming. While it was pretty ridiculous, Tianming didn't mind it if it meant his life was more secure. The more elders protecting him from Yuwen Taiji, the better.

"Junior Sect Master, will you and Qingyu be training at the sacred mountain from now on?" Huangfu Fengyun asked.

"Can we train at another location instead?" Tianming asked.

"Where do you have in mind? The sacred mountain comes with many benefits that will aid your training."

"I wish to train at Fatepath Peak, where the mausoleum is. For some reason, training in front of the tombstones of my ancestors works really well for me. Not to mention, it's pretty safe there, too."

"I see. Even Yuwen Taiji wouldn't be able to break through the Bloodbane Barrier. Alright. Since you want to train there, Qingyu can train at Fatepath Peak then. It's not like we have anywhere else we need to be anyway. Just ask us if you have any questions about cultivation, or need any resources or equipment. We'll provide them all to you."

For him to be able to get anything he wanted from the sect, he truly felt like the junior sect master for the first time. The elders themselves wanted to be Tianming's masters if they could. They were all

powerful saints! So Tianming and a group of elders went to Fatepath Peak. It seemed that they would be staying there for quite a while. All this felt really dreamlike to Tianming.

"Big Brother," Qingyu called out.

Tianming turned and saw her with Jingyu. It seemed that Jingyu had returned after not being able to find her granddaughter.

"Tianming, my grandson, you're amazing!" She was so agitated she could barely speak, so she merely shot him a thumbs up.

"It's all thanks to your teachings, Grandma."

Qingyu seemed to be tearing up beside her as well.

"Don't cry, Qingyu. It makes you look ugly."

"I know. These are happy tears," she said with a snuffle.

"Let's go back. It's about time we enjoy what it feels like to be treated as elite disciples."

"Okay!"

It was a great opportunity for Qingyu to let her potential as a Pentamoon Skybane flourish from now on. With all the elders guiding her, and all the resources she needs at her disposal, that was certainly possible. While her kunpeng was still an eight-star beast, it would no doubt evolve into a top-tier saint beast soon. The change in treatment the siblings would receive after Yuwen Shendu's death was unthinkable.

"Big Brother, you risked your life for me more than once. I'm not sure how to even express my thanks... |—"

She would never forget how he managed to survive today. Never had she been so floored by her emotions. Though she wanted to thank him, she couldn't find the words when she saw his happy-go-lucky face, as if nothing had happened.

"Then don't. All you need to do is to show me your potential. Remember, you have to catch up to me." He gave her a hard pat on her head, causing her to wince in pain.

"I know!" She tailed him like a brat, still looking at him like her idol. Tianming felt having a sister wasn't bad at all.

"Big Brother, where's Ling'er?"

Tianming looked at Ling'er's Love with much longing. Ye Shaoqing was already calling for him to go back to Fatepath Peak.

"I'll tell you when we get back."

"She's okay, right?"

"Well, sorta. Just think of it as her taking some time off to rest."

"I see." While she was a little relieved, she still felt a little anxious about it.

Chapter 293 - Only I Can Cure Your Poison

Two men were in a pavilion at the foot of Fatepath Peak. One of them slumped on the long bench as he drank and ate some peanuts. He looked dirty all over, as if he hadn't bathed for a while. The other was dressed in a green robe and stood ramrod straight as he looked in the direction of Li Mausoleum.

"Be honest with me. When Yuwen Shendu lifted your daughter up by the neck, you were about to pull out the Venomdrake Spike, right?" Ye Shaoqing asked.

"Of course. She's my precious baby, you know," Li Wudi said, then took a few more swigs and burped.

"Really? I almost couldn't tell."

"You don't have a daughter, so you can't understand. True fatherly love is formless and subdued. Most people can't spot it."

"Huh, so your skin did get thicker after all. I really have to take a page out of your book," Ye Shaoqing said, rolling his eyes.

"Haha!"

"Looking at your stupid face really makes me think you hit the jackpot with that son you picked up. He really did well by your clan. This time, he even shattered Yuwen Taiji's ambitions. If not for him, you might've gained only less than a fifth of what you should if you took out the spike. It would have all been a waste."

"There can only be one explanation: the heavens are on my side. They gave me this son, after all. You, however, don't have this fortune."

"Boasting again? He's my disciple, I'll have you know. I have a closer relationship with him than you do."

"Haha, so you say." It had been quite a long time since Li Wudi had felt this relaxed. "This child really is a walking miracle."

"That's right. You saw yourself how he dragged those old fellows like Huangfu Fengyun off their high horses. They actually willingly came to protect him." Back then, Ye Shaoqing couldn't have imagined such a scene. Nobody would believe that so many elders would step up to protect a mere disciple.

"I don't care. He's my son. On the day I overcome my trials, he'll be the big boss of the whole realm. Nay, the path we shall embark on as father and son will lead to the Theocracy of the Ancients!"

"Alright, stop bragging. Just make sure you don't die, trash." Ye Shaoqing rolled his eyes again.

"How dare you mock me? You're just a Shaoqing! I swear when I make my comeback...."

"What then?"

"I'll give you ten beauties to wait on and serve you," Li Wudi said with a snide smile.

"Oh no... the Venomdrake Spike even turned you into an idiot," he said with a chuckle.

There were some brothers who would backstab him and bring him to a state of near death, but there were also some who would secretly support him from behind and lose a finger over it without complaining. It wasn't a matter of who called who brother. It was merely a form of address and said nothing about one's true character.

Yuwen Taiji was definitely the former type.

"My son is going to Heaven's Elysium. You have to go with him," Li Wudi said.

"You don't say."

"From now on, shadow and protect him at all times. Since Qingyu won't be joining the Realm Wars, I'll look after her," Li Wudi said.

"No problem. If your son dies, that means I'll be dead too."

"Make sure to protect them. Huangfu Fengyun and the rest are mere fence sitters. If the situation changes, they might go to the other side. They might cheer at the thought of protecting the junior sect master today, but if my son dies, they'll be nowhere to be seen. I can only trust you."

"I don't need you to tell me that. What's up with you today? You're not usually this naggy."

"At my age, you start worrying about losing your loved ones," Li Wudi sulked with his head down.

"It won't happen again," Ye Shaoqing said, patting his shoulder, "Finish your final step. The day you overcome your trials will be the day we wage the final battle of the Grand-Orient Sect. By then, I'll personally take you up the sacred mountain to retrieve the Li Saint Clan's throne and place it back in Kunpeng Sacred Hall!"

Li Wudi's eyes were filled with bloodlust. "On that day, I will step on the corpses of the Yuwen Clan, like my son has, and sit on my throne."

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The dark hall was filled with nothing but a chilling atmosphere, thanks in part to what had just happened. Anyone who entered would no doubt shiver uncontrollably. To the left and right of the hall were two gigantic beasts. The left one was like a small, pure white hill, while the one to the right was entirely black. Its bloody, open mouth and pair of red eyes made it look like a feral beast.

Sitting at the very forefront of the hall was Yuwen Taiji. He sat ramrod straight and radiated black and white strands of aura that circled him like snakes, making him look even more eerie.

Before him was a dark part of the hall where one wouldn't be able to see one's outstretched fingers. However, there was a figure kneeling in the shadows.

"Based on the plans, you'll be accompanying Tianming during the Realm Wars, right?" his cold voice rang, bone chilling like a glacial stream.

"That's right," said the figure with a hint of fear in his voice.

"Did you know that I wanted to kill him on this very day?"

"No...."

"Actually, I can kill him at any time I like. Do you know why?"

"Because I and some others will be able to easily approach him," said the figure.

"That's right. With you lot working for me, I'll be able to get what I want all the same. So, now do you know why I don't want to avenge Shendu right away?"

"I know. You want Li Tianming to retrieve the Grand-Orient Sword. I'll then take it for you, because I'll be by his side."

"You've guessed right. That is the reason I've asked you to come today."

"I know what I have to do. Don't worry, I haven't been exposed yet. However, it doesn't seem like he stands much chance at getting the Grand-Orient Sword. After all, you took the Spiritburn Tome back."

"It would make it far too easy for Li Tianming to take the sword back if I didn't ask for something so precious back. But if I didn't take it back, Ye Shaoqing would start to suspect. He'd guess that I believe I have a good chance of getting the sword. I didn't want to risk that."

The figure was thankful that Yuwen Taiji was such a secretive, paranoid person. There was no way someone like him would simply forget to take the tome back. If he hadn't taken it back, that would mean he was intentionally leaving it with Tianming, which would imply he was confident in getting the sword. As a result, Ye Shaoqing would make preparations for what was to come.

"I've seen how fast this Li Tianming improves, and paid the price for ignoring it. That's why, I'm going to bet that he'll be able to get the sword back even without the tome." Ironically, he was now the one who had the most confidence in Tianming. "When he gets the sword, it'll be your turn to show."

"I understand."

"Do you know what awaits you if you fail me?"

"Yes, I do," the figure said with a shudder, then lowered his head begrudgingly.

"Only I can cure your poison. With Heartburn in you, you won't be able to die even if you want to. I'm sure you know the feeling better than I could ever describe it. However, I'll remove the poison from your body on the day you give me the sword. I am a man of my word, always."

The figure teared up at the promise and nodded, all the while continuing to shake in fear. He knew better than anyone the pain he felt. If it could be brushed off that easily, he wouldn't be casting away his dignity like that and kneeling to this man.

Chapter 294 - Three Lives, Three Worlds, The Fist Of Madness

Upon returning to Fatepath Peak, Tianming shared Feiling's current predicament with Qingyu. Naturally, the latter was both moved by her actions and remorseful, insisting she would wait for Feiling to regain consciousness and express her gratitude.

After saying his goodbyes, Tianming wholeheartedly prepared for the Realm Wars, which was to be held a fortnight later. In all likelihood, he would leave Grand-Orient Sect in about ten days. At that time,

there would be fifteen elders accompanying them, while the remaining ten would stay in the sect to protect Qingyu and deal with important matters of the sect.

The twenty-five elders, as well as Ye Yuxi, had recently learned of Qingyu's Pentamoon Skybane. If news of this were to spread to others, then perhaps there was a mole among the elders.

Before leaving, Tianming once again made every effort to speed up his cultivation, which of course demanded a lot from poor Meow Meow. As soon as its battle wounds were healed, Meow Meow was forced to cultivate in preparation for the Realm Wars.

"Shall we return to Vermilion Bird after leaving the Grand-Orient Sect? We don't have to fight all the time there. If we have the time, we can even cultivate our minds."

"What nonsense. Have you forgotten we only have a few years to live? If we don't cultivate and fight, we'll die," chided Ying Huo.

"My God, I feel as if the heavens are aiming at me!" Meow Meow rolled over in pain. The Aeonian Grandbane was the enemy of sleep.

"Oh stop being so dramatic, the good stuff is coming." Being back in the Li Mausoleum put Tianming in a good mood. The treasures before his eyes were either celestial manna or Saintbeast War-Souls.

"Wow, how generous!" Ying Huo was dumbstruck by the wealth of treasure before him.

"Have those old fogeys gone mad? They've sent you all their precious treasures." Ying Huo bounced up and down in surprise.

"Enough talk, it's time to evolve," said Tianming.

In fact, his hands were trembling at the sheer number of treasures he had received. With twenty-five elders sheltering him, persisting as the ray of hope for the future of the Grand-Orient Sect felt incredible. No need to participate in the Prime Struggle; the treasures were sent directly to his door.

No other prime disciple received the same treatment. This was something only the future sect master deserved; the entire sect was his. After all, the Grand-Orient Sect was originally passed down to descendants of the Li Saint Clan. The position of junior sect master was equivalent to crown prince of a kingdom, so taking a few treasures from the "national treasury" sent by the "ministers" themselves wasn't unreasonable, was it?

"Meow Meow, this is your Venomfiend Bloodclaw. Remember not to scratch me after you've evolved. There's bloodfiend venom on this thing, all it takes is one scratch," said Tianming.

"You'll be fine as long as you leave his balls alone," interjected Ying Huo.

"You know nothing! Have you ever raised a cat? A little thunder in the sky, and I'll have five bloody scratch marks on me." Tianming crumpled at the thought. What a headache! He would have to guard against being scratched to death.

"I don't want to eat this. It's disgusting." Meow Meow switched to high alert as it fiddled with the Venomfiend Bloodclaw.

"Eat the damn thing."

Tianming couldn't be bothered to argue with Meow Meow, so he picked up the claw and stuffed it into its mouth.

"Go, evolve."

"I refuse to accept this. You're clearly abusing children," argued Meow Meow.

"Keep fooling around and I'll send you flying up to heaven." Tianming laughed sinisterly.

The black cat quivered, disappearing with the Venomfiend Bloodclaw.

"Ying Huo, it's your turn. The low-tier celestial manna, Goldflame Featherblade, is the most suitable manna for you. You'll soar to a forty-nine-star beast."

Tianming opened the manna sphere containing the Goldflame Featherblade. Sharp and domineering, the sword ki surged forth, appearing more like a divine weapon rather than a celestial manna. He almost felt ready for battle just holding it in his hand. It was truly rare to come across manna that possessed sword ki.

"Wasn't the treasure from the first floor a high-tier terrestrial manna? How'd you exchange it for a celestial manna?" wondered Ying Huo.

"Idiot, with my current status, it's embarrassing that my lifebound beasts aren't at least fourth-order saint beasts," Tianming retorted.

Though speechless, Ying Huo had to admit it felt rather good... and now, it would have two more stars than Meow Meow.

The Goldflame Featherblade was the best low-tier celestial manna in the Grand-Orient Sect. A fourth-order saint beast with forty-nine stars was just one star shy of being a fifth-order saint beast.

Tianming looked forward to both Ying Huo and Meow Meow's evolutions. How many blood fetters would they break, and to what extent would their powers grow?

All of it would benefit him. At the very least, the infernalsource and thundersource would spur enormous growth. These two manna would make up for the loss of beast ki. Additionally, Tianming had four other Saintbeast War-Souls.

Yes, four!

These Saintbest War-Souls were jointly selected by the elders from the sect's war-soul inventory. Since the Saintbeast War-Soul was a type of war-soul, there was a risk of failure in the refining process; especially for Primordial Chaos Beasts, who required the war-soul to stimulate their blood fetters and form new abilities. Therefore, Tianming had asked for four.

Since Ying Huo and Meow Meow each had one, they should be able to form new abilities in time for the Realm Wars. Staring at the four war-souls in his hands, Tianming had to admit being the junior sect master was great.

It might appear glorious, but the path of growth is fraught with danger. These elders may stand firmly on my side today but the moment I fail to perform, they'll immediately leave. Master alone will wholeheartedly protect me, so I mustn't get carried away by these treasures. What I have to do is take one step at a time, maximize my talents and employ a shrewd acumen to judge the situation.

He shouldered the burden of Feiling, Ying Huo, Meow Meow, and his own life, as well as their futures. As the leader of the team, he was responsible for every decision. Even if none of them placed such expectations on him, he would personally assume the responsibility alone, taking each step with the utmost attention.

I don't believe Yuwen Taiji will do nothing.

Ye Shaoqing and the others were also contemplating the same problem.

But right now, preparing for the Realm Wars takes precedence.

This was his only shot at seizing the Grand-Orient Sword from Heaven's Elysium. If he missed this, another opportunity would come in ten years, but by that time, he would be ineligible for the Realm Wars. Therefore, Tianming was set on obtaining the sword.

While his lifebound beasts evolved, Tianming practiced his battle arts.

At present, I've mastered the Life-Death Whip Art and Voidgod Sword Intent, just short of the last step, that is, Myriad's Only. I'll have to prepare other moves for the Realm Wars.

Tianming's thoughts were interrupted by Li Wudi's sudden appearance.

"Haha, Tianming my child, drink with me. For some reason, Fatepath Peak is bustling today. I've asked those oldies for a lot of good liquor!"

"I don't have the time," replied Tianming.

"Well, aren't you hardworking! You definitely take after your old man, truly worthy of praise. Tell me what you want. Anything's fine... except for liquor," Li Wudi chuckled.

"What do you have?" Tianming smiled.

"Whatever treasures; the sun, moon, and stars. You can get it from Huangfu Fengyun. Just mention my name."

"Hahaha!" Tianming knew he was bragging again.

"Godfather, please introduce another ancestor to me. I'd like to learn a boxing technique, so I have more tactics I can use in the Realm Wars," said Tianming.

In his battle with Yuwen Shendu, Tianming had managed to block his opponent's Necrodiabolus and injure him with his dark arm alone. Tianming had only realized then how tough his arm was. Perhaps there were other formidable powers to be unearthed. None of the weapons he had come across could hurt his arm.

Since he had been focusing on swordsmanship, Tianming wanted to test how far he could increase his strength by practicing a top-notch boxing technique and incorporating heavenly will into his punches.

"Boxing? Come, I'll take you to meet our tenth ancestor, Li Xiaozhang, who's known as the Trivita Pugilist."

"Li Xiaozhang? That's his name?" Tianming was tempted to laugh.

"Is there something wrong with giving his name a little personality? What should he be called then? Long Chen? Meng Hao? Yun Che?"

"Forget it. Just toss a stone down the Grand-Orient Sacred Mountain, and you'll hit ten of those," laughed Tianming.

"How naive. You'll hit more than twenty!"

With Li Wudi leading the way, Tianming climbed a majestic blood-red mountain. On the peak, a black tombstone was engraved with the words: the tomb of the Trivita Pugilist!

The tombstone was bold and mighty, rougher than the strange, cold tomb of the Grim Reaper. Just looking at it gave Tianming goosebumps. It bore a domineering and unyielding will, rather befitting of the title Trivita Pugilist.

Boxing was a form of close combat, the path of the strong and unruly. Fist against weapon was a risky gambit, hence the need for a ferocious and desperate fighting spirit.

"I'll be honest with you. If you weren't my son, I wouldn't take you to see this old bandit. He drinks like a fish and only accepts good wine," grumbled Li Wudi.

With that, he poured the wine, a move that seemed to agonize him.

"You old devil, take your time drinking. Damn it, you're too much! Oh ancestor, leave a little for your descendent. I'm about to be drained by you! There's not even a drop left. You'll die from overdrinking!"

Beads of cold sweat dotted Tianming's forehead. Had he not been watching, he would have assumed their ancestors had done something untoward to Li Wudi.

On and on Li Wudi chattered, until the moment a fierce, Godlike will erupted from the Trivita Pugilist's tomb. Tianming felt an invisible fist slam into his chest, knocking the breath out of him.

Trivita Fiendfist! On the tombstone, the black words radiated and reformed.

First Lifetime: like a Beast, Skyshatter.

Second Lifetime: like a Fiend, Godringer.

Third Lifetime: like a Fiendgod, Cataclysm.

Trivita Fiendfist: Beast, Fiend, and Fiendgod!

The Trivita Fiendfist landed on the tombstone, one punch at a time. The first fist shook the firmament; the second fist shocked gods and demons; the third fist devastated the world!

Rude, incorruptible, and crazy, advancing courageously.

Tianming was delighted. The Trivita Fiendfist was very similar to the Voidgod Sword Intent. Both were created by the spirit of defiance. Comparatively speaking, the Voidgod Sword Intent was steady with an incisive burst, while the Trivita Fiendfist was rough and turbulent, possessing a boundless fighting spirit and facing death with equanimity. By comparison, it was more explosive.

The three punches had Tianming so awestricken he had yet to react. However, his eyes were feverish as he decided to practice the Trivita Fiendfist with his dark arm.

Three lives, three worlds, the fist of madness, born from but not born of defiance. Just one glance was all Tianming required to comprehend its core. And all of this was because he was the Li Saint Clan's descendent.

1. Trivita is pronounced try-veeta. It sounded cooler than three-lives or three-reincarnations, which was what it was in Chinese.

2. Xiaozhang means "arrogant" in Chinese, so Li Wudi is calling him "Arrogant Li". Which is a rare reference that even works as a joke in English, since it's a homonym for "arrogantly", heh.

Chapter 295 - Another Breakthrough

Tianming had been practicing Sky Shatter in front of the Trivita Pugilist's tomb for less than three hours when Shenxiao Mountain was enveloped in brilliant rays. Crimson flames and black thunder were born almost at the same time. The flames raged, lighting flickered, and thunder roared. This heralded Ying Huo and Meow Meow's successful evolutions after refining their celestial manna.

Although it wasn't considered a real evolution, it signified real growth and a way to break their bloodline bindings, as well as unearthing the extraordinary abilities that truly belonged to Primordial Chaos Beasts. The raging flames and roaring thunder were so terrible that Tianming could feel their transformations despite being separated by several mountains.

It almost seemed as if two primordial wildbeasts lay dormant. Such violent, powerful auras belonging to Primordial Chaos Beasts had merely raised its head and set all beasts below fourth-order saint beasts to trembling.

Tianming was overjoyed. Celestial manna was already the best that the Grand-Orient Sect had to offer. He temporarily paused his cultivation of Trivita Fiendfist and left Li Wudi to return to Shenxiao Mountain.

Upon setting foot on the mountain, Tianming finally caught a glimpse of their new appearances. Meow Meow, whose size and appearance remained quite the same, was still cute, temperamental, and silly. The only change was that its pink paws had turned blood-red. On its four legs, twenty Venomfiend Bloodclaws gleamed with a bloodthirsty luster, sharp and thorny—completely incompatible with Meow Meow's temperament. Without a doubt, the most obvious change was the forty-seven stars in its eyes, proving it was now a fourth-order saint beast.

"Even refining celestial manna and becoming saint beasts have failed to make you more domineering. I'm very disappointed in you two," Tianming sighed. He had expected at least some growth in size. After all, in the images Tianming had seen, Ying Huo was so massive it had once swallowed the sun. Yet with

more than forty stars, Ying Huo was still the fresh, delectable little chick. It was embarrassed to see Tianming.

"What do you know? This just means Primordial Chaos Beasts are so terrifying that we're beyond your imagination!" argued Ying Huo.

Ying Huo had a point. Celestial manna had such an insignificant effect on their growth. Besides, Tianming had seen the endless river of stars in its eyes, a testament to how fearsome the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix was.

Tianming picked up the little chick and carefully observed it, noticing that the fluff on its wings had turned into sharp, golden feathers that blazed with flames and surged with sword ki.

"Meow Meow's Venomfiend Bloodclaws are now as hard as ordinary saint beasts, and so are my Goldflame Featherblades. Our growth will prompt an increase in toughness so they can be used as weapons. They're even harder than your sword," boasted the little chick.

"Let's give it a go!"

Tianming drew Onyx Dragon, coming to clash with Ying Huo's Goldflame Featherblade, the two sides locked in battle. The chick's wings weren't only hard and sharp, but also possessed Goldflame sword ki, which led to an increase in the lethality of Ying Huo's Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven and Voidgod Sword Intent.

"Amazing!" Tianming acquiesced to the power of the Goldflame Featherblade, which had resulted in a rise to forty-nine stars. Who would believe that a lifebound beast was capable of cultivating battle arts to this degree?

"Would you like a taste of my Venomfiend Bloodclaw?" gushed Meow Meow.

"Get off me. Don't you dare climb on my shoulders again," warned Tianming.

It was no laughing matter. A strike from Ying Huo would result in a flesh and blood injury at most, but a scratch from Meow Meow meant blood poisoning that might lead to death.

"Trash."

"Wimp." With an arm around the other's shoulder, the beasts smiled triumphantly.

"Meow Meow, I apologize for my brother's cowardice ruining your fun."

"Chicken Bro, it's fine. He won't be the only coward who cowers under my claws."

Was this how a lifebound beast should behave? It was clearly rebellious.

"Stop showing off and start cultivating!" Tianming snapped.

He had many fine wines stored in his own spatial ring. Thus, he stood before Li Shenxiao's tomb. "First ancestor, descendent Tianming offers wine in gratitude for your blessings. Ancestor, my two lifebound beasts have evolved and broken numerous bloodline bindings. It's time for us to cultivate together and enhance my physique. Please bless us with a momentous breakthrough to the next stage."

Tianming lit up Li Shenxiao's tomb, allowing the eighty-one saintly heavenly patterns to shine once more.

"Li Shenxiao's tomb gathers the spiritual energy of heaven and earth for me, while my lifebound beasts are supported by the Prime Tower in my lifebound space. Now that they've broken more of their bloodline bindings, there's no better time than the present. Based on this premise, I should also be able to transform."

Tianming stuffed the two beasts back into his lifebound space. Every moment before the Realm Wars was a race against time.

"When Yuwen Shengcheng's lifebound beast evolved from an eight-star to a second-order saint beast, its bloodline was upgraded. During symbiotic cultivation, that all contributed to his breakthrough. However, Ying Huo and Meow Meow evolved directly from eight-star lifebound beasts to fourth-order saint beasts."

What earth-shaking changes had taken place in the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix and Genesis Chaos Thunderfiend? What would happen when those changes were transferred to him?

Tianming was eager to find out. "Let's begin!"

The three became one in symbiotic cultivation. It seemed almost like Tianming's first symbiotic cultivation with Ying Huo. At the time, its beast veins were like dragons, compared to Tianming's measly earthworms. At this moment, its infernalsource resembled a lake, while Tianming's mirrored a small pond. Not only had its infernalsource expanded, but even its physique, talent, strength, and beast veins had surpassed Tianming by several times. This was the breaking of bloodline bindings prompted by the celestial manna.

Although Ying Huo and Meow Meow's exteriors had hardly changed, their internal changes were mind-blowing. Even Meow Meow's lightningsource had expanded to the size of countless Genesis Chaos Thunderfiends.

The infinite power of their bloodlines, as well as their other physical qualities infused Tianming. The process was equivalent to creating another Primordial Chaos Beast, a result of the integration between symbiotic cultivation and the Primordial Chaos Beasts becoming lifebound beasts. The significance of symbiotic cultivation was exhibited at this moment.

Tianming wasn't plundering their bloodline, but inheriting and sharing. It was equivalent to duplicating both the Aeternal Infernal and Genesis Chaos physiques and perfectly integrating them in his own body. During this process, his flesh and blood rapidly grew. Tianming now resembled a dual-type thunder and fire Primordial Chaos Beast. The metamorphosis of his flesh alone was enough to place him far above his peers.

The sheer resilience he now possessed would be of great benefit in combat. But this was merely external; the true change was reflected internally. His beast veins grew several times thicker, so circulating beast ki became incomparably effortless, and his two enormous spiritsources expanded tremendously, allowing him to gather immeasurable spiritual energy.

"My spirit source is almost equivalent to fifty or sixty times the size of others. Even the super nexus in my unity field has reached a similar scale. Although Ying Huo and Meow Meow have slightly over forty stars, in fact, their bloodline abilities are comparable to fifth-, or even sixth-order saint beasts."

Consequently, the amount of beast ki Tianming could gather was infinite in comparison to beastmasters of the same stage, not to mention the quality. Any disadvantage in beast ki could be offset, or at least greatly compensated.

In the middle of such a momentous event, Tianming simultaneously activated the Aeternal Infernal Codex and Genesis Chaos Codex while accepting the power of the Primordial Chaos Beasts' bloodlines. Together with Ying Huo and Meow Meow, he gathered the spiritual energy from both the saintly heavenly patterns on Li Shenxiao's tomb and the Prime Tower at a speed several times faster than before.

The newly expanded infernal source and lightning source happened to be empty at this moment. But with the passage of time, when the beast ki filled both infernal source and lightning source to the limit, a change occurred.

"Sixth-level Unity!"

Black and crimson beast ki surged. The two kinds of beast ki were terrifying in nature, and had only grown more majestic and imposing with his advancement.

If Yuwen Shengcheng could make a breakthrough by seizing the opportunity, Tianming's breakthrough after a life and death battle seemed inevitable by comparison.

Having just broken more of their bloodline bindings, Ying Huo and Meow Meow had a thorough understanding of their own cultivation techniques. This time, with the help of Li Shenxiao's tomb and the Prime Tower, they were on a roll, completing the process in just one day.

"This was my fastest breakthrough!" Tianming exclaimed. "After all, it was only two days ago that I broke through to fifth-level Unity in the Prime Tower."

Two days! Tianming's speed would most likely break records in the Flameyellow Continent that had stood since ancient times. After all, this was Unity, not the Beast Vein stage.

"However, my growth was substantiated by the successful severing of bloodline bindings, as well as the miraculous effect of Li Shenxiao's tomb and the Prime Tower. A breakthrough like this is an unexpected fortune. Their evolution into fourth-order saint beasts, as well as my talents, means comprehensive improvement. In fact, the combination of the Primordial Chaos Beast and decabane physiques embodies a terrifying existence. But with the enhancement of the Aeternal Infernal and Genesis Chaos physiques, my talent has grown once more. The potential brought about by the power of bloodlines is more extensive than any growth from my bane-rings, cultivation techniques, or advancement in stages."

Tianming recognized what he had to do to advance through the next few levels of Unity. It was only a matter of time until he reached the peak of Unity. Many people might expect him to slow down, but the power of bloodlines helped him gain further momentum. As long as they continue evolving and breaking their bloodline bindings, his potential would be limitless!

Chapter 296 - Infernal Haze, Ninefold Chaos Thunderscape

Tianming was eager for more power. In fact, there was very little a genius like him could do in the battle among the giant forces of the Grand-Orient Sect. The death of Yuwen Shendu that altered the structure of the sect was a rare occurrence. He was a man dancing on the edge; even if his talent defied destiny, he knew his current strength was far from enough.

Time waits for no man. With the Aeonian Grandbane, failure meant death. So even if his talent had grown thus far, he still insisted on cultivating hard, day and night, which was something ordinary folk could never achieve. His genius wasn't terrifying, but the effort he invested in it was.

"The elders aren't necessarily reliable. Only the Ye clan will look after me. Now that Yuwen Taiji has his eye on me, I must grow stronger to survive and protect them...."

The demons in his heart included Feiling, Ying Huo, Meow Meow, Ye Shaoqing, Qingyu, Li Jingyu, Li Wudi, and so on.

"Although the situation seems fine on the surface, there's peril everywhere. If I revel in my talents but fail to make progress, the only thing waiting for me is an ugly death."

Tianming had a fairly clear understanding of his situation. These were all reasons why he strode forth with all his strength before the Realm Wars.

"Yueling Long, I once said I'd visit Heaven's Elysium to take your head in ten years, but I never expected it'd only take me three months. I have the greatest surprise planned for you. Most importantly, before Feiling awakens, I'd like to return the five sealed abilities that were taken away."

This was the other motive behind Tianming's participation in the Realm Wars, apart from competing for the Grand-Orient Sword. Since he was the junior sect master, he'd use the resources of the entire sect to strengthen himself and increase his odds. On the narrow road of life and death, there was no point in contrived courtesies.

After breaking through to sixth-level Unity, Tianming continued practicing the Voidgod Sword Intent: Myriad's Only and the Trivita Fiendfist. Ying Huo and Meow Meow each received two Saintbeast War-Souls for refining. For fourth-order saint beasts, it wouldn't take long for them to succeed—about half an hour at most.

However, both of them failed to refine one war-soul and succeeded with the other. Since the war-souls had been swallowed, they were considered wasted.

Ying Huo and Meow Meow were different from ordinary lifebound beasts. What they required was a Saintbeast War-Soul to stimulate their bloodline bindings and awaken their abilities. If the war-soul didn't match, it was useless for breaking the bloodline bindings and was considered wasted. But conversely, the probability of a Saintbeast War-Soul awakening one of their abilities was much higher than any ordinary beast soul.

Ying Huo's new ability was called the Infernal Haze, while Meow Meow's third Saintbeast War-Soul ability was called the Ninefold Chaos Thunderscape. Their new abilities were very suitable for their current situation, and the power they exerted was terrifying indeed.

Upon witnessing their transformation, Tianming was amazed. They showed comprehensive growth in all areas, especially their abilities. Their regular Infernal Blaze and Chaos Voltball underwent explosive changes.

"Our opponents in the Realm Wars will enjoy these two new abilities," chuckled Tianming.

Next up, more cultivation! When practicing cultivation techniques, the three became one. When practicing battle arts, Ying Huo continued to study the Voidgod Sword Intent and its inverse Excalibur and Life-Death Claw Art, while Meow Meow... slept. It was no surprise at all. Meow Meow made every second of sleep count and was unwilling to waste a moment of leisure time.

"Old Ye, can you please demonstrate Myriad's Only once more?"

The last stance of the Voidgod Sword Intent was simply terrifying. Even with Tianming's new transformation, Myriad's Only posed a challenge. He hoped to master in ten days what took Ye Shaoqing a year.

"Can you be less intimate? I'd rather hear you call me master," coughed Ye Shaoqing.

"But it sounds overly polite and tacky. What we need most is intimacy," laughed Tianming.

"No thanks, I'm not interested in men," replied Ye Shaoqing.

"Alright, hurry up! I'll practice and you tell me what's wrong."

"Go on then."

Under Fatepath Peak, Tianming waved Onyx Dragon, repeatedly drawing the sword against Ye Shaoqing while the other elders watched. What he practiced was the unpolished form of Myriad's Only.

"I'm very confused. From Countercurrent, to Starfall, then to Cosmic Break, the progression is the same, as long as I constantly exceed the limit. However, Myriad's Only is an entirely new level that seems to surpass the word 'defiance.' There's a sense of breaking the cosmos, slaughtering gods and demons, and dominating the universe."

"You're right. Your understanding is accurate. The most important thing for Myriad's Only is the word 'only.' What does it mean to hold supremacy? You must contemplate the word," said Ye Shaoqing.

He had no trouble intercepting Tianming's sword ki with his bare hands. Tianming thrust his sword, but failed once more. Right now, he was nowhere near the confidence he'd displayed when he first practiced Voidgod Sword Intent. However, the challenge only fueled his fighting spirit. Within an hour, he swung his sword thousands of times, failing each time.

"You're right in many areas. Your technique and swordsmanship is perfect. But your understanding of the sword intent and the word 'only' is lacking. I suggest you put this to rest for now. In a few days time, I'll create the right environment for you en route to Heaven's Elysium. It was under that environment that I truly comprehended Myriad's Only," said Ye Shaoqing.

"Alright." Tianming obeyed his arrangement.

It was only natural for him to listen to his predecessor's advice with an open mind. Getting lost in the pride of his talent and paying no heed to others would be foolish behavior.

The world was boundless and filled with talented geniuses. There must be something worth learning from those who came before him. How could the knowledge of one man be compared to countless predecessors and ancestors? Tianming was very humble in that respect.

"Are there any battle arts besides the Voidgod Sword Intent that you'd like to practice? The elders will accompany you on your journey to the Realm Wars. When the time comes, you may seek guidance on the road," said Ye Shaoqing.

This suggestion was limited to Tianming alone. No one else would even think of mastering battle arts in such a short time.

"I heard that the tenth ancestor of the Li Saint Clan practiced a battle art known as the Trivita Fiendfist, which is very powerful. I wonder if any of the elders have mastered it?" asked Tianming.

The effect of the tenth ancestor's tomb, as well as guidance from an elder, would greatly improve his practice. Many of the ancestors' methods had been passed down, so other clans of the Grand-Orient Sect must have dabbled in it.

"The Trivita Fiendfist? It's a saintly-ranked battle art that's similar to Voidgod Sword Intent. If you decide to practice it, you'll be able to grasp it superficially at most," Huangfu Fengyun smiled.

"Even a superficial understanding of a saintly-ranked battle art is good. Other disciples at the peak of Unity have only just begun to practice heavenly-ranked battle arts. None would dare attempt comprehending saintly-ranked battle arts, since success is impossible," added Shangguan Jingshu.

"A pentabane's comprehension is amazing."

The elders were impressed by his extraordinary ability upon witnessing Tianming cultivate the Voidgod Sword Intent. Heavenly-ranked battle arts weren't an issue for Tianming. Although Li Yanfeng comprehended his Hellish Downfall Sword Art ahead of time, it had taken him five years.

"What a coincidence. I've actually dabbled in Trivita Fiendfist."

Right then, the burly, energetic voice of an elder sounded. Despite being the same age as Ye Qing, he had a head full of black hair and appeared youthful and imposing. One look and Tianming could tell he possessed a ferocious combat power.

Tianming was rather surprised. No one recognized the Life-Death Whip Art when he used it, which meant the battle art might have been lost to the Grand-Orient Sect. To his surprise, one of the elders actually practiced the Trivita Fiendfist. But then again, since whip arts were unpopular, its loss was reasonable.

Sixth elder Zhao Zhiyuan was ranked fourth in their faction.

"Elder Zhao," Tianming greeted.

"There's no need to be so polite. I'm a rough, straightforward man."

"Many thanks, elder."

"Alright, I'll teach you the Trivita Fiendfist."

Zhao Zhiyuan was straightforward and bold. Not only did he demonstrate the moves for Tianming, he also spoke clearly, simplifying many details.

"Junior Sect Master, this is a saintly-ranked battle art, after all. You don't have to pay attention to this part. I'll separate the core of this battle art, remove the complicated integration of heavenly will, and pursue the fundamentals. You try."

He had been meditating in the Li Mausoleum over the past few days. Now that he had guidance, his efficiency improved. With his position as the junior sect master, the elders' willingness to help proved greatly convenient for his cultivation.

Despite the fact the group of elders had practically surrounded Tianming, he wasn't at all annoyed. This was an opportunity for him to learn from these powerful elders. With their experience, even a few words would be of great help.

"The first step of the Trivita fiendfist is the Beast—Skysaker. You'll find that the core of this move is actually the same as Voidgod Sword Intent's Countercurrent, Starfall, and Cosmic Break. Even the second step, Fiend—Godringer possesses the same concept. However, the will of the Trivita Fiendfist lies in defiance, but at the same time, madness and a state of violence. Madness born from defiance is the foundation of Trivita Fiendfist. Consider yourself a madman, comprehend the meaning of madness, treat me as the sky that drives you crazy, and use your fist to break me. Shatter the sky."

As expected of the sixth elder, his attainments were profound. With his explanation and the demonstration of the Trivita Pugilist's tombstone, Tianming was infinitely closer to the real Trivita Fiendfist.

On the fifth day, after countless repetitions, Tianming finally mastered the first step.

"Junior Sect Master, your heaven-defying talents truly astound me," Zhao Zhiyuan smiled wryly as he openly said the words the other elders wanted to say.

Even if it wasn't a complete saintly-ranked battle art, since half of the important points had been removed, Tianming's moves contained a power stronger than ordinary heavenly-ranked battle arts.

Rebels and madmen were the core of the Voidgod Sword Intent and Trivita Fiendfist.

"If we had another month until the Realm Wars, Tianming would have a definite chance of winning the Grand-Orient Sword," sighed Shangguan Jingshu.

"Yes!" The elders were all truly amazed after watching Tianming cultivate.

"Tianming, let me introduce you to your companions. They're prime disciples who will join you in the Realm Wars."

There were four prime disciples, but only Tianming and two others remained after Yuwen Shendu's death and Su Wuyou's defeat.

Chapter 297 - The Prime Disciples' March Of Humiliation

As Li Tianming continued practicing his boxing techniques under the elders' shocked gazes, Zhou Zhiyuan brought two young men over.

Li Tianming took a look, and saw that they were both dashing in looks.

The one on the right was dressed in white robes, upon which were embroidered maple leaf designs. He looked very scholarly and cultured, and the pleasant smile on his face made people feel at ease.

"Junior Sect Master, he's called Shangguan Yunfeng. He's my great-grandson, and Shangguan Jiayi's elder brother," Shangguan Jingshu said. She looked warmly at her great-grandson, obviously full of pride. It was rather impressive for both a prime disciple and someone like Shangguan Jiayi to arise out of her great-grandchildren.

"Greetings, Junior Sect Master. Your performance a few days ago was nothing short of spectacular. You have my complete admiration," Shangguan Yunfeng said with a friendly smile. The pair of brothers seemed to have been raised well. They both gave off refined auras and were obviously from a scholarly family.

There was another prime disciple, apart from Shangguan Yunfeng. He was dressed in black training clothes. From his robust body and tanned skin, it was patently obvious how hard he trained. He looked at Tianming with a gaze that was neither warm nor cold.

The sixth elder, Zhou Zhiyuan, gave the young man a pat and smiled, "This is my grandson, Zhao Lingzhou. His aptitude is a bit poor, he's a tad too stubborn, and he doesn't talk a lot. He also doesn't quite match up to the junior sect master. He'll be following you during the Realm Wars, so if he offends you during that time, I hope you won't take it to heart."

Zhao Lingzhou frowned, obviously taking issue with his grandfather's words. However, he still recognised the occasion, so he stiffly responded, "Greetings, Junior Sect Master."

He had seen Tianming fight Su Yiran and Yuwen Shendu. However, he had never expected that he would have to be so polite to him in the future.

"Yunfeng and Lingzhou, there's no need to be so awkward. We're all of the same age, and we'll be working together during the Realm Wars. I'm quite a casual person, so I hope we can get along as fellow disciples and become friends," Tianming said frankly. His words were primarily directed at Zhao Lingzhou, who was clearly displeased.

"It'll be an honor to be friends with the junior sect master," Shangguan Yunfeng smiled.

"Just call me Tianming."

"Sure."

After speaking with Shangguan Yunfeng for a while, Tianming found that people from the Shangguan clan were really cultured and had a way with words.

However, Zhao Lingzhou simply sat there wordlessly the whole time, until Zhou Zhiyuan chased him back home to train.

“Junior Sect Master, you’ll set off in six days. With your speed, do you have any confidence in mastering the second stance of the Trivata Fiendfist?” Zhou Zhiyuan asked.

“Let’s give it a shot.”

“Now?”

“Yes!”

Shangguan Yunfeng and Zhao Lingzhou could be considered familiar faces now. Hence, Tianming poured his all into training Fiend—Godringer. This attack was for the sake of rocking even the gods, and exactly how much madness was needed in order to accomplish that?

As he watched from the side, Shangguan Yunfeng gave a sigh. He could only give a bitter chuckle and say, “We’re both prime disciples, but the gap in our comprehension is so vast. It’s a struggle for me as a ninth-level Unity to even comprehend heavenly-ranked battle arts, but he’s already started on saintly-ranked battle arts.”

There was no other option for him than awe.

“Be sure to learn from the junior sect master during the Realm Wars,” Shangguan Jingzhu said sincerely.

“Yes, great-grandma.” Shangguan Yunfeng nodded.

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On the eleventh day after defeating Yuwen Shendu, Tianming had mastered the second step of the Trivata Fiendfist. It was even stronger than Death Requisition from the Life-Death Whip Art, and was different in style.

Today also happened to be the day they set off. They would depart north toward Heaven’s Elysium to partake in the Realm Wars. A total of fifteen elders would escort the three prime disciples.

Before they set off, Li Tianming, Shangguan Yunfeng, and Zhao Lingzhou gathered at Fatepath Peak to wait for the elders.

“Lingzhou, why do you look so despondent?” Shangguan Yunfeng asked.

Zhao Lingzhou stood at the side and gave them a look. “Why wouldn’t I? We’re going there to be humiliated anyway.”

“Hey, don’t be like that. How could you admit defeat before we even fight?” Tianming said.

“Do you have confidence?” Zhao Lingzhou asked.

“Quite a bit.” It wasn’t that Tianming was being arrogant. He just felt if he wasn’t going to be confident, there wasn’t even a point in going.

“Naive. You think you can do something just because you beat Yuwen Shendu? Remember, he didn’t use the Spiritburn Tome, and you don’t have it now either!” Zhao Lingzhou said coldly.

When he saw how certain Zhao Lingzhou was, Tianming couldn’t be bothered to continue the conversation. He exchanged a look with Shangguan Yunfeng.

Shangguan Yunfeng forced a smile. "Well, we're all our own people. Don't blame him."

However, Zhao Lingzhou was still muttering off at the side, "That's how it goes every single time. We go for our once in ten years humiliation by Heaven's Elysium. No generation of prime disciples is an exception. How could the elysian children let us snatch away the Grand-Orient Sword? They'll be more vicious than anyone else during this opportunity! When past prime disciples returned, they were always depressed and lost their heart to cultivate any further.

"We still had some slight hope with Yuwen Shendu being in Heavenly Will, and having the Spiritburn Tome. But since it's just the three of us, let's just try our best not to be too embarrassed."

Zhao Lingzhou kept muttering to himself. Although he looked the opposite of someone who was weak-willed, it could be seen that he completely lacked any confidence in this outing.

"What, you'd rather Yuwen Shendu was here?" Shangguan Yunfeng asked sternly.

"Well, that's not so." Zhao Lingzhou shook his head and looked at Tianming. "I just feel it's a joke to thrust our sect's future onto some teenager!"

"Is that so?" Tianming chuckled. "Just because you're not capable doesn't mean that holds true for others as well."

"Well, I'm looking forward to it." Zhao Lingzhou's lips curled.

"Good. Watch very closely then."

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The fifteen elders were finally gathered. Among their number was Huangfu Fengyun, Shangguan Jingzhu, Zhou Zhiyuan, Ye Shaoqing, and Ye Qing.

The ten remaining elders would be stationed at the Grand-Orient Sect, watching Yuwen Taiji. They weren't weak, and protecting the sect and Li Qingyu wouldn't be any problem. Yuwen Taiji may have been strong, but his faction of elders wasn't stronger than these twenty-five.

Due to the importance of this Realm War, the first elder would be personally leading the group.

"Prepare to leave!" The first elder summoned his lifebound beast, a fifth-order saint beast called the Aircloud Godcrane. It was the largest lifebound beast Tianming had ever seen. When it extended its wings, it was dozens of meters long, enough to cover the skies!

Despite its advanced age, the Aircloud Godcrane was still full of a sacred majesty, and didn't lose out to Ye Shaoqing's Azureflame Dragon in the least.

Everyone got onto it and sat down. The three prime disciples were surrounded by the fifteen elders, completely safe.

"Go!"

They had already made the rest of their preparations. The Grand-Orient Sect's disciples and the remaining elders sent them off as the crane took to the skies, heading toward Heaven's Elysium.

The crowd only finally reluctantly dispersed when the giant crane vanished into the clouds. Now, they would wait quietly for the results, full of suspense.

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At the Li Mausoleum's entrance on Fatepath Peak, a man with messy hair was watching the crane fly off. He put down the wine in his hand, then turned around and entered the mausoleum.

"Just this one final step. One more death and I'll be eternal. Tianming, Qingyu, Li Saint Clan, wait for me! You have to hold on, brother!" After entering this time, he wouldn't be coming out again unless he succeeded.

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On Taiji Mountain, a man dressed in a white and black robe was standing at the highest peak with his hands clasped behind his back.

He continued staring in that direction even after the crane had vanished for a long while.

"Are the preparations done?" Yuwen Fengtian walked over.

"Yes," Yuwen Taiji responded dully.

"I think you're too overconfident, though. For a thousand years, every prime disciple has returned in humiliation. Without the Spiritburn Tome, this gamble is unlikely to be won." Yuwen Fengtian shook his head.

"No, I believe in him."

"You've always done things differently. Even I, your father, can't understand. Now, our efforts of over a decade have gone down the drain, and I hope you can still turn this around," Yuwen Fengtian sighed.

Yuwen Taiji nodded.

"Actually, I thought you'd just kill Li Tianming and get revenge for Shendu and Shengcheng. Those traitorous elders would lose their hope and bow to you. After all, you'll still grow into something terrifying even without the Grand-Orient Sword, given enough time."

"But I need the Grand-Orient Sword! Otherwise, even if I dominate here, I'd still have to bow to Jun Shengba!" Yuwen Taiji's eyes burned with fervor. His appetite wasn't so small.

"Have you shed even one tear for those two kids yet?" Yuwen Fengtian said helplessly when he saw Yuwen Taiji's passion.

"Father, would you believe me if I say I'm hurting even more than you?"

"Is that so?" Yuwen Fengtian really couldn't see it.

"Shendu and Shengcheng will see it. When I get the Grand-Orient Sword, they'll be able to rest in peace. When I accomplish our clan's long-cherished dream, they'll be proud of me. This is all I can do now. I have no more tears to shed. If something must be shed, let it be someone's blood!"

Chapter 298 - Onyx, Southsky, Cloudmist, Grand-Orient

The Aircloud Godcrane flew so high that it was above the vast sea of clouds. Tianming rode steadily on the crane, despite the turbulence around them. This beast could definitely fly much faster if it weren't for the people riding on it.

"Grandpa Huangfu, can you have the crane slow down? We only need to reach Heaven's Elysium on the last day," Ye Shaoqing said. Huangfu Fengyun's age made him someone who could be his grandfather, after all.

"Shaoqing, you intend to have the junior sect master comprehend Myriad's Only by looking down from high above the clouds, don't you?" Huangfu Fengyun asked.

"That's one part of it. I also haven't explained the rules of the Realm Wars to him in detail yet."

"Alright. We'll travel at a leisurely pace then."

Tianming looked at the distant clouds and felt the vastness of the world. He wondered how many places beyond the Grand-Orient Realm were beyond his wildest imagination and wanted to know how puny the world an Aeternal Infernal Phoenix saw was.

"Have you seen the information I gave you back then?" Ye Shaoqing asked.

"I have. Apart from the seven elysian children, three other sects will be sending their own disciples to participate, right?" With his near photographic memory, he had memorized all the results, abilities, and possible trump cards of his prospective opponents.

There were countless sects in the Grand-Orient Realm, but most of them had been swallowed up and converted into Heaven's Sanctums or Flameyellow Scion Institutes by Heaven's Elysium. Among the larger remaining sects in the realm were four great sects that were considered second tier. They weren't referred to as a collective of five great sects, for Heaven's Elysium's might had greatly outstripped the other four.

Heaven's Elysium was the only supersect in the realm, having replaced the Grand-Orient Sect a millennium ago. Even now, they continued growing stronger. The other four great sects were the oldest sects in the realm, and their glory days were long past. Though at the very least, they managed to maintain a certain level of standard.

Based on the rankings of the previous sect battles in the realm, Heaven's Elysium took first place uncontested, while the Grand-Orient Sect placed fifth. The sect occupying second place was located in the west of the realm near Onyx Hole, called the Onyx Sect.

Ten thousand years ago, when Heaven's Elysium hadn't yet risen from obscurity, they were the principal rival of the Grand-Orient Sect. Many battles had taken place between the two powers, with most of them ending in Grand-Orient Sect's victory.

Yet, nobody could have expected that Onyx Sect would stabilize their heritage and legacy throughout the years while Grand-Orient Sect fell from grace to fifth place. In their current state, they might not be able to face off against the Onyx Sect, let alone Heaven's Elysium.

"Ten years ago, the Onyx Sect even engaged in a war against Heaven's Elysium, but they were defeated. Now, they've become minions instead," Ye Shaoqing said.

"Master, the information you gave me says that the third-ranked Southsky Sect has a good relationship with our sect, right?" Tianming asked.

Southsky Sect was located near the southwestern area of the realm on Southsky Island. It was much closer to Vermillion Bird than the Grand-Orient Sect was.

"That's right. Our relationship has always been decent. They've also supported us quite a lot in recent years. If not for our alliance with them, we would've faced even more oppression from Heaven's Elysium."

"Did it start all the way back during the ancestors' days?"

"That's right. The one who founded the Southsky Sect was the wife of the founding ancestor, Li Shenxiao: Weisheng Yuyin. It's said that they split due to differences in personality and forged their own paths. Despite parting, they remained friends the whole time. While their sect's descendants don't have Lifesbane, their heritage is actually pretty close to yours. You come from the same source, after all. Back then, the founding ancestor had a son and daughter. The one Weisheng Yuyin took with her was her daughter, who didn't have Lifesbane."

Tianming didn't expect the two sects to have this kind of relationship. It was no wonder they were able to maintain such close ties.

"Weisheng is a rather rare surname. Is it native to the Grand-Orient Realm?" Tianming asked.

"No. It's said that Weisheng Yuyin is someone the founding ancestor got to know when he was in the Theocracy of the Ancients. She came to Grand-Orient Realm with him."

Only the most powerful of people would become legends, Tianming thought. People even knew where his wife came from.

"What kind of place is the theocracy?"

"Since you came from Vermillion Bird, you know about commanderies, right?"

"I do. The city of Flamehaven, where I was born, is part of the Southfire Commandery, one of the commanderies in Vermillion Bird."

"In the same sense, the Grand-Orient Realm is a commandery of the Theocracy of the Ancients. The Elysium Emperor of Heaven's Elysium is known as the Commander of the Grand-Orient Realm."

Tianming was mind blown. He had thought that the theocracy was some kind of secret realm. He didn't think that the Grand-Orient Realm was actually a part of the theocracy instead. Given the number of talented disciples the Grand-Orient Sect had churned out through the ages, it didn't seem to be a mere commandery.

"Well, it's not that similar in principle. The Theocracy of the Ancients isn't a nation like the small country you came from. Instead, it's been ruled by a grand dynasty since antiquity. The nation was said to have produced literal gods before, so it isn't weird that it can reign over a place like the Grand-Orient Realm. The history of this ancient dynasty stretches much farther back than Grand-Orient Sect's own. Our sect has only lasted some ten thousand years, during which it was appointed by the theocracy to rule over the realm," explained Ye Shaoqing.

"I see."

"Don't worry too much about the theocracy. If you do manage to become a saint, you'll have a chance to roam the theocracy. The Grand-Orient Realm is a really distant place to the theocracy, so they basically don't really care about the internal struggles between the sects. At most, they come to visit once every decade to supervise the fight for the Grand-Orient Sword. Even then, they usually do it from the shadows, rather than appearing outright."

"So someone from the theocracy will come to watch over the Realm Wars?"

"Perhaps. It's said that they do send someone over, but no one has ever seen or received them before. Even so, their supervision is an edict from the theocracy itself. Even if they didn't send anyone over, the possibility that they did is enough to scare the various sects into not messing around during the Realm Wars."

"I got it now. Master, can you tell me more about the Prime Tower and Grand-Orient Sword?"

"These two divine artifacts are said to have been crafted by the gods. They were granted to the founding ancestor by the Primeval Autarch, when he was appointed to become commander of the Grand-Orient Realm. The Grand-Orient Sword is also called the Imperial Sword, and another name for Prime Tower is Undying Tower. Nobody apart from the founding ancestor has been able to unleash their true divine might.

"Ever since the founding ancestor's passing, the Prime Tower secured the sacred mountain with the power of its heavenly patterns, causing it to become a sacred training ground for the sect. Unless the sect is conquered and the Grand-Orient Mountains themselves are occupied, nobody will be able to take the tower away.

"As for the Grand-Orient Sword, it's been passed down through the generations of Li sect masters. But when the Li Saint Clan fell from grace, the sword was taken away by the Onyx Sect. Then, when Heaven's Elysium rose to power, they took the sword from them. As the Grand-Orient sword is a divine artifact the founding ancestor received from the theocracy, it isn't something that can be taken on a whim. It was said that the theocracy sent someone to Heaven's Elysium when it was taken. Once they realized that the Li Saint Clan had fallen from grace and could no longer hold onto the realm, they devised the Realm Wars.

"It would be carried out once every ten years, during which the five great sects would send the disciples from their most current generation to fight. Any sect that can take the sword will be allowed to hold onto it for the next decade. Nobody from the senior generations will be allowed to interfere in that process.

"The theocracy's might is the reason the Realm Wars are still carried out to this day. If it weren't for that, Heaven's Elysium would never offer up the Grand-Orient Sword for little kids like you to fight over."

In other words, Heaven's Elysium had no choice but to offer the sword as a prize due to the edict from the theocracy. Even if no one was really supervising the Realm Wars, Heaven's Elysium wouldn't dare risk breaking the protocol in fear of retaliation.

"The winner would be able to hold onto the sword for a decade. After that, another war is held to determine the next ruler of the realm. Don't look down on the sword. It's power is one thing, but its true value lies in its relation with the edict from the theocracy that states that the sect that manages to hold onto the sword for five consecutive decades will become the new ruler of the realm. That means five successive generations of disciples will have to take the Grand-Orient Sword in the Realm Wars.

"In the past thousand years, while the other three great sects have been able to take the Grand-Orient Sword, they only managed to hold onto it for ten years before Heaven's Elysium snatched it back in the next round. As for our sect, we've never once taken it back since we lost it."

It was truly embarrassing and demotivating. Not only were they unable to take back the sword, they had spent so many resources and much effort to nurture each generation of prime disciples. Even then, they still lost horribly and were traumatized for life, causing their future cultivation to slow and stagnate.

Ye Shaoqing sighed and patted on Tianming's shoulder. "Such is life. When we stood on top, we were the idols of many. Once we fell, even the ancestors of the Li Saint Clan would be disappointed in our sect's descendants. That's why the Realm Wars is just as much a struggle for the Grand-Orient Sword as it is a battle for our dignity! And our sect has been the laughingstock of the others for close to a thousand years...."

Over the past thousand years, there had been a hundred generations of prime disciples, with each generation lasting ten years. They stepped into the battlefield and fought the Realm Wars with the aim to regain their sect's dignity, only to leave in shame. By now, winning the Realm Wars was merely the prime disciples' fleeting dream. Tianming could finally understand why Zhao Lingzhou was so pessimistic, and he also finally knew why Yuwen Taiji wanted so badly for Yuwen Shendu to take the Grand-Orient Sword back.

Yet now, the hope and dignity of the Li Saint Clan and Grand-Orient Sect were his burden, on top of the hopes of the countless generations that had come before. Those yearning gazes, as well as the ones filled with fighting spirit, were focused on him.

Though Huangfu Fengyun had plainly told him that not taking the sword back wouldn't really change much, Tianming couldn't feel casual about it at all after hearing about the humiliation his sect and clan had experienced.

"Dying is but a part of life, but living without dignity is unacceptable." He took a deep breath, his eyes filling with resolve as they looked to Heaven's Elysium's direction. This time, he wasn't just heading there to defeat Yueling Long.

He would also be taking back the dignity the past hundred generations of prime disciples had lost.

The five sects, namely, Heaven's Elysium, Onyx Sect, Southsky Sect, Cloudmist Sword School, and Grand-Orient Sect, would send their top disciples to fight for the Grand-Orient Sword. Who would have the last laugh? It wouldn't be the Grand-Orient Sect, thought many.

Chapter 299 - Southsky Sect Banquet

The wind blew strong as Tianming stood atop the Aircloud Crane's head, wielding Onyx Dragon. He looked to the distance and saw an endless sea of clouds. Through the gaps between the clouds, he could

see mountains with all kinds of creatures living within. It was as if he had a full view of the mortal realm, a stunning view indeed.

"Do you feel it? The feeling of being the only one in existence to behold all this," Ye Shaoqing asked.

"I'll try."

"Strike your sword toward everything you see before you. Try to grasp how it feels to be the one and only among a myriad things."

"Okay!"

Ye Shaoqing had created the perfect place for Tianming to try mastering Myriad's Only. That was why the crane had to fly slower. Their journey to Heaven's Elysium would take four days instead. Even given the slower speed, it was still difficult to stand atop the head of a flying crane straight, let alone while practicing swordplay.

"Tianming, this is all I can do for your cultivation. The rest will have to depend on you. I believe you can do it. Yours is an exceptional spirit and mind. It's no doubt enough for you to break the cosmos and transcend life and death."

After he said all that, Ye Shaoqing returned to the back of the crane and watched Tianming train with the other fourteen elders.

"Shaoqing, do you think he can do it?" Zhao Zhiyuan asked.

"That's a pointless question to ask. There's nothing else we can do besides watch."

"I see," Zhao Zhiyuan said with a chuckle.

He saw his grandson, Zhao Lingzhou, pout as he was thinking about unnecessary things.

"Fool! You should train whenever you can like the junior sect master!" he snapped.

"It's a waste of effort," his grandson replied.

"You think I won't toss you off right now?"

"It's better than going to the Realm Wars just to be humiliated."

Zhao Zhiyuan felt that it would be more embarrassing if he taught his grandson a lesson. Instead, he focused his attention on the youth with devilish white hair, like the others. He was the one who would really be going against his fate.

Tianming opened his eyes to take in as much of the view as he could while he contemplated the intricacies of Myriad's Only.

"Only?" Countless changes manifested in his mind. Ye Shaoqing had comprehended the essence of the move in such an environment.

"Countercurrent, Starfall, Cosmic Break, and Myriad's Only...." Any sword could be used with these four moves, with special emphasis put on the sword intent: the intent to go against the current, the stars, the cosmos, and to eventually be the only thing to go against everything.

"So, it's a replacement for Cosmic Break." He started having an inkling of insight, but that wasn't enough. Facing the strong winds, he struck out with his sword time and again, despite the strong air resistance that prevented him from achieving a perfect strike.

"There's many obstacles in the world. Nothing is truly smooth sailing. Only by training amidst such strong winds can one know the true meaning of cultivation."

"Makes sense," the little chick said as it tried to learn the technique for itself. As Tianming tried comprehending Myriad's Only, it was trying to learn Cosmic Break, and knowing a thing or two about Myriad's Only would definitely help it learn Cosmic Break. Now that it had the Goldflame Featherblade, it would have even more potential if it could use both abilities and battle arts.

Tianming sank into his own world. His strikes numbered in the hundreds, thousands, then myriads as they got faster and faster.

"Myriad's Only, huh? Guess that means I have to train a myriad of times each day."

While the number didn't look that impressive, the elders saw his hardworking spirit. They knew how determined he was, based on his nonstop attempts to traverse the perilous road ahead of him. Tianming didn't want to disappoint anyone. As the wind blew, the clouds rolled, and the stars in the night sky shone, the sword in his hand transformed nonstop, each time approaching the true form of Myriad's Only.

Then one day, Ying Huo finally cracked Cosmic Break and parted the clouds with it. The elders watched with their eyes wide, already incredibly impressed at how a lifebound beast at the Unity stage could use a saint-ranked battle art, crude as the attempt was. They wouldn't have believed it unless they had witnessed it themselves.

"As expected of a lifebound beast of a pentabane."

However, they felt that the more terrifying one was no doubt Tianming, as Ying Huo's will was no doubt a reflection of his own, given that he was the main unit of their symbiotic cultivation. Ying Huo had definitely taken part of Tianming's passion, endurance, crude personality, and sense of responsibility and amplified it to the max, not to mention his strong desire to protect his loved ones.

On the fourth day, they saw Tianming swing his forty-thousandth strike. He had finally understood the true essence of the move high up in the skies.

"Breaking the cosmos and scaling the skies, turning into the sun and moon itself and ruling supreme over heaven and earth," he mumbled, his eyes closed as he struck.

His ten thousand strikes each day condensed into a single strike, instantly causing thousands of holes to be pierced through the clouds. With but a single strike, it was as if ten thousand swords had struck, cleaving countless clouds in half.

Tianming kept his sword away and turned back with a smile, as if all of that had been nothing out of the ordinary for him. The elders watched him in awe, then applauded. They had never seen someone like Tianming throughout their entire lives.

"It's one thing if he's far more talented than others, yet he's far more hardworking, too. Easily ten times as much."

"If he doesn't dominate, nobody can."

All of them applauded wholeheartedly for Tianming, despite the Realm Wars looming over them. They resolved themselves to protect him even more.

Tianming knew that more training would not only increase the options he had, but also the elders' willingness to protect him. Cultivation was a journey of life and death. He didn't want to be the second coming of Li Wudji, so he had to make sure to get the powerful ones on his side until he could one day stand on his own.

He shot a glance at Zhao Lingzhou, who hung his head in embarrassment. He felt really inferior when he compared himself to Tianming.

I've never admitted defeat before, yet how could I do just that before the Realm Wars have even begun? How embarrassing! he thought. He had finally decided to change. If someone like Tianming was struggling to the very end to fight for the glory of the sect, why was he, someone who had sworn to live and die as a member of the sect, sighing in defeat? No matter how this turns out, I'll fight to the end without embarrassing my sect!

He knew that they would arrive at Heaven's Elysium soon. He could already smell the arrogance that place exuded.

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Huangfu Fengyun was giving them a briefing on the proceedings before they arrived.

"The Realm Wars will take place at Heaven's Elysium, but according to the rules, only seven people from the four great sects can participate because they only have seven elysian children. As far as I'm aware, there's fifteen participants from the four great sects in total, meaning eight of you will be eliminated at the Throughpath."

Heaven's Elysium was located on the highlands and stretched endlessly outward. The only way to reach it was known as the Throughpath, which countless geniuses across the realm dreamed to cross.

"Before the Realm Wars, all fifteen of you will have to step onto the Throughpath, where Heaven's Elysium has placed lots of wildbeasts and some heavenly pattern barriers to block your way. What you need to do is cross the path and become the first seven to reach Heaven's Elysium. You won't be meeting the elysian children on the path, but you'll be faced with the top disciples of the other sects, namely the southsky disciples, onyx disciples, and cloudmist disciples.

"They're the equivalent of prime disciples and elysian children. There will be five onyx disciples, four southsky disciples, and three cloudmist disciples. Some among them are geniuses at the Heavenly Will stage—at least more than one, in fact. The three of you will have to try your best to cross the Throughpath, or you won't even have a chance to be humiliated by the elysian children.

"This generation has a lot of top-ranked disciples. In the last four generations, the number of participants never numbered more than the elysian children, so the Throughpath wasn't necessary.

Since Heaven's Elysium won't let us fly straight to them, we'll have to rest at Heaven City and wait for them to receive us."

It seemed that Heaven's Elysium was enjoying throwing their weight around lately. Heaven City was located below Heaven's Elysium. Anyone who dreamed of entering the sect would rest there.

"Let's rest at Heaven Inn. We'll be meeting for a dinner banquet with our friends from the Southsky Sect later. This time around, their sect master will also be here."

Heaven Inn was the largest inn in the city. In fact, it was the largest in all of the Grand-Orient Realm, as well as the most luxurious and high-class. The interior decoration looked even grander than that found in palaces. Even Vermillion Bird's Xing Mansion couldn't compare to it.

The third-ranked Southsky Sect had arrived two days before. Having stemmed from the same source as the Grand-Orient Sect, many members of the Southsky Sect had ties with the Grand-Orient Sect. The banquet was not unlike a gathering of old friends.

Tianming rested in the inn and even got some time to train.

"The Throughpath will open tomorrow. We'll have to cross it before thinking of the Realm Wars."

The trials there would be nothing more than wildbeasts, heavenly pattern barriers, and challengers from other sects. There weren't any rules beyond charging up the path to reach the end.

During the evening, Ye Shaoqing called out to have Tianming join the banquet. The elders were preparing to welcome those from the Southsky Sect. When Tianming arrived, the elders were also present. Being a junior, he was seated with Shangguan Yunfeng and Zhao Lingzhou.

As they would be fighting tomorrow, the other two seemed a little nervous. Right as they sat down, they could hear their guests arrive at the entrance. As the Southsky Sect ranked third, they were probably a little stronger than the Grand-Orient Sect.

Chapter 300 - Weisheng Ruosu

There were twenty elders accompanying the disciples from Southsky Sect, much more than Grand-Orient Sect. The reason so many of their elders had come in the first place was to protect Tianming. The Southsky Sect, on the other hand, had fifty elders to begin with, hence their higher numbers.

The Southsky Sect had their own council of elders, but their positions and power were different from those in the Grand-Orient Sect. They mainly served the sect master instead.

This time around, Sect Master Weisheng Tianlan had personally brought twenty elders with him to the Realm Wars, a sign that he heavily prioritized this event. He was dressed all in white and had long, flowing hair. He seemed like a young man, and based on his looks, behavior, and charisma, he didn't seem too much older than Ye Shaoqing.

Weisheng Tianlan looked rather pleasant—handsome, even—much like a privileged young man from a good family. While Ye Shaoqing shared some of that bearing, he had a much sharper gaze thanks to his mastery of swordsmanship. In stark contrast, the Southsky sect master seemed like a gentleman and nothing more. Unlike the Grand-Orient Sect Master, Weisheng Tianlan was definitely a genius among geniuses for being able to become sect master at his age. At the very least, he wouldn't be any bit

inferior to Yuwen Taiji. His fellow sect masters from the Onyx Sect and Cloudmist Sword School were born in the same generation as his father.

"Greetings, Grand-Orient Elders. I appreciate the hospitality."

"Sect Master Weisheng, please take a seat," Huangfu Fengyun said as the person with the most seniority in the sect. While he was much older, he still spoke respectfully. Seniority of age didn't matter in the face of actual status.

"Senior Huangfu, you're too polite," Weisheng Tianlan said as he and his elders took their seats and started chatting with old friends.

"Ruosu, you all come in as well," Weisheng Tianlan called out after he sat down. Four young disciples came in, three boys and a girl. The most elite disciples in Southsky Sect were known as the southsky disciples. They enjoyed the greatest care and guidance their sect had to offer.

Tianming's eyes fell on the girl who led them and he was immediately awed. She was dressed in an elegant white dress, and her beautiful face gave off a gentle glow and was flawlessly fair, like ivory. Beneath her fair cheeks were faint splashes of crimson.

She had a dignified aura that wouldn't tolerate any disrespect. Her eyes sparkled with a cool silence that was neither charming nor unlikeable, but just right. The white dress made Tianming think of a certain someone from his past, with the main difference being this girl's far superior family background, giving her an aloof sense that Mu Qingqing didn't possess.

"This is Ruosu. I recall that she was only eight the last time she met with Shaoqing," Weisheng Tianlan said. He seemed to be an old friend of Ye Shaoqing's.

"Girls really change a lot as they grow up. She's as beautiful as a goddess now," Ye Shaoqing praised.

"That's one thing, but yours is another. You're getting rather old. It's about time you settled down."

"Oh, that won't do. I want to play around for a few more years yet."

As they spoke, Weisheng Ruosu greeted the elders with the other three southsky disciples before they sat opposite Tianming. They were potential rivals, after all, so it couldn't hurt for them to check out their competition.

"Tianming my little bro, you've fallen for this beauty, haven't you? Are you going to cheat when Ling'er's asleep? Don't worry, I definitely won't tell," Ying Huo said from the lifebound space.

"Cut your crap. She's at Heavenly Will. I'm only trying to get a feel for her power!" he spat back.

Only Weisheng Ruosu among the four was at the same level as Yuwen Shendu. People like them definitely had insane talent. The other three were on the level of Zhao Lingzhou.

Weisheng Ruosu introduced the other three disciples as Weisheng Qingluan, Bai Taijun and Xi Menglin, respectively. Weisheng Qingluan was Weisheng Ruosu's younger brother by a year. They were the sect master's children; he seemed to be quite the accomplished teacher. As both of his children would be participating in the Realm Wars, he felt he stood a rather good chance this time.

"Tianming, Yunfeng, Lingzhou, you all should get to know them as well," Huangfu Fengyun said after he introduced them.

Weisheng Tianlan looked at the three of them before turning to Ye Shaoqing and asking, "Where's Yuwen Taiji's son? I heard he also reached Heavenly Will. Why isn't he here?"

He had also realized that nobody from Yuwen Taiji's faction was among the elders and didn't think that Yuwen Taiji himself would be absent. He wouldn't have come to the banquet if he had known.

"Things are a little complicated. I'll tell you about it in more detail later tonight. Basically, we're only sending these three untrained kids to join the Realm Wars," he joked.

He didn't think the others would take his joke seriously. The white-haired first elder of Southsky Sect, Gu Qiuyu, couldn't hold back and said, "Is the Grand-Orient Sect so afraid of being humiliated that you intend to lose at the Throughpath before going back?"

It was a rather horrid accusation that made things rather awkward for Huangfu Fengyun.

"That's not right. I heard that Yuwen Taiji needs to get the Grand-Orient Sword to dominate their sect," said another elder.

Seeing them speculating, Huangfu Fengyun glanced at Ye Shaoqing, who had no choice but to explain what had happened.

"My disciple, Li Tianming, son of Li Wudi, killed Yuwen Shendu before he even got the chance to use the Spiritburn Tome his father had prepared." He glanced at Tianming to make sure the others knew who he was talking about. When he finished, the elders turned to look oddly at Ye Shaoqing and Tianming.

"Shaoqing, you're not joking around, right?" Weisheng Tianlan said with utter flabbergastment.

"I knew you wouldn't believe it."

"How could someone at Unity defeat someone at Heavenly Will?"

"Pentabane."

"What?"

The elders of the Southsky Sect all widened their eyes. Seeing Tianming's white hair, they asked, "Are you certain?"

"Of course," Huangfu Fengyun said. "We've been paying attention to him for a few months now."

"How can a pentabane only be at Unity? Which level is he at?"

By now, Tianming was the focus of all their attention. His rise to prominence had happened right before the Realm Wars, so he was relatively unheard of outside the sect. Huangfu Fengyun and the rest explained his origins, but said he had cultivated for some two years to make the story less hyperbolic.

"So, you're saying he can face a Heavenly Will cultivator despite being only at Unity?" Weisheng Tianlan asked.

"If he manages to utilize his full potential, I guess. He might be a little weaker than that, usually," Ye Shaoqing said, having heard about Feiling. He knew she was asleep, so Tianming would be weaker than usual without her help. Even so, Tianming had had a recent breakthrough to the sixth level of Unity, so he was now about as strong as he was when he'd fought Yuwen Shendu.

"He sounds decent. Even so, I don't fully believe you yet. I guess I'll have to see how he does during the Realm Wars," Weisheng Tianlan said.

"Definitely."

As they spoke, the first elder, Gu Qiuyu, still seemed rather doubtful. Looking at Tianming, he said, "I recall that pentabanes have bane-rings. Let me see them."

"Nope," Tianming said, as his bane-rings had transformed into words.

"You don't even dare to show your bane-rings, yet you claim to be a pentabane?" Gu Qiuyu merely smirked without saying much else, causing the atmosphere to grow awkward. He definitely thought Tianming was faking it.

"My friends of the Grand-Orient Sect, I almost believed that wild story of yours," Gu Qiuyu said with a laugh.

"Enough from you," Weisheng Tianlan strictly said, shutting him up. Even so, doubt had already set in most of the Southsky Sect elders; not that it mattered. At least the sect master seemed to believe him.

"The last time the trial at the Throughpath took place was three generations ago. Based on that time, the disciples can easily gather in groups near the end of the path. It'd be a good idea to form alliances before the trials. In recent years, the Onyx Sect has completely submitted to Heaven's Elysium, and the Cloudmist Sword School was brought into prominence by them in the first place. I worry that their disciples will take all seven positions from us.

"It's one thing for us to not be able to take the sword, but it's another thing if they gang up on our disciples." That was the reason they even held this banquet in the first place.

"Since that's the case, we should let these seven youths get to know each other so they can support each other later, right?" Ye Shaoqing said.

"That's exactly it."

"Aren't you afraid our disciples won't be strong enough to team up with yours?"

"I am, but I trust your character."

"Deal. Since that's the case, I'll vouch for these three's abilities. If they turn out to be burdens on your disciples, you can come looking for me."

Seeing him so confident, Weisheng Tianlan felt somewhat relieved. However, some among the twenty elders didn't feel the same, such as the first elder.

The four disciples themselves looked at Tianming and the rest doubtfully, as if they were a little unhappy. The green-clad youth, Weisheng Qingluan, however, came to Tianming and asked, "Friend, are

you really from the Li Saint Clan? I heard the Weisheng Clan came from the same line of descent as well."

Tianming chatted with the bloke and found him to be a decent person. He sounded really friendly and reasonable, like Weisheng Tianlan. Upbringing truly made a difference in one's character; there wasn't a hint of sketchiness in the way he spoke and acted.

"Sis, Tianming's pretty interesting! Come and join us!"

The whole time, Weisheng Ruosu had been keeping her head lowered. She had remained quiet throughout the whole time her seniors were talking. It was only when her brother called out to her that she looked at Tianming.

"Nice to meet you, Miss Ruosu. I'm Li Tianming."

"Likewise."

She was a cool beauty, after all.

"Oh? Are you charmed?" Ying Huo asked.

"I'm only making alliances! You bugger off!"