

The Ages 861

Chapter 861 - Cornered and Blind

As the sun began to set, Tianming finally reached Linyu City. It was located rather far off from Liuyun City, though it was closer to Tianming City than Liuyun City was. The last wisps of red from the setting sun stretched across the skies, blanketing the city in a gentle cascade.

The city was really quiet; all five million captives there were filled with terror and awaiting their final fate. Si Ling's order to massacre them hadn't yet reached the city. Regardless of the distance, Tianming would always be much faster than any messenger they had. The Nonahall troops in the city were currently toying with the captives and having endless fun, causing nonstop cries of pain, grief, and despair to reverberate throughout. Without a word, Tianming barged into the city and started his own massacre.

"It's the imperial son!"

"He's here to save us!"

The citizens all watched with tearful eyes.

"Everyone, leave with me!" Tianming realized that, as their mental support, there wasn't much he needed to say. All he had to do was show up and he would gain their faith and trust.

"Let's go!"

"Kill!"

"There's nothing to fear now that the imperial son is with us!"

They had heard of Tianming's amazing deeds as he crushed their oppressors time and again. Not to mention, with Lan Huang paving a way and crushing everything with its Kilofold Rings, the captives allowed their pent-up rage and hatred to explode. All Tianming had to do was make a chip in the enemy's defense for the torrent of disgruntled captives to burst through.

"You leave first! I'll watch your backs!" Tianming beckoned.

"Praise be the imperial son!"

The captives all cheered his name with utmost gratitude as they escaped northward during the twilight while Tianming killed more and more enemy troops that attempted to hunt them down. So far, they hadn't been able to stop the captives from escaping at all. It was only after the captives had completely disappeared beyond the horizon that Tianming stopped and made his way back to Tianming City.

"I hope they all survive and enjoy the rest of their lives." Carrying out good deeds felt indescribably good, and he also got the benefit of earning the captives' faith. Using his Sovereign Eyes, he could see the Omniscient Will from the lives he'd saved flooding toward him.

"It appears that gods truly exist. However, they aren't cultivators that ascended beyond the Samsara stage. Instead, the gods exist in people's hearts. When people truly need a god, one will be born!"

Tianming didn't know how the ten gods in the history of the Flameyellow Continent had ascended. All he knew was that his experience was completely different from theirs. By now, he stood at a much higher place in the hearts of the folks of Archaion than Feiling and the rest. It was tacitly acknowledged that he was the reincarnation of Great Emperor Xuanyuan!

He turned his gaze to the north as he stood on the walls of Linyu City, looking over the vast lands that were part of Archaion. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, feeling his pulse beat in harmony with the rhythm of the land. It was as if he had become part of Archaion himself. Or rather, it was more like his soul had blended together with it to become one.

"My dad said that becoming a god is the best way to shake off our pursuers. However, he didn't tell me what kind of god I should become."

Gripping the bloodied Archfiend in his hand, he cracked a smile. Then, he flapped his wings and flew toward Tianming City. The desperate battle was finally about to begin.

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The veil of night had set on Tianming City. Despite the south of Archaion being a place rich with nature and wilderness, Tianming City seemed dark and lifeless, even with the Sun-Moon-Star Formation covering it.

Countless dark figures came and went outside the city. There were at least six million enemies, all riding their lifebound beasts as they set their ravenous sights on the city. The scale of an army of six million was hard to imagine, especially considering the fact that the total number of soldiers of the Nine Divine Realms combined was only around eight million. With the sheer number of troops stationed outside Tianming City, one wouldn't be faulted for mistaking it for Taiji Peak Lake.

The Archaion Sect hoped that the Sun-Moon-Star Formation would be able to mitigate most of the enemy forces, but even that wasn't certain. The six million beastmasters on Nonahall's side and their lifebound beasts had erected a practically airtight encirclement around the city. Now that the order to prepare for mobilization had been given, they were only one order away from attacking.

The darkness of night was all encompassing, and one couldn't see their outstretched fingers. With tensions rising to a boiling point, bloodshed on an unprecedented scale was bound to commence. Which side would be the one to remain standing come daybreak? Whose corpses would be strewn all across the walls of the city? Whose lover or children would be among the pile of corpses?

The regular rhythm of six million heavy breaths compounded upon each other like the soft growl of cubs, resonating with each other to form a gigantic roar. Those within Tianming City could no doubt smell the bloodlust from the mouths of the vile beasts, oh the ever-unnerving scent of iron.

Tianming was now mingled among those savage beasts. His entire body was covered in heavy black armor, only revealing his single black eye. "I heard we're waiting for the skyscourge bloodfiend and heartsourge fiend, right?"

"Yep. They wish to render a final service to Nonahall."

"They must be really fierce and ready to fight then."

"Well, it'd be ideal if they could tear apart the Sun-Moon-Star Formation and kill Li Tianming."

"No doubt about that."

"Hehehe.... The folks in the city are truly pitiful. It's over for them, this time around. Once we're done here, the next step is to continue stomping everything in our path flat until we reach Taiji Peak Lake."

"Did you hear? Ghoul King Si Ling wants to massacre the entire city tonight as a tribute to her elder brother, Ghoul King Xue Yi. Not a fly is to be spared."

"Very well. That means we're free to do as we please tonight then."

"Archaion is only the start. One day, the Nonahall Divine Realm will unify the entire Flameyellow Continent under our rule."

"We'll start with Tianming City tonight!"

Tianming had heard all of that after blending into the enemy forces. He continued wordlessly advancing until he reached the very front of the vanguard. Now, he was as close to the Sun-Moon-Star Formation as he could be.

"Hey, back off! Don't be in such a rush!" someone from behind called out to him.

Tianming immediately spread his wings and sped up. Even as he charged into the Sun-Moon-Star Formation, the forces of Nonahall still hadn't reacted.

"Who's that?!"

Right after they said that, Tianming disappeared beyond the formation. The moment he entered, the formation's terrifying power locked on to him.

"Palace Lord Yi, it's me, Tianming!" he cried out. It was only then that the Infinite Starnet of the formation dissipated. This third-origin tribulation pattern formation was no doubt much stronger than the formations of the Grand-Orient Realm. The markings alone seemed far more complex, allowing Yi Xingyin the kind of granular control to attack or spare whomever he chose.

Tianming crossed the formation and got on the walls, where Jian Wuyi and the rest were waiting for him. "Sect Master Jian, the heartscourge fiend and skyscorch bloodfiend will be leading the charge."

"Alright, we appreciate the news," Jian Wuyi said.

"Good." Tianming looked around the city and let the tense atmosphere soak in. The upcoming crisis felt like a kind of darkness that was about to overpower them. Would this be their last stand, or would they live to fight another day?

"Have the captives of all four cities been rescued?" the city lord of Tianming City, Su Wanfeng, asked.

"They have, City Lord. The sect even sent us help on that," Tianming said.

"Very well." That was the second piece of good news Tianming had brought.

"Now that we're no longer threatened by the corpse puppets and saved twenty million people from the fate of endless suffering past death, you've really rendered the realm a magnificent service," Xuanyuan

Xie exclaimed. If not for Tianming's efforts, Tianming City would be facing far worse that night. Still, they didn't have any concrete plans to defend themselves other than fighting to the death. Meanwhile, on the Pentaphase front, the two-million-strong army led by Fang Shenyu and Jian Qingyuan could only wait for an opportunity to come. Before the enemy launched a proper attack on Tianming City, they didn't dare leave their post.

"What's Meow Meow doing?" Tianming asked.

"Napping over there," Su Wanfeng said. That was to be expected. Tianming went over and picked up the lazy cat.

"Who dares interrupt my restful slumber? Feel my wr—" Meow Meow mumbled as it slowly opened its eyes.

"Feel your what?"

"Feel my very strong feelings of love and affection for you?" It immediately changed its tone when it saw Tianming.

"So, you're well rested, I'm sure."

"It could be better, ideally with two more hours," Meow Meow said.

"Shame we don't live in an ideal world!" Tianming tossed it back into his lifebound space and entered a civilian residence. Before the enemy began the attack, he had a chance to enter the life phase of the seventh level—it was just a simple matter of forming his samsara rings. With his Imperial Will, he could easily control the strong tribulation forces. Soon, he and his four beasts made it to the seventh-level life phase.

"With Ling'er and the Greenspark Tower, I believe I can now face off against Palace Lord Yi and Divine Marshal Xuanyuan Xie."

Those were people at the tenth-level death phase, second only to sect masters and ghoulish kings! The voluminous vigor of the life phase made his power even more prominent, and the four codexes he practiced had enough combined tribulation force to rival third-origin tribulation elders at the tenth-level life phase. He took out Archfiend and wondered when he would truly be able to take the Archfiend Eye into his own eyes.

"I wonder how long it'll take until I truly become one of the sky plunderer race..."

He had spent a lot of time figuring out how to crack the secrets of the black hole stars and decided it must have something to do with Archfiend. Still, he didn't have a clear answer as to how to proceed.

"Dad, what should I do?"

Chapter 862 - Let the Slaughter Begin

Under the dark veil of night, the whole area was deathly silent. The wave of darkness consisted of countless beasts that were ready to pounce, striking fear to everyone watching. When Tianming walked

out of the building and turned back, he saw that almost every citizen of Tianming City was looking at him with passionate gazes.

"Imperial Son, we don't want to die...."

"There's still so much I want to do. My lover is at Gusu City, and I've promised to marry her."

"Imperial Son, I still have to apologize to my son. I've been a deadbeat most of my life, but I'd like to repent and make it up to him."

Usually, people thought they would live forever and keep delaying the things they really had to do. Only when they had a close brush with death would they truly regret not doing what they had to earlier.

"Relax, everyone." Tianming smiled at them like the child of the bright sun. Xuanyuan Xie and the rest had already given all sorts of motivating speeches countless times. There was nothing he could say or do other than step onto the battlefield.

He came to the south gate, where Jian Wuyi and the dozen third-origin tribulation elders were. The enemy would be attacking from all four gates. Tianming City only had a million troops defending it, and the south gate would be where the enemy would strike the hardest. Currently, around four hundred thousand defenders were stationed there.

The city had around two thousand second-origin tribulation elders and ten times as many first-origin tribulation elders. Jian Wuyi had the second-origin tribulation elders go to the battlefield to mount a strong resistance against the strongest of the enemy forces. He had the twenty thousand first-origin tribulation elders defend Sun-Moon-Star Formation with Yi Xingyin instead. With so many fourth-level samsarans and above holding the formation, it should increase its efficacy a few times over.

For now, Jian Wuyi himself was remaining at the south gate. According to their intelligence, Si Ling and her army were gathering outside. They could see the black masses of troops all the way from the walls. The east and west gates were defended by Beigong Linlan and Lin Qingtian instead. Fu You and Lan Yi's troops were positioned outside those gates. As for the north gate, it would be attacked by Fu You's men, with Xuanyuan Xie and Su Wanfeng defending against them.

"The way they're spread out is the most effective method for dividing up the defensive strength of the formation. It's geared to wear Yi Xingyin out. Not to mention, if they create a breach, they'll be able to flood the city with as many troops as possible. As long as any single direction is breached, they can send more and more troops to completely collapse the formation, find Yi Xingyin and the rest's location, and disrupt them. That's when the city will fall. Past that, there's no way they will spare the civilians in the city," Jian Wuyi said expressionlessly. It seemed like total annihilation.

"How many enemies are in the south?" Tianming asked.

"Currently, there's a million and a half beastmasters, four times our number. As for the other three directions, they each have eight hundred thousand troops, all also having four times as many as the defenders we have stationed there. The remaining two million are stationed further south to stave off the reinforcements from Fang Shenyu and Jian Qingyuan."

"If those two million turn around, we'll be facing off against three and a half million beastmasters."

"If that's the case, we'll have to hope Arcana Sword and Origin Phoenix can make it here in time."

They were all beastmasters, not mere corpse puppets. Coupled with their lifebound beasts, they numbered at least seven million.

"As long as the enemy breaches the formation, those two legions will immediately come to reinforce us. Yi Xingyin will be able to divert the formation's attack away from them to allow them to enter unharmed. Timing is of paramount importance. We have to hold on at least until they manage to pass the enemy's rearguard before they'll be able to come to reinforce us," Jian Wuyi said.

Fang Shenyu and Jian Qingyuan's legions were the key to Tianming City's survival.

"Understood!" As long as they held on, they might yet have some hope. The question is whether they could endure it all.

Tianming took a deep breath. At that moment, the tranquility of night erupted into sudden and abrupt chaos and the ground at the south gate shook heavily.

"Warriors of Nonahall, breach the city and massacre them!"

The war cry was echoed by the north, east, and west sides as well. The three ghoulish kings on the level of Jian Wuyi led their respective armies of eight hundred thousand, each with a million lifebound beasts or more, on a charge toward the formation. The south had the most troops, with more than three million beastmasters and lifebound beasts combined. Behind them were four million more units waiting in ambush for any potential reinforcements.

Tianming City erupted into chaos. The formation that had been on standby the whole time shone brightly and brilliantly, its light piercing through the darkest of clouds above. It was as if a pillar of light had descended from the stars above onto the Sun-Moon-Star Formation. The savage Nonahall troops were completely blocked and kept outside of the formation.

The millions of citizens and their lifebound beasts had once counted on the formation to change their fates. No matter how strong the enemy was, they didn't give up and fueled the formation with their life force, causing a large number of Infinite Starnets to appear and give the first wave of enemies a huge blow.

Many lifebound beasts and beastmasters were immediately cut into countless chunks, spilling blood all over, yet that didn't stop their comrades from stomping over the remains of the fallen as they passed through the formation's starlight attacks and advanced toward the walls. Their expressions were savage and motivated. As the invaders, they had the psychological upper hand. Si Ling's orders for them to massacre the city had caused every one of them to turn into fearless, demonic machines of war.

"Rather than resisting the torture, might as well get yourself killed quickly to spare yourselves from suffering!"

"We will take Taiji Peak Lake! Tianming City is a mere stepping stone! There's no way you can resist us! You've long been abandoned by your sect!"

"Die!"

The sheer number of troops seemed to rock this corner of the world. In almost an instant, piles of corpses and rivers of blood were formed. Tianming wasn't the least bit concerned about exposing his identity here. He was situated at the most well-defended spot in the city. The more enemies that came his way, the more that would end up dead.

"It's him!"

Whenever someone recognized him, they would charge straight in. It was the only chance in their life to gain fame and riches. It was a shame that even normal third-origin tribulation elders were doing nothing but suiciding by trying to kill Tianming.

Chapter 863 - Enemies On A Narrow Road

Xian Xian's Radix World Tree was firmly rooted outside the southern city gates, its black roots spreading endlessly. The Radiant Vines formed a defense, while the Bloodrain Sword from the Scarlet Lily filled the sky in attack.

Since the beginning of the war, Xian Xian alone had killed thousands of enemy warriors. The Radix World Tree was born for this sort of war. It burst into a hundred thousand blades of Bloodrain Sword. The sword-shaped petals could directly pierce the hearts of sky saints and empyrean saints, resulting in immediate death. No other lifebound beast had such an effect.

Moreover, its Evernight Curse was already at its strongest. As long as it continued, its opponents would fall into confusion, and more and more people would slaughter each other. With its existence, Tianming could face a whole army alone.

However, there were still too many of the enemy—at least four times their numbers. Even if the Sun-Moon-Star Formation was trapping most of them in the outer layer, countless beastmasters and lifebound beasts pounced on Xian Xian, slashing frantically, like densely packed ants that could cause severe damage.

At that time, Ying Huo, Meow Meow, and Lan Huang were all playing their roles. They guarded Xian Xian, making it the base of their battle and allowing it to control the entire battlefield. They were there to slaughter, and at the same time, protect Xian Xian.

With the Greenspark Tower, no one could defeat Lan Huang... at least for now. The giant beast charged through the battlefield, leaving a bloody path in its wake. When it unleashed its Kilofold Rings, a rain of blood and corpse fragments filled the sky.

As for Tianming, he was at the forefront, Archfiend in hand, performing a striking demonstration of the Eight Desolation Fienddragon Whip. Wherever the black and red chain went, a bunch of corpses followed. Within a short period of time, an empty area appeared in front of him. They were all afraid to die. In other words, Tianming was left to the powerhouses on Nonahall's side.

Tianming's opponent soon arrived. Feeling a chill creep up his spine, he looked up and saw a woman in gray accompanied by three gigantic necrobeasts. Her gaze met his, lips curling into a sinister smile as a cold light flickered.

"You'd better not run. Just watch properly as I kill ten million people tonight. Li Tianming, I assure you that each and every one of them will die miserably! I don't care if you think I'm cruel or without morals. In this world, strength is the indisputable rule. I've fought everything and climbed to the pinnacle of all living beings to dominate the lives and deaths of millions, not to be a good Samaritan. You mustn't run! Stay and play the humanitarian!"

She was extremely worried that Tianming would escape, thus her emphasis on the matter. Ignoring the entire battlefield, she charged toward him with her three lifebound beasts. To avenge Ghoul King Xue Yi and the nightmare soulworm, her killing intent overshadowed the entire army.

"With the imperial son's head, won't the cities fall without an attack?" Her malicious laughter didn't at all resemble the sound a cool and elegant woman such as herself should make.

As she approached Tianming, Jian Wuyi suddenly shot from the side, his four swordbeasts attached to the sword. His temperament was similar to Feng Qingyu, his attainments in sword arts equally profound. In the process of forcing back Ghoul King Si Ling, he slaughtered a hundred Nonahall warriors.

"Jian Wuyi, you're no match for me!" Si Ling laughed contemptuously.

Jian Wuyi ranked third in the Archaion Sect and was a level short of Si Ling, equal to Ghoul Kings You Ying and Qing Ming.

However, Jian Wuyi didn't bother responding to Si Ling's sneer. The sword in his hand resembled a wooden sword, yet it burst with astonishing power. At the same time, a blazing sun appeared beside him.

It was the Solunar Blast. Relying on the protection of twenty thousand first-origin tribulation elders, Yi Xingyin and tens of millions of ordinary people could better display the power of the Solunar Blast.

The formation sun flew to Jian Wuyi's side, burning like a raging fire. Together with countless Infinite Starnets, it helped Jian Wuyi stop Si Ling.

Si Ling was the strongest opponent on the enemy's side. If she was allowed to enter the city and come face to face with the citizens, millions would die. This kind of peak powerhouse who stood on top of hundreds of millions of people was one in a billion. Therefore, as the strongest man in the city, Jian Wuyi's purpose was to stop her.

Even with the formation sun and the Infinite Starnet, no one knew whether or not they would succeed. On this bloody battlefield, everyone had gone beyond their limits to fight the enemy.

In the midst of the legions, Si Ling and Jian Wuyi locked horns. In the other three directions, the other ghouls should all have begun fighting. The east and west weren't an issue; after all, Xuanyuan Xie in the north was merely a divine marshal and wasn't as strong as Fu You. Therefore, the formation moon was currently limiting Fu You in the north.

The sound of war shook the sky as everyone desperately fought. Only by giving it their all would it be possible to survive.

Tianming was still fighting on the battlefield. The stars were shining in the sky, while the blood on the ground had formed a river. Among the corpses were enemies, warriors of the Fienddragon Legion, and

city defenders alike. Many familiar faces had fallen forever, their heads separated from their bodies. The cruelty and ruthlessness of war was beyond words. Such carnage drove them into madness and suffering, and turned them into killing machines.

No one could stop Tianming. He alone directly withstood the frontal impact of the opposing army. However, he was soon eyed by two gigantic, bloodthirsty beasts that emerged from the ground. They stared at him with ferocious eyes, surging with killing intent. They were here for Tianming!

The moment Si Ling confirmed Tianming's position at the south city gates, they immediately headed over. They were the heartsourge fiend and skyscorch bloodfiend, lifebound beasts at the same cultivation level as Si Ling.

"Li Tianming, the battle in the Kilostar Domain was the most frustrating and painful battle of our lives. You made us lose everything."

"There's no sealing formation tonight. You'll be able to experience our real power!" the two beasts spoke, one after the other, then charged at Tianming.

For Tianming, a catastrophe was imminent. Even though he had broken through to the seventh-level life phase, Xue Yi's lifebound beasts were still terribly strong. The heartsourge fiend in particular was extremely lethal, despite its injuries.

The skyscorch bloodfiend spewed out Skyscorch Bloodphlegm, the sea of flames burning Xian Xian's branches and vines and causing it to scream in pain.

"Die!"

Without the sealing formation, they were indeed terrifying. However, behind Tianming was a city filled with countless lives. He had to hold on. There was no retreat.

"Everyone has given their all, let alone I, the imperial son. Mother, you said that even a little grace should be returned many times over. I've received their Omnisentient Will. Without the Archaion Sect, I wouldn't be where I am today. So even if I die here, I won't have any regrets or complaints."

He drew the Grand-Orient Sword, split it into two, and held the swords in both hands. With Archfiend wrapped around his arm, it was as if Li Muyang was by his side.

Ying Huo, Meow Meow, Lan Huang, and Xian Xian, who all resonated with his soul, were present. Attached to him was his beloved, who had never uttered a word of complaint. She wasn't afraid in the face of death, so why should he fear?

"Kill!"

Tianming led his lifebound beasts toward the scarlet behemoth in fierce confrontation.

At this moment, there were several Infinite Starnets entangled around the heartsourge fiend, smashing it to the ground. The sky glittered as the cold silver moon in the north crossed over the city and slammed into the beast.

The impact exploded its flesh and blood. For a while, countless heartsourge worms flew out of its body.

“Tianming, no matter what you do, stop the heartsourge fiend! Once those worms enter the city, the consequences will be disastrous!” Yi Xingyin’s voice sounded from within the formation.

“What about the divine marshal’s side?” asked Tianming.

Since the formation moon was here, Xuanyuan Xie must be having a hard time dealing with Fu You.

“We have no choice. I’ll try my best to support him. You must stop them!”

Yi Xingyin left the formation moon by Tianming. It continuously absorbed the strength of all residents and was the ultimate power of the Sun-Moon-Star Formation. At present, Yi Xingyin hadn’t detonated the formation’s sun and moon yet, so they acted as obstacles. If they failed to kill their opponents, the formation would lose a lot of power once the sun and moon were detonated.

“Right now, any of the four fronts might collapse. The two beasts and Ghoul King Si Ling are the strongest among the enemy. There must be no mistakes when using the Solunar Blast to suppress them. We can’t allow Si Ling or the two beasts to enter the city!”

Although there was a crisis, Tianming’s thoughts remained clear. He understood the great responsibility he carried.

“Xian Xian, stop the heartsourge worms!”

“Alright, I will!”

In the moment of life and death, even this little one remained steady and reliable. As soon as it extinguished the Skyscorch Bloodphlegm, it stretched out countless roots to intercept the heartsourge worms that were heading for the city. With its restraint on the offspring, at least ninety percent of them were intercepted.

The worms were pierced and devoured. The Greenspark Tower could heal Xian Xian’s broken branches and vines, but it couldn’t spark more growth. If Xian Xian wanted to restore its peak combat power, it had to eat. And the more it ate, the more worms it could stop.

The heartsourge fiend’s enormous body was entangled in the Infinite Starnet, and at the same time, the formation moon continued its bombardment. Just as the fiend was about to activate the Soulhide Curse, it was interrupted by the formation moon. For a period of time, all it could do was roll around the battlefield, trying to break free from the restraints of the Infinite Starnet and the formation moon.

The only thing standing before Tianming was the skyscorch bloodfiend.

Chapter 864 - The City In Imminent Danger

The behemoth resembled the Archaionfiend. With its thick scales, it was born to fight and could tear apart the Infinite Starnet better than the heartsourge fiend. And at this moment, it had its gaze fixed upon Xian Xian, spewing a raging fire.

“Stop the bloodfiend!”

Tianming, Ying Huo, Meow Meow, and Lan Huang pounced on the beast. Lan Huang's size was comparable to the bloodfiend. Relying on the hardness of its flesh and its Kilofold Rings, Lan Huang slammed the bloodfiend to the ground.

In that instant, the bloodfiend's Skyscorch Bloodphlegm hit the Nonahall warriors behind it, the terrifying ability immediately burning thousands to death. The bloodfiend was enraged. Today, its only purpose was revenge, even if it meant looking death in the eye.

Pinning Lan Huang under its body, the bloodfiend opened wide and gnawed its opponent's neck while its sharp, blood-red tail pierced the two-headed dragon's abdomen. The horrific power of an eleventh-level death phase tribulation beast came into full play.

At that moment, Tianming, Ying Huo, and Meow Meow collided with the bloodfiend. Thousands of lightning bolts bombarded the beast. Quickly transforming into the Regal Chaosfiend, Meow Meow sank its teeth and claws into the bloodfiend's neck, digging its tail into the beast's ribs at the same time.

Even though the bloodfiend's flesh was hardened, the 999-star Venus Fiendbone still tore through it. The beast sent Meow Meow flying with its sharp claws, almost shattering the cat's skull. Blood splattered and Meow Meow howled in agony.

"You overestimate yourself!"

The skyscorch bloodfiend was pleased. This was its true power. Even though it was restrained by the Infinite Starnet, Tianming and his lifebound beasts were merely fragile rabbits before it.

It assumed that Lan Huang and Meow Meow had been severely injured and lost their combat effectiveness, becoming helpless lambs to be slaughtered. To its surprise, after falling to the ground, Meow Meow immediately got back up, its head still intact. Meanwhile, Lan Huang bit the bloodfiend's shoulders, and with a quick flip, pinned it below its body once more, the Primordial Soundwave deafening its ears.

"Why aren't they dead!?"

Not only were they still alive, Lan Huang's abdominal injury had already healed.

However, there was no time for the bloodfiend to continue pondering the question, because a fiery figure suddenly flickered and appeared in front of it. A little bird was aiming at its eyes.

Hexapath Samsara Sword! An explosive sword light burst forth and the bloodfiend quickly closed its eyes, withstanding the attack with its eyelids alone. But even so, its eyelids were almost torn. Outraged, the beast countered by expelling a crimson flame into the sky, engulfing Ying Huo.

"Go to hell!"

As soon as its voice fell, there was a sharp pain in its back and blood splattered everywhere. Tianming had ripped out a huge wound with his sword. The power of the Imperealm Sword Formation exploded in its body, resulting in a gaping hole! What made the bloodfiend even more upset was the fact that Ying Huo appeared once more, completely unharmed despite being caught in its Skyscorch Bloodphlegm.

"You can't be killed?!"

As far as the bloodfiend could recall, Tianming and his lifebound beasts didn't possess such means in the Kilostar Domain. However, there was no time to lose as wave after wave of attacks rained down upon the gigantic beast.

"Fuck off!" Opening a crimson shield, the bloodfiend swept them aside.

"If I can't kill you, I'll slaughter the city first!"

With a sudden flap of its wings, the bloodfiend ascended into the sky. However, dense chains were entwined around its body. It turned around and saw that the double-headed dragon had wrapped its body with chains. Lan Huang dived into the Azure Oceanic Purgatory, its nine kui seas rolling, the tremendous force dragging the flying beast into the water with it.

Waves reached the sky. With a sneer, the bloodfiend shot out from the sea, pulling Lan Huang along. But as soon as it emerged from the waters, Tianming, Ying Huo, and Meow Meow pursued it with relentless attacks. With the suppression of the Infinite Starnet, the bloodfiend could neither kill them nor enter the city, even if it was at the eleventh-level death phase. The heartsourge worms had failed to infiltrate the city as well.

Having devoured countless worms, Xian Xian had grown even larger and was able to help the formation moon deal with the struggling heartsourge fiend. In fact, these two gigantic beasts had never imagined they would be obstructed.

"You're courting death!"

The bloodfiend changed its mind. It didn't believe anyone could be indestructible.

"Be careful!"

Aware that the beast had gone mad, Tianming pulled out all the stops, even summoning the Dragonhide to withstand its lethal attacks. In the face of this gigantic beast, Lan Huang was the one who suffered the most. Fortunately, with Tianming and the others sharing the burden, as well as the Greenspark Tower, Lan Huang was still in good condition despite being most heavily injured.

On the contrary, the bloodfiend was covered in blood, one of its eyes blown apart by Ying Huo. Tianming and his lifebound beasts were doing their utmost to resist the bloodfiend in its complete form.

These two beasts combined were more powerful than Si Ling's three necrobeasts. If it were any other ordinary ghoulish king's lifebound beast, it would be dead by now.

The battlefield was speckled with blood and corpses. Murderous cries and painful screams filled the air. In the city, the people held back their tears as they contributed all their strength. Everyone knew what a passive situation they were in; the city was approaching a crisis.

"We've managed to restrain even our enemy's most powerful experts. However, their numerical advantage is still insurmountable!"

At the formation's nucleus, Yi Xingyin and the tribulation elders had exhausted all their strength. Although they weren't fighting on the battlefield, they were already vomiting blood.

"The Origin Phoenix and Arcana Sword Legions should've already been dispatched, but there's two million warriors in their way. They won't be able to make it in time...."

In the midst of battle, Tianming realized they had contained Si Ling, the heartscurge fiend, skyscorch bloodfiend, and the other three ghoulish kings. Nonahall's third-origin tribulation elders couldn't break into the city either. But on the ground, the Fienddragon Legion had been retreating little by little as the enemy's numbers increased. Soon, perhaps the enemy's legions would charge into the city and massacre the residents.

"Once the balance is broken, the city will fall and the outcome will be irreversible!!"

Anxious thought squirmed at the back of his mind. Tianming and his lifebound beasts were on the edge of death. Intercepting these two gigantic beasts was all he could do. They would be dead, if it weren't for the Greenspark Tower and breaking through to the seventh-level life phase.

Sweeping his gaze across the battlefield, he witnessed countless city guards consume the last of their strength and fall in battle, never to get up again. These people had sacrificed their lives to protect their home, and the wives and children behind them. They were all desperately fighting, but the enemy's numbers were too great. How could two hands fight against four fists?

Chapter 865 - Plunder Fate, Steal Life And Death

The east, west, and north were in a similar situation as the southern battlefield. At the powerhouse level, the two sides barely maintained a balance relying on the Sun-Moon-Star Formation. The enemy had gained an advantage due to their sheer numbers.

"Li Tianming, if you hadn't killed the nightmare soulworm, we wouldn't have slaughtered so many people today. In fact, we could take the city without a single warrior! Do you understand? This is the difference between Archaion and Nonahall. Your name is very interesting; you share the same name as this crumbling city! Listen carefully, Li Tianming. Destiny favors the strong! Now that the heavens have called for the destruction of Archaion, all you can do is obey. I know you're a brave man. You're good at running, but can a man like you watch as we slaughter millions of your compatriots? When our legion enters the city, that's when the show begins! Keep your eyes open and witness the law of the jungle and what it means when they say that the losers are sinners. History is written by the victor. After ten thousand years, no one will remember the Monorigin Divine Realm!"

The skyscorch bloodfiend revealed a humanlike smile. Since it couldn't defeat Tianming, it would remain in a stalemate with him. It seemed like the older you get, the wiser you become. Having seen through Tianming's character, they knew he would stay and were pleased that he would die here.

They didn't have to do anything. Just by relying on their legion which was four times as large as their opponents', they could devour them. At least seven hundred thousand of the Fienddragon Legion and city guards had perished in battle. There were less than three hundred thousand warriors left. These warriors and their lifebound beasts fought beneath the four walls of the city, using their lives to stop the enemy's fierce onslaught. Even if the Nonahall Ghost Sect lost close to a million troops, they would still be considered victorious as long as they took down the city.

There was no glory, only bloody tears and hearts that yearned to protect their homeland so that this city wouldn't be trampled on by the wicked, so that their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters wouldn't be humiliated by these ruthless men.

On this night, the Sun-Moon-Star Formation no longer shone like it did in the past. The dark clouds gathered above. These demons and monsters would eventually engulf this shining jewel and turn this place into hell. Who could stand up against them?

On the battlefield, Tianming withstood the light rays condensed by the flames of the skyscorch bloodfiend. The terrifying force slammed him into the ground. His body was almost falling apart, half of his bones broken.

Despite the warm current of the Greenspark Tower coursing through his body, he was still subjected to the most gutwrenching pain. But he didn't utter a word as he crawled to his feet, his twisted arms and body returning to their original state in the process.

The Nonahall warriors could already smell victory. Their laughter swept across the battlefield as if they had won.

"Tianming...."

A weak voice drifted into his ears. Tianming looked down. At his feet, a woman covered in dirt was calling out to him. She was stained with blood, her body covered in wounds, fresh blood still gurgling out. Her red lips had turned pale, icy blue eyes struggling to stay open as she nestled on a severely injured blue dragon.

"I'm sorry. I only managed to kill three hundred of them...."

Tears flowed down the corner of her eyes and pooled with the blood on her cheeks.

"Leave now. When you return, please tell my mother... I won't make it back. I've failed to honor her. If there's an afterlife, I'll make it up to her... I will.... Please take the Frosty Mercurius. I'm sorry, I-I don't deserve it...."

Bones were strewn all over the battlefield and blood had formed a river that flowed between them. With all her strength, she pulled out her spatial ring and handed it to Tianming.

"We've lost." She forced a smile.

Tianming's white hair was covered in blood. He, too, did his best to smile.

Instead of taking the Frosty Mercurius, Tianming turned around and charged at the skyscorch bloodfiend. Despite remaining silent, he gave it his all. In his chest, anger surged like a volcano. He felt as if he would be torn apart by the rage.

He flew across countless nameless corpses. But were they really nameless? Weren't they like Xuanyuan Muxue, people who had come with passion and courage? Didn't they have relatives and loved ones? They wanted to use their own strength to protect their home and the people they loved.

Tianming City was a border city, an isolated island that had already been abandoned. However, it had been standing in the south for tens of thousands of years and would always symbolize the dignity of Archaion.

For the first time, Tianming felt as if he was burning. There was no flame, no blazing heat. It was his heart that ignited.

“Only after walking through the world of mortals, crossing over life and death, do I know the meaning of life. Human life is very short. We must recognize what makes us boil with passion. Some people deviate from their beliefs, while others lose their reason. Then they must be burned to make up for the inadequacies of the heavenly laws, to fight for the dignity of every life. Father, is this the man you hoped I would be?”

He looked up to the sky, not sure where Li MUYANG was.

“Archaionfiend Eye!”

His gaze flickered between the Archfiend and his third eye.

“I worked hard to obtain you, yet I’ve failed to use you. If I die here today, what’s the point of owning you?”

He tried countless ways to use the Archaionfiend Eye but failed.

“There’s only one thing that I haven’t done....”

He didn't need to embark on such a risky path before this. But now, it didn't matter anymore.

“Even tribulation artifacts can’t pierce this eye. I wonder if Archfiend can.”

Without destruction there could be no construction!

“If I can’t change my fate today, what harm is there in being blind?”

Of course, with the Greenspark Tower, he wouldn’t be blinded even if he gouged out his eyes, would he? Grabbing the tip of Archfiend, he stabbed the eye in his left hand without hesitation.

“Ahh!!”

To his surprise, it actually went through. The piercing pain made him grit his teeth. But at that moment, his dark arm suddenly radiated with starlight. Opening his hand, Tianming found hundreds of millions of stars condensed in his third eye, the starlight exploding. His dark arm burned, his third eye felt as if it would burst, and his scalp tingled. What on earth happened?

“Have I succeeded?”

He didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Without the Greenspark Tower, he wouldn’t have dared stab his eye.

At that moment, a majestic voice echoed in his mind!

"My child, do you believe that a group of humble people possess the courage to plunder fate, steal life and death, fight a catastrophe, and save the lives of the common people?"

Tianming was all too familiar with this voice. Wild with joy, he looked around but the man he wanted to see didn't appear.

"Father!"

He wasn't actually familiar with his father, the tenth incarnation, the man with his audacious schemes. What had he ever done?

Amidst the starlight, his voice sounded once more. "I love this vast, profound world. How can I allow outsiders to trample on our freedom? How can I watch as the strong slaughter the innocent? Even plunderers have a code of conduct. Stealing fate, comprehending life and death, seizing good fortune, and peering into the future are the unique abilities of our kind! Gentlemen are fearless and wise. History will prove our greatness!"

Those last words would move even the most apathetic of hearts.

The voice faded away. But the moment the stars converged, the red mist from the Archaionfiend Eye on the Archfiend finally flowed into his third eye.

Despite the searing pain, Tianming was ecstatic.

What was the sky plunderer race? These words had given Tianming the answer. Plunderers had a code of conduct, and gentlemen had nothing to fear.

"These are our innate abilities. The most important thing is what our hearts beat for, why we give our lives."

Tianming's blood boiled in this cruel war. At that moment, the Archaionfiend Eye had truly entered his third eye and he felt a transformation that transcended the soul. He had finally become one of the sky plunderer race. However, no one knew the earthshaking changes he had undergone.

"I've returned to my origins and transformed into my true self!"

With the inheritance and name that came from his father, no matter how exceptional he became, he would always be a member of the sky plunderer race.

After integrating the Archaionfiend Eye, his third eye had undergone drastic changes. One glance sent his scalp tingling. The eye was no longer a monotonous blood-red, but had become very complex. First of all, it was round with two parts—an inner and outer circle. The inner circle was a taiji yin yang pattern in the exact shape as Taiji Peak Lake. Black and white, it appeared cold and detached. On the outer ring were nine spots of light that formed a ring enclosing the taiji yin yang fish. All nine spots were gray and dim, lacking brilliance.

Right then, two spots suddenly lit up. The first went from gray to crimson, while the other turned from gray to pure white. For the time being, there were no changes in the other seven gray spots.

"Could these nine spots of light be the nine abilities of the sky plunderer race? And these two have been activated?"

Tianming knew how to use the abilities the moment he thought about them. It was mysterious and inexorable. His gaze fell upon the red light. "Vitasteal?"

The memory within his bloodline told him the answer. Then, he turned to the white light. "Fatesteal?"

There was no time to further contemplate the spots of light. His lifebound beasts had been under the bloodfiend's attack for quite some time, and the warriors on each battlefield were close to collapse.

Tianming had a strong feeling in his bones.

"Vitasteal!"

Chapter 866 - Crime: Violation of Sanctity, Verdict: Eradication of the Body and Soul

According to legend, the human soul was a trinity of caelum, terra, and vita, the essences of sky, earth, and life themselves. Among the three, only vita exists within the body itself, while caelum and terra were external.

Caelum, as its name suggested, existed in the sky or heavens. It was the connection between man and the world, allowing them to intuit and comprehend heavenly will. Terra, on the other hand, was centered around the body and spread out across space and time. It could sense what would happen days into the future, and even cross spatial boundaries. Deja vu was commonly explained as the terra part of the soul having been to that place and time beforehand.

Caelum and terra weren't things that could be detected by normal folk. In fact, what was widely considered the spirit of the body, the white mist within the sea of consciousness, was actually vita. In fact, vita was the foundation of the human body and what controlled it. As such, Tianming was really curious as to how it could be stolen in the first place.

The moment he conceived of that thought, the red dots on the outer circle of the Plundering Eye suddenly entered the inner circle of the Taiji Eye. At that moment, the whole Plundering Eye was no longer separated by inner and outer circles and had turned entirely red. A huge wave of soul power blasted out of his arm, covering the entire battlefield in an instant.

"This is..." While others couldn't see it, Tianming could see it perfectly. When he stretched out his black arm, millions of formless hands extended from it, all of them covered in hexagonal scales. What was more terrifying was that nobody else on the battlefield was aware of the presence of these hands. When Tianming stretched his hands out more, the millions of hands spread all over, landing on the heads of every Nonahall warrior and their lifebound beasts. Through the third eyes on those hands he could see their sea of consciousness, within which lay the white misty vita!

He grasped with his left hand, causing the countless formless hands to enter the seas of consciousness and grabbing the vita within. At that moment, he heard a jumble of sounds in his mind as he saw the memories of the countless people. It was too much, and he felt like his mind was about to explode. The sensation felt a little like absorbing Astral Will; however, Astral Will felt more like a gift he was free to take, while all this was forced into him.

"Is this what Vitasteal is like?"

He immediately saw the enemies that were about to charge toward the city stop with a blank look on their faces, then they felt a sudden pain and collapsed on the ground. All these people and lifebound

beasts felt like mere puppets in his hands. He came to realize that those with higher cultivations had stronger souls. Basically, samsarans weren't affected by Vitasteal at all, but as most of those fighting on the battlefield weren't samsarans, quite a lot of people actually fell prey to it.

Tianming gave it a pull, extracting millions of vitae from their seas of consciousness. The moment their vitae left the body, the terra that was spread out around their bodies would congregate and rush into the sea of consciousness to temporarily gain control, allowing them to recover a few moments of consciousness. However, terra wasn't nearly as proficient in manipulating the body, causing them to act even worse than if they had fallen to the Evernight Curse. They couldn't even tell what direction they were heading in, stumbling around like drunks and unable to fight.

"What're you all blanking out for? Kill them!" Tianming yelled.

The others couldn't believe their eyes at all. However, this was no doubt their chance to gain the upper hand on the bloody battlefield

"Kill!"

The few remaining warriors of the city charged in and began their slaughter. The sight was something that deeply moved Tianming. He had grasped the vitae of a million people at once, witnessing their entire lives in the process, and forcibly separating them from their bodies. It was akin to astral projection, something Ye Lingfeng had been capable of doing. He didn't know that those of the sky plunderer race could force that state on other people!

"It'd be even better if I could just crush their vitae outright." He looked at his left arm, still shaken as multitudes of emotions overwhelmed him. His singlehanded domination of a million enemies at once gave the defenders and the Sun-Moon-Star Formation a huge opportunity. The formation easily dealt with the absentminded enemies with the many Infinite Starnets, causing corpses to rain down.

Tianming had tipped the scales alone. While others didn't see how he did it, they could at least tell that it was no doubt him.

"Yes, Imperial Son!"

"The reincarnation of the founding ancestor is here to save us!"

"Kill!"

Nothing was more exhilarating than bathing in blood after escaping a desperate situation. The formation channeled the wrath of the ten million citizens in the city as it slaughtered the stunned enemies. When they finally turned the tide around in the south, the formation would be able to help alleviate the stress on the other three fronts.

One after another, Nonahall warriors fell after being pierced through by beams of starlight, causing their forces at the south to rapidly lose momentum. Never would Tianming have dreamed that he would have even more effect on the battlefield than Xian Xian's Evernight Curse. While the latter could affect even samsarans, it had a limited range. Tianming's Vitasteal, on the other hand, could only work against saints, but then again, most of the participants in the battle were saints. With a simple pull, he could remove a million vitae from their bodies and indirectly cause them to be killed.

"My dad keeps telling me how humble and normal the sky plunderer race is, but we actually possess such incredible powers like breaching formations and Vitasteal.... We even dared to steal the Primordial Chaos Beasts... by what metric can we ever be considered normal?"

Though, there was no point in pondering his way out of this mystery, especially not here and now. To those within Tianming City, this was do or die; they wouldn't have another chance to give it their best shot. Even though the enemy had many more forces to expend, they weren't faring that badly either. Right now, the elites on the enemy side didn't understand what was happening, but they believed Tianming was behind it all.

"Kill him! Ignore his lifebound beasts!" Si Ling cried with rage. Even as her forces were just about to scale the walls, Tianming had ruined their plans yet again! These occurrences were far too commonplace to be a coincidence. It almost felt like destiny, something she felt truly afraid of.

"Phoenix, go deal with him too! I'll take on that sun!" she instructed her beast. The phoenix cried before leaving Jian Wuyi's sword formation and charged toward Tianming along with the freed skyscorch bloodfiend. Once more, Tianming was in danger. The moment Vitasteal was interrupted, the advantage he had created for his side would be rendered useless and Tianming City would be crushed. There was no way he could rely on Ying Huo, Lan Huang, and Meow Meow alone to take on the necrostyx phoenix and the skyscorch bloodfiend.

"Damn, I have no choice! I'll go for it!" He had one final trick up his sleeve: Fatesteal. However, his subconscious seemed to suggest that he shouldn't use it no matter what, lest he face terrifying consequences. The white dot on the Plundering Eye seemed ever so cold, making him feel rather fearful of it.

However, no fear could possibly compare to that of the prospect of death. He released Vitasteal; within that short span of time, six hundred thousand of the million people he'd grasped had perished. He didn't have time to take a breather, but immediately fused the white dot on the outer circle into the taiji diagram in the inner circle.

Suddenly, the taiji diagram turned pure white, painting the entire Plundering Eye white as well. Tianming heard a high-pitched hum coming from within his head and felt his body explode completely. There was nothing of him remaining apart from that eye, which was the essence of his entire being. The whole world before him was embroiled into a storm. Countless visions flashed across his eyes amidst that storm, the phoenix and bloodfiend long having gone from his sight.

All of a sudden, his gaze suddenly settled on a fixed frame. He looked closely and saw some mountains, upon which a gigantic black beast walked about. On top of the beast was a woman in a black robe. Tianming could see Tianming City through her eyes.

"Xiaoxiao? The Archaionfiend?" The fact that she could see the city meant that she and the Archaionfiend were nearby. When Tianming saw the two of them, they seemed to turn to him, seemingly a little confused.

"Why can I see her?"

The next moment, the scene changed once more.

"What in the world is Fatesteal?"

The strong sound of blowing wind was heard as the world turned itself over and about once more. All of a sudden, Tianming's vision fixed itself to a different frame. He now saw a huge bloody cauldron, within which hundreds of thousands of corpses lay alongside a black-haired youth. There were complicated patterns littered all over his body, all of them giving off terrifying vibes. He seemed more malefic eldritch abomination than human.

"Jiang Wuxin?"

All of a sudden, Jiang Wuxin opened his eyes and looked to the skies.

"Why would he be in this cauldron?" Tianming wondered.

Then the scenes changed once more and Tianming felt like he was being rocketed above the clouds. Almost instantly, he reached the five-colored star and saw a black-robed old man and a white-robed young girl. They had deployed a black and white formation near the star, at the center of which were two pale white eyeballs.

"Who're these two? Are those eyes Ye Bodhi's?" Tianming widened his eyes. "They seem to be saying something... Guiding? Return? I have to get closer! I want to know what they're saying!"

As he thought that, he found his vision approaching the two of them. Right as he was about to eavesdrop, billions of stars gathered above his head, forming a boundless realm of stars that seemed to morph into a single galactic eye that angrily looked at Tianming.

Countless roars crossed the span of space and time into his mind. "Who dares to reveal the cryptic fates of the heavens?! You have violated all that is sacred! I sentence you to the eradication of the body and soul!"

That instant, Tianming's mind felt like it was cracking apart. He had wanted to see if using Fatesteal would help him defeat his opponents. Little did he know that he would get visions about Lin Xiaoxiao, Jiang Wuxin and even Ye Bodhi's eyes. Before he could react, the threat to his life descended.

"Come back!" his heart seemed to yell. The world started blurring once more as he regained bodily sensation. It was as if nothing had happened. However, when he looked up, he saw nine-colored light shining down from the grand aerial firmament, descending toward his head through the Sun-Moon-Star Formation. It was the aforementioned punishment for his transgressions!

"What kind of power is this?" It was the first time he had felt so humbled and insignificant in the grand scale of the universe, despite having stood at the peak of the Flameyellow Continent. Right before the moment of his death, he didn't know what he should do.

Laughably, the skyscorch bloodfiend and necrostyx phoenix were right above his head at that moment. The nine-colored light immediately vaporized the phoenix, followed that by turning the bloodfiend into a bloody mist, then finally struck his head. The beasts had died in an instant, and Tianming felt like there was no way he would survive after violating the laws of the heavens.

The visions he'd had through Fatesteal probably didn't take place in the present, but rather the future. It was a taboo that should never have been attempted. There was far too little time to use the Prime Tower now.

But all of a sudden, he felt his surroundings suddenly calm. The starlight from before had completely dissipated and he had survived. All that remained was a fine black powder that wafted down from above. Tianming reached out to hold it, only to notice that Archfiend was now no more.

"Dad.... You knew that I'd attempt to use this ability, so you prepared this in advance to save my life, huh...."

Archfiend was no more, and Tianming would no longer have a chance to steal a glimpse at the workings of fate. However, he had no time to continue pondering everything that he and Li Muyang would have to face. He was still on the battlefield, and Tianming City was still struggling for survival.

The key was that the two beasts that had almost killed him were now dead. Looking around, it did seem to be the case. Not only that, the terrifying nine-colored light had sent everyone on the battlefield into a stupor. Millions of people and beasts stopped and looked blankly at Tianming.

Si Ling herself was completely stupefied. Nobody could give her an answer as to what had happened. She glared at Tianming and ordered, "Bring your men here!"

The two million troops guarding their rear immediately charged into the Sun-Moon-Star Formation. But the moment they did, Fang Shenyu and Jian Qingyuan's legions appeared behind them and mounted a charge. At the same time, the Nonahall warriors near the north, east and west gates managed to defeat the defenders and scaled the walls. They launched toward the civilians within!

The war still hadn't ended, and it might take until daybreak to know who the true victor was. Si Ling, Jian Wuyi, the three ghouls, and their matches still hadn't settled the score yet. However, Tianming was no longer afraid. Currently, Vitasteal and Fatesteal were still echoing in his mind, causing countless visions to manifest.

He abruptly opened his eyes and charged into the battlefield with Grand-Orient Sword in hand. Far away behind him, Xuanyuan Muxue weakly got back up and followed in his tracks with her weapons, ready to kill as many enemies as she could.

Chapter 867 - Secrets of Caeli

Outside the Sun-Moon-Star Formation, a gigantic black beast came flying from the distance, illuminated by nothing but starlight. It opened its fleshy wings wide, causing the starlight to reflect coldly off its black scales. Mounted atop its neck was a girl dressed in black, hiding in the beast's shadow. Even the light of the stars had a hard time reaching her.

Upon closer inspection, one would see that her skin was covered in complicated, lightning-shaped patterns of bloody color. They almost seemed like circuits that had come from the gigantic beast, like chains binding girl to beast.

Tianming would no doubt be shocked to see it, as he had already seen them not long ago using Fatesteal. They were Lin Xiaoxiao and the Archaionfiend, but the latter was a few times larger than it was when it had first left the Archaion Sect. Its dark crimson eyes, which Tianming had ruptured, had recovered. Now, there were more than nine hundred stars within, proof that it had benefited greatly at Nonahall's expense. Now, it seemed far more threatening than before, unlike its timid, rat-like self back in the Archaion Sect.

As it flew across the skies, it cast a huge shadow on the ground, but none of the fighters below took note of its presence. Then it looked down and opened its mouth wide. "I haven't tasted caeli for a long time. It smells far too good. There's no way I'd be able to enjoy such a delicacy if not for this war. I wouldn't have been able to find my way back to prominence without it."

The girl sitting on its back merely moved slightly, causing the blood-colored circuit patterns on her to shine brightly and turn into actual electricity before instantly swallowing her entirely.

"Xiaoxiao, I already told you to cease your useless struggle. Why even bother? The Trisoul Boltchains no doubt feel rather unpleasant, right? I spared quite a bit of effort to get that idiot Di Zang to let me learn it to be used on you. Ever since you've been sealed by the chains, you have become nothing but a decoration. All you need to do is to sit on my back like a potted plant. Who cares about the bond between a beastmaster and lifebound beasts? I'm the Archaionfiend, some might say a royal one too. There is no way I'd tolerate being at your beck and call."

It opened its mouth wide and continued to suck a kind of formless mist into its body. "Among the trinity of souls, caelum is the one that allows normal humans to commune with the heavens and earth. Half of it belongs to the heavens while the other half belongs to the person. The heavenly will of people is intuited through their caelum and later infused into their vita. That's why the foundation of insight and comprehension of cultivators lies in the caelum. The Old Deepstar Path is a divine artifact that absorbed the caelum of those long past so the memories contained within can be used to guide future generations," it explained as it continued sucking away with a joyful expression.

"Caelum is the most tricky of the trinity of souls. It never enters the body, belonging to both the person and the world itself. It occupies a higher vantage point to observe one's life experience. When we try recalling something, we're in fact trying to look through our memories using caelum as a lens of sorts, almost as if we're seeing things in the third person. Only vita has a first person point of view.

"I once told you that we Archaionfiends are soulvores, that is, we consume souls. The reason we're so powerful is our ability to consume caelum! Back in the Archaion Sect, if it weren't for the fact I was too weak and didn't wish to cause a commotion at the Old Deepstar Path, I could've eaten my fill of caeli there.

"At the time of death, the caelum returns to the heavens and continues to exist temporarily. That's when they can be eaten. However, you're far too useless. I consumed tens of millions of caeli at Pentaphase to nurture you, yet you were actually holding back my growth. Your bloodline is far too inferior, and isn't a good base for me at all.

"No matter. As long as the war continues, the dead will only keep piling up. At the rate I'm consuming them, I'll make you stronger even if you're a completely useless pig! Hehehe.... It's a shame that you offended me too much. Even if you end up reaching the Ascension stage, you'll never get to experience

that power for yourself. From now on, you're just a vessel for my power! You don't have to speak or move. Just watch as I climb to the peak and consume you entirely. I will one day free myself from the chains of symbiotic cultivation.

"It's laughable, when I think about it. The people of this world actually think that the symbiotic cultivation technique of the rootbeast race was invented by a human ascendant... hahahaha!"

It burped audibly from its lavish meal. "Not bad. Let the killing resume, then." It didn't even need to lift a finger. "Working together with Nonahall is amazing. Their founding ancestor is of a race much nobler than the rootbeast race.... Xiaoxiao, I really did consider coexisting with you properly. It's a shame that you weren't compatible with me and wasted quite a bit of my time. I really can't stop laughing at the thought that an ignorant brat like you would actually try to fight and resist me... With what? I told you that I'd bring you all over the universe to see mysteries and wonders you can only imagine. Now, seeing is all you can do."

.....

Within the Sun-Moon-Star Formation, Tianming turned his gaze to the two million warriors that had entered after the two beasts from before had been vaporized. There were only around a million defenders left on the south side. The enemy's forces now numbered close to three million in total; including beasts in that count would only further inflate the numbers. If it weren't for Origin Phoenix and Arcana Sword Legions having reached their positions beforehand, the south gate would definitely have fallen by now.

While others still couldn't see the rays of hope yet, Tianming knew it was time for the counterattack. Now that the heartscourge fiend was being held back by the formation moon, it wasn't a threat to anyone else. Tianming charged back to the south gate.

"Palace Lord Yi, I need your help!" His bloodied white hair was rather eye-catching.

"Alright."

"I'll control the crowd for you to kill with the formation!" Tianming yelled, then turned to the horde of troops coming their way. Beastmaster and lifebound beast alike, all of them were engaging in a killing frenzy.

"Don't be afraid of him!"

"We have more on our side than they do!"

"Once we cross that, we'll be able to massacre the civilians to weaken the formation! The city will fall!"

"They can't possibly stop all of us!"

The army of millions charged toward Tianming as he took a deep breath. "I don't care if they're ghouls or humans, good or evil. I don't even care if I'll be the biggest sinner after the end of this battle."

A true hero feared nothing. He grit his teeth and stretched out his black arm. The red dot on the Plundering Eye once more fused into the Taiji Eye as he used Vitasteal. Formless hands reached out to more than a million people.

Once more, Tianming was able to peer into the seas of consciousness of every one of them. Then he gave a rapid pull to separate the driving spirits of the lifebound beasts and beastmasters, leaving only tribulation elders at the Samsara stage unharmed. Though they were able to resist it, their vitae were still jumbled, causing them an intense headache.

The charging people and beasts suddenly collapsed into a huge pile on the ground. It was an ungodly method that was beyond the imagination of everyone on the battlefield.

"Kill them!" Tianming cried. As if on cue, the formation blasted into full power, wreaking havoc and destruction.

Chapter 868 - Fiendblood Vigor

Tianming controlled the flow of enemies while the formation continued mowing them down. Wherever the starlight fell, blood splattered. The warriors of Nonahall continued collapsing one after another.

What was even worse for the invaders was how the Origin Phoenix and Arcana Sword Legions had begun their charge, locking them into a pincer attack with nobody being able to do anything about it. Their three-million-strong force was being culled at a rate visible to the naked eye.

Tianming had used Vitasteal a number of times from the walls, which considerably drained him. He seemed completely pale and exhausted from the sheer exertion of his own vita. Once his vita went dormant, his terra would enter his body. Now, he had to support himself by holding onto the walls to be able to stand properly. Even so, he felt it was worth it as long as Nonahall could suffer enough casualties to the point that their force collapsed.

"The sky plunderer race really has some amazing tricks." He looked at his Plundering Eye with a strong desire to know the origin and fall of his mysterious clan.

"My father said that we're the only two that still live. The rest of the clan is long gone by now. We're as good as extinct." There was no way he would be able to meet anyone else from the clan aside from Li MUYANG. "I guess we'll see!"

He shook his groggy head and forced himself to keep his eyes open. Despite how weary he seemed, he kept his sight firmly on the enemy and used Vitasteal once more. Millions of enemy corpses had collapsed before the city walls, numbering as much as half of the six million troops. Even though the three million elites had been meant for conquering all the cities in Archaion, almost all of them had perished at the south side of Tianming City. They had barely just set foot into Archaion.

All that had frustrated Si Ling to no end. She was solely responsible for how this had turned out, and there was nothing she could do about it. Nobody could have predicted Tianming would be able to do something like this. She witnessed her troops being surrounded and completely eviscerated time and time again.

"Jian Wuyi, fuck right off!" she snapped.

"It isn't time for my exit yet." The moment he said that, the formation sun controlled by Yi Xingyin came crashing down again, forcing Si Ling away.

"Heartscourge fiend!" she cried. The beast had wanted to avenge its master by killing Tianming even without the orders from Si Ling, but now it was in a really disadvantageous position, with the formation's power free to be channeled to things other than defense.

The moment the heartscourge fiend tore its way out of an Infinite Starnet and homed in toward Tianming, the formation moon came crashing down all of a sudden, slamming directly against its head.

The moon shone so brilliantly that the surroundings seemingly whited out for a brief moment. When the light dissipated, people from beneath looked up, only to see that half of the great beast had been blown away. Even so, its vitality was amazing. Even with half its body gone, it still wriggled about, as if it had something like the Greenspark Tower healing it.

"Kill it!" Tianming cried.

Ying Huo, Meow Meow, and Lan Huang leaped on that opportunity. Coupled with Xian Xian, who was dealing with the heartscourge worms with its countless vines, the beasts had been keeping the broodmother and its children completely at bay. With the bombardment of fire, lightning and grinding of the Kilofold Rings, they had completely suppressed the heartscourge fiend. Under their desperate efforts, the last surviving lifebound beast of Ghou King Xue Yi was finally killed.

"It's hard to imagine how difficult Xue Yi would be to deal with without the sealing formation." Tianming gave the battlefield a look over after the beast's death. Now, there was no other significant threat apart from Si Ling. They had more or less secured victory for the southern side.

Though, before he could even catch a breather, Yi Xingyin cried out urgently to him. "Tianming, get into the city now! A million enemy troops just entered. Ghou King Fu You heavily injured Xuanyuan Xie and they're flooding in! The east and west gates have also been lost!"

"Alright!" He quickly racked his brains.

"Big Brother, can we still hold on?" Feiling asked with a weary voice. She'd lost count of the number of times she'd used her temporal powers.

"Yes. Let's go." He called out to Ying Huo and the rest and moved his heavy body back into the city.

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Far above the formation, the Archaionfiend watched the youth at the south gate as it devoured caeli nonstop, the eye in his left arm in particular. The beast's eyes were filled with anger and a rage so potent that even its scales shook with tremors. Its heavy breaths even contained bloody lightning bolts.

"Shameless thief! You have to die! Even if you offer up your caelum to me, I'll make sure to torture you for eternity!" It felt hatred simmering in its gut.

"There's still more than twenty million caeli in the city. If that thieving brat wins, all of that will go to waste. Forget it. Even though I promised Di Zang and Po Suo I would only show them my powers at Taiji Peak Lake, their original plan has already been ruined anyway. They can't blame me for sneaking some benefits for myself."

It flapped its wings and flew north, entering the formation from there. The defenders were at a disadvantage at the north, east and west sides, so no one could stop the Archaionfiend now. Even

though a few first-origin tribulation elders attempted to intercept it, it easily blasted them into smithereens with a breath of bloody lightning.

"Do you all think I ate tens of millions of caeli for nothing? If it weren't for this pig, I would've recovered enough power to rival an ascendant! Damn this symbiotic cultivation!"

The Archaionfiend coldly smiled as it came to the walls of the city. The feeling of being unstoppable was one to relish in. It squinted and looked around, seeing around a million Nonahall warriors charging into the city toward the ten million civilians. Some of the defenders went back inside and blocked the invaders' way with their own bodies.

"Come on!" The Archaionfiend flew into the sky and blacked out the sun. "Shameless thieves, let me show you the new Archaionfiend move I just reawakened—Fiendblood Vigor!"

All of a sudden, millions of blood-colored lightning bolts appeared on its body, striking down on the Nonahall warriors and their lifebound beasts and turning their eyes red immediately. Their blood seemed to boil and their demeanor completely changed. They lost all reason and turned into beasts that feared not even death, their powers further boosted by Fiendblood Vigor.

Even though both the Archaionfiend and Primordial Chaos Beasts had become lifebound beasts, the main difference between them was how Ying Huo and the rest seemed to have their memories sealed, as if they had been completely born anew, while the Archaionfiend remembered everything. That was why it had so many tricks up its sleeves.

"I did mention I could make their sect stronger, and I wasn't joking around. Not to mention, this is only a small part of my arsenal. Naturally, those affected by Fiendblood Vigor will be my puppets from now on... hehehehe...."

Chapter 869 - Bloodblitz Blast

Everyone in the city saw the gigantic black beast up in the skies that shot out millions of bolts of blood-colored lightning to control the warriors of Nonahall and their respective lifebound beasts as if they were puppets. It was plain to see that it was a far more adept technique than Si Ling's corpse puppetry.

"Kill! Massacre the ten million here! Give me a sumptuous meal! These descendants of specters have been winning time and again at Pentaphase and had everything under control, so I couldn't exactly butt in. But now that they're losing, it won't be a problem if I eat a little more, right?" The Archaionfiend showed itself before the millions of civilians of the city, appearing like a devil out of their worst nightmares.

"Well, well... I wonder where the formation core is." Abruptly, it descended and slammed into the ground, immediately turning some hundred thousand civilians into ash as the whole area around them collapsed. When the dust settled, it saw a grand underground complex protected by a kind of light shielding, within which were more than twenty thousand first-origin tribulation elders and Yi Xingyin, who were powering the formation.

"Found you!"

"Archaionfiend? Didn't we ask you not to show up?" said a figure behind it.

"You were about to lose. Did you expect me to sit by the sidelines and watch?"

The figure was none other than Fu You. "How could we possibly lose?" he said with a chuckle.

"Just check the south side. Your three million troops there are nearly all dead, and so are the heartscourge fiend and skyscorch bloodfiend. Si Ling also lost a lifebound beast," it said.

"Impossible!" Fu You snapped with disbelief.

"I have no time to waste talking with you. Just go check. I found the formation core for you all. If you can break it in time, you might yet turn the tide of battle," it said, then flapped its wings and was airborne once more.

"Why are you leaving now? Weren't you going to help?"

"Me? I'm off to enjoy some delicacies."

It had endured for far too long. Today, it finally felt closer to being the true Archaionfiend it had once been. If it weren't for experiencing that time of hardship firsthand, it never would have expected it could fall so far from grace. But now, it would surely let itself go wild to make up for lost time!

"Xiaoxiao, thank you. You've been really careful the whole time, but your sole mistake was taking me to the Specter Mountains! I bet you feel horrible after that thieving brat wanted to kill you for no reason, right? Hahahaha! Right now, all you can do is watch as I feast!"

It ignored the girl on its head, treating her like a decorative feather on its hat. Thanks to its Fiendblood Vigor, Nonahall's troops were starting to push back against the defenders and were about to start the massacre of the civilians in the city. The moment that happened, the power of the formation began to weaken. Eventually, nobody would be able to keep the four ghouls at bay!

At the same time, Fu You began attacking the formation core. Once it crumbled, the entire Sun-Moon-Star Formation would shatter. The formation was the only thing of strategic value in the city, and once it was done for, the city was as good as taken. The enemy would no longer have to worry about the meager number of troops Archaion had stationed there.

During this moment of crisis, Tianming led the two million troops from the reinforcement legions in a charge into the city! The distraught civilians who were being attacked immediately let out thunderous cheers when they saw him.

"The imperial son is here!"

"Don't be afraid! We have reinforcements!"

"Hold strong!"

Thanks to the reinforcements led by Fang Shenyu and Jian Qingyuan, they were able to maintain peak resistance for the time being. However, it would be really hard to deal with the enemy that had mingled with the civilians and begun their slaughter. All of them were bathed in blood lightning and had lost all sense of reason, becoming automata that were driven by nothing but the urge to kill.

The sight of that sent Tianming into a fit of rage. He recognized the black beast in the sky as the Archaionfiend. There was another figure on top of it, but it was covered in the same blood lightning and impossible to recognize. Still, Tianming knew for sure that it was Lin Xiaoxiao.

"It's you!" Back then, Tianming knew that she and the Archaionfiend, and those who had anything to do with Li MUYANG in particular, would one day pose a threat to his life. The sect had once attempted to hunt the Archaionfiend down, but they weren't able to find it anywhere. But now that it had reappeared, it had more than nine hundred stars in its eyes and was serving Nonahall; it was obvious that Nonahall had helped it grow. Tianming didn't know what method they used or how much power it had recovered, but it was definitely nothing to scoff at, considering how it could freely roam about the battlefield while controlling so many warriors with its abilities.

When he had a rising suspicion, he gave it a look with the Plundering Eye. "What's that?"

Through the eye, he could see some white mist floating up to the sky from time to time. The appearance of the mist seemed to coincide with deaths and the Archaionfiend looked like it was consuming that mist somehow.

"Those look like caeli! Is it consuming human caelum?"

Tianming recalled that the soulfieud was able to devour souls, but he wasn't aware of the types of souls back then. But now he felt confident that the soulfieud only consumed vita, not caelum.

Using Fatesteal, I saw it and Jiang Wuxin as well as Ye Bodhi's eyes. Those were supposed to be the secrets of fate, yet I managed to steal them. That must mean that the Archaionfiend, Jiang Wuxin, and the eyes are the keys to the bigger picture. Today, I must take care of the Archaionfiend for good! Otherwise, the city is a goner! I gotta save them, quick!

Tianming immediately noted that Fu You was attacking the formation core while nobody else was paying attention to him. They were so close to the brink of utter collapse.

"Shameless thief, tell me, what does despair taste like?" the Archaionfiend taunted as it glared at Tianming. Their hate was mutual.

"Beast, you shall perish!" Tianming charged in, ignoring his fatigue. He had no other choice. "Vitasteal!"

Stretching his hands out, he caused millions of formless hands to manifest at the walls. Thanks to Bloodfiend Vigor, they were particularly easy for Tianming to track.

"Thief! You think this is your talent as a sky plunderer? Do you need me to tell you that you wouldn't be able to use Vitasteal without my spiritually-attuned eye?" The more it saw him use those techniques, the more frustrated it got.

However, Tianming ignored it and pulled on the million vitae. Despite being hypercharged by Bloodfiend Vigor, he was able to pull their vitae out.

"Kill them!" Tianming had to make sure they were dealt with as soon as possible, for they were currently attacking the civilians. Thanks to him, Fang Shenyu and Jian Qingyuan's men were able to join the crowd and quickly pick out the vitaless, stumbling enemies. It didn't take long before the Nonahall warriors and beasts had all been taken care of. It seemed that Vitasteal still worked well on them despite Bloodfiend

Vigor's effects, which only irked the Archaionfiend even more, for it was a move made possible only by its eye to begin with.

"So you grow stronger by consuming caelum, eh? No wonder the sky plunderer race tried to take all your eyes. There's nothing wrong with poetic justice. Stealing your eyes away was doing the world a service!" After dealing with those enemies, Tianming was so tired that his eyelids were twitching. He had truly reached his limits, but Fu You was still attacking the formation core.

Even with the Archaionfiend right in front of him, he still had to deal with the ghoulish king first. Currently, he was alone; without his lifebound beast, he was only about as powerful as Jian Wuyi at the eleventh-level life phase. Some two weeks ago, Tianming had relied on the sealing formation in the Kilostar Domain to take out Qing Ming, and now he was going straight for Fu You without the formation's help! Following him were Divine Marshals Fang Shenyu and Jian Qingyuan, both tenth-level death phase samsaras on par with Xuanyuan Xie and Yi Xingyin.

"All of you, hold the formation spirit threads!" Fang Shenyu ordered his troops. Now, they only needed the million warriors of the Arcana Sword Legion to take care of the stragglers that managed to make their way into the city. As for the rest, they were helping out wherever they could, and could even spare some men to fuel the formation. This was one of the signs that foretold of their victory. However, should they not be able to stop Fu You in time and allowed the formation to collapse, the ghoulish kings would be unhindered. It would be hard to say who would prevail then.

Fu You kept smashing away at the underground complex using his gigantic hammer. Though Tianming and the rest had reacted as quickly as they could, they were still a little late. Tianming charged toward the ghoulish king with his sword raised and beasts summoned, but completely worn out, and used the Ninesky Beastsoul Formation. Nine waves of sword ki blasted towards Fu You. "Leave!"

Fu You turned around and got entangled with Tianming, Jian Qingyuan, and Fang Shenyu. The dire situation was averted, if only for now. However, a lot of damage had already been done, as was evidenced by the cracks on the formation core. The cracks would continue spreading, and would eventually result in the total collapse of the formation.

Currently, while the Archaionfiend had left the heat of battle, it was looking in the formation core's direction from the sky. "I consumed at least five million caeli from the start, right? Since I haven't digested them yet, I'll use them to make a little surprise present. My ability, Bloodblitz Blast, will be able to scatter ten million vitae in an instant if I fuel it with five million caeli. Once they die, their caeli will rise into the sky and I'll get to eat again! Hahahahaha!"

Tianming and the rest were fully occupied with Fu You, giving the Archaionfiend free reign.

Chapter 870 - Battered and Defeated Dog

"Five whole million caeli converted into Bloodblitz Blast... I can't wait for the feast that is to come!" The Archaionfiend laughed and opened its wings wide, flying until it was directly over Tianming. Then, countless bolts of bloody lightning gathered in its mouth, causing its belly to inflate as if there was a volcano inside it. All five million caeli were being converted into blood lightning.

"It's not powerful enough yet... I'll let it brew a little longer!" By now, its entire lower body was covered in bloody lightning, which seemed to gather in the sky above it as well. The lightning bolts surrounded the Archaionfiend, looking like a gigantic bloody mouth about to swallow the entire city whole.

Eventually, the sound of cracking electricity was heard, greatly unnerving anyone that heard it. Within the city, everyone apart from Tianming seemed to feel their souls shake, Fu You included. The sheer power generated by using five million caeli was something that even the Archaionfiend struggled to control. Almost immediately, the civilians in the city that were just out of danger, as well as the two million reinforcements and their lifebound beasts, looked up in terror. Everyone saw the bloody clouds that gathered in the sky as well as the gigantic voltaic beast in the very middle.

"What's that...?"

"It looks like the lifebound beast that controlled the enemy troops and made them stronger...."

"What's it... what's it going to do? It feels really terrifying!"

Even young children could tell how dangerous the whole situation was. Everyone in the city felt a chill down their spines.

"You accursed piece of shit!" Fu You, sensing the sheer magnitude of power coming from above, ignored Tianming and immediately fled north. However, everyone else within the city couldn't run as quickly as he had; the formation core was here, so Yi Xingyin and all the rest couldn't leave at all. They didn't even have time to react.

As Fu You was busy running away, the lightning had gathered to a breaking point. The Archaionfiend locked its gaze on the nearby Tianming. "Die!"

A torrent of bloody sparks rumbled out from the beast. Even before it was launched from its belly, the terrifying storms generated by it were enough to shake the city.

"If I was alone, I could just hide in the Prime Tower! But...." The blast would surely engulf the city whole, causing the deaths of tens of millions. Even with the Sun-Moon-Star Formation there, the city would no doubt be flattened. That kind of power wasn't something lifebound beasts could possibly generate in the first place.

"What in the world can I do?" Tianming grasped his fists tight as he desperately tried brainstorming a way out of it. In such dire straits, how were the visions from Fatesteal able to help him resolve it?

"Archaionfiend!" Tianming hollered, glaring at it and Lin Xiaoxiao. "Lin Xiaoxiao, I didn't think you'd become someone like this!"

Disaster would occur once the lightning blasted out of the Archaionfiend's body. Nobody would be able to stop the five million caeli from blowing up. It was almost certain death!

Yet something happened at that very moment, something that baffled even Tianming. He saw with his Plundering Eye how the charged Bloodblitz Blast was stuck in the Archaionfiend's belly, unable to come out. Little did he know that the beast was fuming over this technical mishap.

"Lin Xiaoxiao, how dare you mess around?! The Trisoul Boltchains will completely scatter your soul!" Its expression contorted significantly. The lightning-covered girl sitting on its back shuddered as she raised

both hands to press hard against the beast's back with enough force to divert its snout toward the sky. With a great roar, the Archaionfiend interrupted its blast.

"You wanna die?! If you don't let go, I'll torture them!" it yelled as it struggled, much to the shock of those watching from below. "Lin Xiaoxiao!"

As the beast roared and shook, everyone could see the blood-red eyes of the girl on its back. "Stop lying to me. I know they've been gone for a long time. Wu You, you're right. I'm useless trash, and all I do is mess things up. I even got manipulated and used by you. However, it doesn't seem like you're fully aware of what symbiotic cultivation entails. From the moment you formed a blood pact, I became just as much of an Archaionfiend as you.

"If you can consume caeli, so can I! The stronger you made me, the more I came to know. There was no way you could've stopped their souls from dissipating! You were lying to me the entire time! I knew that I wouldn't be able to break the Trisoul Boltchains for the rest of my life, but now I'm certain that you're a cruel, heartless, greedy, and shameless clown! The biggest mistake you've made so far, or ever will make was choosing me! From now on, I'll stop you no matter what you're trying to do! You weren't wrong about me being weak! Thanks to looking down on symbiotic cultivation, you didn't know you were making me more powerful at the same time as you strengthened yourself, and now you shall suffer the consequences!"

The forceful use of her energy caused the Trisoul Boltchains fastened around her life and deathsprings to send electricity tearing through her body, causing her arms to crack apart. Then she opened her mouth wide. While abilities couldn't be shared through symbiotic cultivation, bloodlines could. The innate talent of the Archaionfiend to devour caeli was just as transferable to the beastmaster as Ying Huo's resistance to fire!

Now, there was a second caelum consumer in the skies. Lin Xiaoxiao knew that her lifebound beasts' souls were gone for good, so there was no longer anything holding her back. "Wu You, you're nothing but a sore loser. How dare you be so full of yourself?"

As she smirked, the concentrated blast within the Archaionfiend's body began destabilizing. Perhaps it was because of that, or perhaps the Archaionfiend had realized what Lin Xiaoxiao was capable of, but the beast felt like it was getting a harsh wake up call. It thought it'd had the girl completely under its control!

"Stop!" The Archaionfiend began panicking. Despite its meticulous plans, it had neglected to take into account her ability to consume caeli like it could. It had taken her agency, or lack thereof, for granted, and it came back to harshly bite it during this critical moment. Who knew what would happen to the concentrated blast that was being drawn in two separate directions? Even though the Archaionfiend was much stronger than her in that regard, the amount of power it was dealing with was something that had to be handled without the slightest mistake, let alone intentional sabotage from another party.

"Noooooo!" the Archaionfiend shrieked before a gigantic explosion in the sky drowned its voice out. Countless bolts of blood lightning spread outward like a flower tens of thousands of meters wide, barely brushing against the formation. It was a beautiful sight to behold for those within the city. The spectators felt their minds go blank. Without a Plundering Eye, they didn't know what had transpired in that twist of fate.

Tianming was the only one who had seen it all. Right before the blast was unleashed, Lin Xiaoxiao's slender hands pulled harshly on the Archaionfiend's head like she would a horse. When the beast still wanted to unleash the blast, she intentionally triggered the explosion while it was still within the Archaionfiend.

Now there was a huge hole in the fiend's belly, and that was after all the damage control it could manage. Had it not done so, it would have been vaporized in an instant.

"Xiaoxiao?" Tianming flew into the sky without another word. The blood flower disappeared like transient fireworks and Tianming saw a suffering Archaionfiend, its entrails hanging out from the huge hole in its belly, completely unlike when it was at its prime moments ago. On its neck was a black-clad girl, fastened tightly like a sculpture. There were bloody marks all over her pale body, the marks of the Trisoul Boltchains that kept her locked and secured to the spot. She looked to be at the brink of death. There was barely any will at all left in her darkening eyes. When she saw Tianming, she forced out a smile and said, "I'm sorry... My foolishness caused you so much trouble."

That was all she could say with the last of her energy. But before she could finish, the Archaionfiend was already struggling to flee when it saw Tianming. The debilitating injuries it had suffered made it much weaker in combat now, making healing up a priority, so the reunion was cut short.

Tianming couldn't really give chase, and he didn't, as the city was still in dire straits. Even if he did give chase, there was no saying if the fiend would just vanish like before.

"Lin Xiaoxiao, I forgive you!" he cried as a flurry of complex emotions washed over him.

"Thank you...."

By the time Tianming heard that, the Archaionfiend was scurrying away into the darkness like a battered and defeated dog. While the meeting was short, Tianming knew that they would meet again. The next time they met, they would be able to commune with one another for real.