

The Ages 121

Chapter 121 - The Trembling Chen Hao!

The strongest aspect of lifebound beasts was undoubtedly their spirit-source abilities. As Li Tianming had Jiang Feiling's help, he chose to deal with the stronger of the two, the Hepta-Starred Winged Lion.

Multiple booms rang out as lights slammed into Li Tianming over and over. Li Tianming attempted to use the Flaming Shadow Flash to dodge, but even with his speed, most of the blows still landed on his Infernal Armour, throwing his bloodflow and energy into disarray. Without his defenses, death would have probably claimed him; the attack had nearly shattered the Infernal Armour.

Enduring the attacks, Li Tianming rushed through the starlight to arrive in front of the lion, which was stunned to see him appear completely unharmed. At the same time, the Blazing Dragon Chainblade coiled around one of the lion's wings, tangling the lifebound beast as Li Tianming used Skyfire Soulbinder. With its target now locked down, the scorching Infernal Blaze spread to its foe with the chainblade as a medium, eating away at the lion.

"Get over here!" With this opening, Li Tianming yanked on the chain and dragged the lion over to him, before using his left hand to unleash the Three-Spring Heavy Strike.

The three punches smashed onto the lion's head, shattering its skull. The lion wailed miserably, collapsing a moment later, foam dribbling out of its mouth.

"Lil' Seven!" The previously pleased Chen Hao was flabbergasted. He was currently being driven mad by the little chick, who was moving so fast that it might as well be invisible, leaving him unable to help his lion.

He couldn't underestimate it, not with its unpredictable movements. His robes could protect most of his body, but it left certain areas like his face unprotected. A moment of inattention would leave him with a pound of flesh gone.

Furthermore, any attempts to chase the little chick would fail due to the Temporal Field's impact on his speed. He had suffered like this for a while, only for the unbelievable development of Li Tianming injuring his Hepta-Starred Winged Lion heavily.

It was a great blow to his confidence. Those three violent punches caused his scalp to numb, while the manipulations of the chainblade was an art unto themselves. While chains looked gentler than swords, their flexibility in battle far surpassed swords.

When Chen Hao finally recovered from his shock, it was too late.

"How the hell could he be this strong? His lifebound beast used to be a wildbeast!"

Chen Hao wanted to cry, but tears didn't come. In the past, he had never understood why his brother Chen Yao had collapsed mentally after his defeat by Li Tianming. Now, he understood. His guts and aspirations had been crushed by Li Tianming's three punches.

The lion's continued wails only made him even more despondent.

In his moment of absent-mindedness, the little chick unleashed its Infernal Blaze, which took the form of a phoenix that rushed him.

Fortunately, a giant, golden beast charged over. A golden stream of energy slammed into the phoenix, dispersing it. Even more fortunate was the fact that the intervening attack had arrived at an angle, sparing Chen Hao from being covered by the remnants of Ying Huo's attack.

Naturally, Chen Hao's saviour was Xing Que. Xing Que was actually even more shaken than Chen Hao, because it had been a very, very close shave in saving Chen Hao.

"Together!" Chen Hao finally found his confidence. We outnumber him two to one, there's no need to be scared!

If they had known Li Tianming would be this hard to deal with, they wouldn't have been so conceited. Now, the two of them as well as the Solar Horned Tiger besieged Li Tianming.

Chen Hao's eyes turned bloodshot now that the chance for revenge had come.

"You take the chick. Solar and I will take care of him. He seems to be even stronger than his lifebound beast and he has Jiang Feiling helping!" Xing Que didn't dare to be conceited anymore either. If the little chick was tied down, it would be equivalent to Li Tianming not having a beast.

"Teach him a lesson!" Chen Hao spat. However, it didn't change how shaken he was inside, when he clearly remembered Li Tianming's opponent one short month ago had been his little brother.

Back then, my pinky alone could crush this Li Tianming. How can he be this strong now? Chen Hao vividly recalled the fear he'd felt a moment ago; only by defeating Li Tianming with Xing Que could he remove this inner demon.

And yet, defeating Li Tianming under their current circumstances would never dispel the terror he felt earlier. As long as he wasn't a match for Li Tianming alone, he would never be able to stand upright again. He was ashamed to face Sage Chen, and he was hard-pressed to explain everything to his irascible mother!

His mother would be furious once she found out, and what would he do if she treated him as trash henceforth?

On the other side, Xing Que and his tiger seemed to have Li Tianming under control, their coordinated assault pressuring him over and over.

Alarm bells began to ring in his head for some reason, and Chen Hao looked over. With his Celestial Wings, Li Tianming had led the flightless Xing Que and his tiger a distance away. Xing Que and the tiger were hot in pursuit, but their quarry's ability to fly and the inherent superiority of his chainblade's range enabled Li Tianming to toy with them.

Chen Hao wasn't too sure why he felt alarmed, but the answer came a moment later. With an outburst of speed, Li Tianming changed course abruptly, streaking towards the alarmed Chen Hao at a speed that Xing Que couldn't react to.

Within moments, Li Tianming had left him in the dust. Even if Xing Que could catch up, the Temporal Field was still active and waiting for him.

In a blink of an eye, the tables had turned; Li Tianming and Ying Huo were now attacking Chen Hao. Even though Xing Que only needed a moment or two to reach them, it was more than enough for Li Tianming. Chen Hao's eyes were dull, with the starlight that once filled them now replaced with shock — the youth had taken heavy psychological damage.

"You're already terrified of me." Li Tianming swooped down from the sky, his chainblade snaking out and stabbing at Chen Hao.

Chen Hao executed his Cosmic Brilliante Sword Art to force Li Tianming back. It was a commendable reaction given his state of mind, but it just wasn't enough. A crimson glow sprang up behind him as he fended off Li Tianming's attack.

He turned to look, but a fiery phoenix had already slammed into him. The Infernal Blaze immediately engulfed him, turning him into a fiery war god! Unfortunately, he wasn't Li Tianming; immediately after the attack landed, his star robes began to burn. Panicking, Chen Hao began to strip — a fiery death awaited him otherwise.

It was at this moment a whip crashed into his face. Chen Hao tumbled onto the ground, losing a few teeth as he rolled away from Li Tianming. His pain-filled shrieks lasted for a moment or so before the Hepta-Star Arcane Sword pierced through his thigh and pinned him to the ground below. His face pale, he could see Li Tianming's chain wrapped around the sword that had pierced through his leg.

The pain overwhelmed him a moment later, granting him the luxury of unconsciousness.

Although Chen Hao had wanted to kill Li Tianming, the latter had shown mercy. In the end, Chen Hao was Sage Chen's son. His father had shown him kindness before, and he would repay that by letting Chen Hao live.

However, Li Tianming's deliberations on this matter came to an end, as a furious Xing Que caught up. Honestly, if the four of them had attacked Li Tianming together from the very start, attaining victory would have been far harder. Kiting Xing Que and luring him away was a good move on his part, although the arrogance they had shown earlier had been the clincher.

Right before this, the little chick had helped Li Tianming block Xing Que. Now, it returned to being one versus one.

Xing Que was outwardly ferocious, but on the inside, he could no longer treat Li Tianming lightly. A frown appeared on his face as he entered a desperate battle with Li Tianming; he no longer had the luxury to ponder the immense changes that Li Tianming underwent in a mere month.

"Hey, Xing Que. Interested in finding out if I can trample all over that face of yours?"

Chapter 122 - Remember this Humiliation!

Xing Que's weapon was called the Red-Sun War-God Halberd. Combined with his tall and sturdy frame, his attacks naturally carried an explosive quality to them.

"Star Cleaver Art!" A battle art that sought to cut down stars, it was an overbearing move that suited Xing Que's battle style — a complete contrast to Chen Hao's Cosmic Brilliante Sword Art.

One was domineering, one was beautiful.

If they weren't both male, they would probably have had one of those arranged marriages. Although they weren't sweethearts, seeing his brother heavily injured still left Xing Que furious, increasing the power behind every swing of his halberd.

"Li Tianming! You will end up worse than him, mark my words!" Xing Que snarled.

"Don't brag so much! You're just showing how scared now." Li Tianming hovered in mid-air. With the Temporal Field up, he was unbeatable. After all, Xing Que wasn't that much stronger than Wei Guohao or Chen Hao.

But Li Tianming, well, he was waaaaayyy stronger!

As Li Tianming spoke, the Solar Horned Tiger's horn suddenly lit up. Golden light shot outwards, its target Li Tianming. This was its spirit-source ability, Illuminating Sunlight. With the light as a cue, Xing Que leapt up a moment later, his halberd preparing to fell a star from the sky. His movements were explosive, this sudden eruption of attacks quite fierce.

However, Li Tianming was already prepared. Even though the Illuminating Sunlight was fast, it wasn't that easy to land a hit on him when he was in the sky. His Infernal Armour had reverted into his perfect state too — even if he was struck directly, he wouldn't be defeated.

Li Tianming dodged to the side with the Flaming Shadow Flash, its speed further boosted in the Temporal Field, and the Illuminating Sunlight passed by harmlessly.

"Die!" Xing Que's halberd hacked down.

Li Tianming suddenly opened his left palm, revealing his Bewildering Eye again. Using an art of seduction against a man left an odd taste in his mouth, but it was ultimately just a means to an end.

With Xing Que beguiled for a moment, Li Tianming seized the opportunity to use the Soulless Seven Howls.

First stance, Wail of Evil Spirits!

Second stance, Torment of Vengeful Apparitions!

The Blazing Dragon Chainblade began to emit strange sounds, which combined with the Bewildering Eye, assaulted his sight and hearing in concord.

Third stance!

Fourth stance!

Fifth stance!

Xing Que could survive a hit from the chain, but he wasn't able to stand up to the consecutive attacks by the supreme source-ranked Soulless Seven Howls. His grade five armour didn't protect every bit of his body, as such armours were restrictive in battle, leaving behind some unprotected spots. The nimble Blazing Dragon Fang just so happened to excel in finding such spots.

As the Soulless Seven Howls reached its fifth stance, the Blazing Dragon Fang broke through Xing Que's Star Cleaver Art, stabbing through a chink in his armour to pierce Xing Que's waist.

Xing Que roared in pain, and with such an opening, Li Tianming descended from the sky, sweeping out with his legs and kicking Xing Que in the head. His massive frame was blown away, landing beside Chen Hao, who just happened to pull out the Hepta-Star Arcane Sword. However, at the sight of Xing Que flying over, Chen Hao hurriedly threw the sword aside, not daring to pick it up.

Xing Que attempted to struggle to his feet, which earned him another kick from Li Tianming that sent him crashing into a rock. Dizziness took hold of him again, and when he finally fought that off, he was greeted with the sight of Li Tianming working together with the little chick to turn his tiger into a bloody mess.

Several holes had been pecked out on the tiger, and it had been completely defeated.

When Li Tianming finally stopped, the surroundings were completely silent, save for the pained whimpers of two men and their beasts, as well as the constant roaring of thunder above.

Xing Que and Chen Hao looked at Li Tianming, terrified to the point that they didn't dare exhale.

Li Tianming used his chain to bundle the two up, the dragonfire on the chain making them grimace in pain. The two arrogant young masters of Xing & Chen Merchantry tried to act tough, but they were unable to hide the trembling in their legs. Their terror only grew further when they saw the state that their once resplendent lion and majestic tiger were in.

When Li Tianming played with his Blazing Dragon Fang in front of the two, their expressions finally wavered.

"So, was that enjoyable?" Li Tianming grabbed Chen Hao by the hair and forced him to look him in the eyes. "Hey hey, why aren't you answering?"

Li Tianming's smile widened. He had been waiting for a long time to do this, ever since they mocked his mother back at the ranking battles.

"Weren't you super pretentious before and liked to look down on people? Look at you now!" Li Tianming asked, patting Chen Hao on the cheek.

"Don't go overboard in trying to humiliate us. You may have beaten us, but you'll end up worse eventually." Chen Hao tried to snarl, but it was difficult with several teeth missing.

"Go overboard? I humiliated you all? Please. Did you even think this would happen when you and your mother said all those words?" Li Tianming gave him a loud slap, finally shutting Chen Hao up.

"After you go back, properly describe to your mother how I beat you up and embarrassed you." Li Tianming punctuated his words with another slap. Chen Hao's left side had already become swollen from the chain just now, and Li Tianming was going for the right side now. With both sides starting to swell up, Chen Hao's face was completely ruined.

"I know you wanted to kill me. If I lost today, I might not have kept my life. Still, I have more morals, so I won't kill you. We don't have any deep enmities after all, and Sage Chen did give me a hand." Li Tianming continued to slap him as he spoke, his sentence long enough to land three nice satisfying slaps.

Chen Hao finally lowered his head. He still couldn't accept it, but there was nothing he could do.

“Li Tianming! Come at me if you have the guts!” Xing Que roared.

“Damn it, why are you so excited? You’re up next!” Li Tianming walked up to him, and slapped him on the face.

“Xing Que, will you still send me a coffin for free?” He had never forgotten those words. Xing Que had given him an address for him to pick up a free coffin for his mother.

“Was it very fun, taking the suffering of others as entertainment?” Another slap fell, turning Xing Que’s face purple.

“Li Tianming!” Xing Que gritted his teeth and looked at Li Tianming.

“What?” Li Tianming pressed the Blazing Dragon Fang against his neck and said coldly. “I don’t know your daddy, nor did he do me any favours. I didn’t kill Chen Hao, but you on the other hand...”

“You!”

“I’ll ask you again. Are you still offering the coffin?”

Xing Que’s eyes spat out fire.

Another slap!

“Still offering? Well, are you?!” The last slap made Xing Que tear up. With the Blazing Dragon Fang against his neck, Xing Que didn’t dare to speak up.

“Hmph, we’ll see if you dare act cocky in front of me again!” Li Tianming stood up, and he placed his foot on Xing Que’s face, breaking his nose.

“Xing Que, remember this humiliation! Next time you see me, be more polite.” Li Tianming finally removed his foot. After calling over the little chick, he collected his chainblade and swaggered off.

Xing Que and Chen Hao were left snivelling on the ground. Who was to blame except themselves for being too weak? The winner was in the right, and as the losers, no one cared about them. It was the case for Li Tianming back then, and it was the case for the two brothers now.

In truth, apart from the Hepta-Star Winged Lion, the rest weren’t injured all that badly. They didn’t have internal injuries, and they could rely on the large amounts of spirit herbs they possessed to quickly recover their combat strength. Only the lion had it tough; Li Tianming had taken special care to ensure that it couldn’t get back up. Otherwise, the one on the ground would be him now.

It was their fault for saying such hurtful words in the past. Li Tianming was looking forward to them passing on his reply to Xue Lan. However, although they had kept targeting Li Tianming, they weren’t his true opponents. Today’s lesson was quite harsh, but it might actually end up a blessing for these pampered young masters to experience such humiliation.

“This is the meaning of power. Dissatisfied? Unhappy? Your fists provide the answer!” Li Tianming understood the path of cultivation better now.

“This is a world that belongs to the strong.” Li Tianming looked up at the sky. “Ying Huo, this is how we’ll do things from now on. If anyone bullies us, we beat them black and blue. Then, we beat them up even harder!”

“That’s easy!” The little chick, perched on his shoulder, puffed up its chest heroically.

“What about me?” Jiang Feiling asked.

“Ling’er, did you dislike how cruel I was just now?” Li Tianming asked. Jiang Feiling was just so pure that Li Tianming felt discomfort doing any bloody things around her.

“Nope. Those slaps were very enjoyable and cool!” Jiang Feiling said with adoration.

“I didn’t think Ling’er would be such a cruel girl. Ah, there goes her image!” The little chick sighed emotionally, its vision seemingly filled with the cruel actions of mankind.

“Well, I never cared about my image in Ying Huo’s heart. The only thing that matters is how cute big brother thinks I am.”

The little chick was furious. “You two pieces of trash! I, Grandpappy Chicken, am running away from home!”

“No, don’t go. Without you, I and Ling’er will be heartbroken,” Li Tianming said anxiously.

“Why?” The little chick puffed itself up even more somehow.

“Because you’re too beautiful a chick to let go of.”

Chapter 123 - The Feather of the Bluefire Vermilion Bird!

Eleven days had passed. Ever since he defeated Xing Que and Chen Hao, Li Tianming had not come across anyone else. He did come across a good number of wildbeasts, but he chose to avoid unnecessary battles. The beasts that roamed the Azure Domain were mostly water-type, and their abilities were unlikely to suit the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix.

While he still did not know the exact rules to the Abyssal Trials, Li Tianming had two main goals in mind. The first would be to look for beast souls and mannas. Ever since they obtained the royal manna, the subsequent ones they found were manna of the lowest tier. Even after refining, there were no changes to the little chick at all. The difference between normal manna and royal manna was just too huge. He would have to rely on Jiang Feiling’s ability as well as his luck for that.

His second goal was to find Jiang Qingluan! Jiang Feiling couldn’t rest easy without finding Qing’er, as she nagged about her every day, and in the first place, Jiang Qingluan was why Ling’er entered the Abyssal Battlefield to begin with. Though they weren’t sisters by blood, their relationship rivalled or even exceeded that of real sisters. Even for Li Tianming, he felt uneasy without having Jiang Qingluan to argue with, since she was already a close friend of his. Therefore, finding Jiang Qingluan was an even higher priority than finding manna.

“Seven from Torch Dragon, seven from Aquamarine, and six from Vermilion Bird. We’ve only met Ji Changyan, Xing Que and Chen Hao so far. Where are the rest? And where’s Mu Qingqing?”

The Abyssal Battlefield was the best place to get rid of her, and there would only be one result should he run into her here. He would only be much more cold-blooded than he was with the twins.

This was one of his main aims for participating in the Abyssal Trials to begin with. With Lin Xiaoting reaching Unity, Li Tianming was afraid that he would leave once he finished his seclusion. Time was running short for Li Tianming, and so were the chances of killing his two foes.

Li Tianming continued his search.

“I reckon the Heavenly Pattern Barrier’s already half of its original diameter.” Li Tianming saw the membrane of the barrier once again, but he was now somewhere near the center of the domain. With the diameter half of what it was, it went without saying that their arena was much smaller too. That also meant the twenty of them should be closer to each other as well, since they would be less scattered across the map.

But since Ji Changyan was dead, only nineteen of them were left. In fact, Li Tianming wouldn’t even know if he was the first to die. Perhaps there were more who had died.

Should have asked Xing Que and Chen Hao whether they met anyone else, Li Tianming thought.

“It’s quite likely that around the twentieth day or so, the barrier would enclose only a tiny fraction of the whole domain. Once that happens, everything would end within ten days. If so, what will the rules be, and what will decide who can enter Heaven’s Elysium?”

Li Tianming didn’t think he was the only one who had that query in mind. Was it really like what Ji Changyan had said, that he would have to end up killing every other participant? It was a growing possibility, one that neither he or Jiang Feiling would accept.

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Day thirteen of the Abyssal Trials!

“You lazy ass, when are you gonna get up?” The little chick was poking around the lifebound space, an egg in front of him. It was kicking the egg, which already had three cracks on it. If Li Tianming was to look within the crack, he would observe black lightning sparkling inside the egg.

“Just how lazy are you? A gentle push and you’ll be out. What, need your elder brother’s help?” The little chick was an impatient thing. Back when it was hatching, it was even more eager than Li Tianming about coming out of its egg.

The second brother had shown signs of hatching as early as Ying Huo did, yet two months had passed with nothing happening. Many signs of it hatching had appeared, only to fizzle out disappointingly a while later. The two had already gotten used to it, in a way.

Li Tianming took the egg out of his lifebound space and held it in his hands.

The rumbling of lightning shook the space around them, as thunderclaps shook the skies above. Even the black lightning visible through the cracks of the egg seemed to resonate with the catastrophic weather outside.

These had to be the portents of a Primordial Chaos Beast hatching!

However, Li Tianming wasn't going to hype himself up. Right before the thunderstorm reached its peak, the clouds around them dispersed, along with the black lightning inside the egg.

"So?" The little chick asked.

"It's asleep. Again," Li Tianming answered.

This was already the third time this happened! Each time, thunder and lightning would manifest around them in the most dramatic fashion possible, but the beast would go back to sleep with a purr, without fail. The fellow's personality was obviously a complete opposite of the hardworking little Ying Huo.

"It's just lazing around in bed. Don't mind me, I'm just going to peck open its shell..." The little chick glanced at the asleep egg, a threat in its eyes.

"Forget it, I don't want the case where it flees from home right after it hatches." Li Tianming decided to just go with the flow, since there must be something special about the Primordial Chaos Beast to begin with.

With that being said, he was curious about the beast inside. After all, it was capable of calling upon the power of lightning from within its egg to stir up a thunderstorm outside. No matter what the beast was, he would be a twin beastmaster after it hatched, meaning that he would not only possess the Aeternal Infernal Power but also the power of the black lightning. He could sense there was something special about that black lightning, almost as mighty as the infernal source.

"Ohhh! It's a tiger, a really ferocious one too!" the little chick exclaimed.

"Tiger? Even more ferocious than Xing Que's Solar Horned Tiger?"

The little chick nodded. "That's right, millions of times more ferocious than that pussy. It is the master of the storms, shrouded in lightning and capable of destroying an entire world."

"How did you know?"

"I saw it through the cracks. It looked like the king of all beasts, and people would flee in fear just by seeing it." The little chick said.

"Guess I'm finally gonna get a fearsome looking beast! Ying Huo, look at that stupidly cute face of yours. How are you the eldest brother?" Li Tianming jeered, something which he would do every time he brought out the other eggs.

"How would I know, I guess life is just unfair to me." The little chick pouted, but Li Tianming did not catch its evil grin.

"The power of lightning..." Li Tianming knew that Lin Xiaoting controlled lightning too, along with both his beasts.

"Once this second brother hatches soon, I'll be the true master of lightning!"

The little chick had already proven itself to be the mightiest phoenix in the world, and Li Tianming had faith that his second beast would be the king of lightning too. Since it had gone back to sleep, Li Tianming popped it back into his lifebound space, before continuing his search.

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Day fourteen of Abyssal Trials!

Li Tianming's group arrived in front of a lake.

"Look, there are traces of battle here!" Li Tianming saw that the patch of jungle right next to the lake had been mostly destroyed, many of the trees burned down to their roots. At least one third of the water in the pond had splashed out, forming thousands of puddles around it.

Underneath his feet were the corpses of countless fishes and prawns, the age of the corpses suggesting that the battle here had happened one or two days ago.

"Looking at the damage done, the lifebound beast should be quite a massive creature, probably a water-type one too. Hmmm and the burnt trees, there must be a fire-type beast here too." Li Tianming walked around the battlefield. Suddenly, he spotted something out of the corner of his eye that made his heart skip a beat.

"What is that?" Jiang Feiling asked nervously.

Li Tianming picked up that item and shook away the dust. It was a blue feather about the size of his palm.

"That is Blue's feather!" Jiang Feiling gasped, her voice trembling slightly. 'Blue' was Jiang Qingluan's seven-star lifebound beast, the Bluefire Vermilion Bird! Having spent all her life with Jiang Qingluan, she was familiar with the beast too.

"Qing'er, what about Qing'er? What happened to her..."

"Don't panic, it's just one feather. Plus, there's no bodies around, not even any bloodshed. We can only tell that she had fought someone here, but that must be a few days ago. She might be somewhere else now." Even though he said those words, he knew that they needed to hurry and find her!

"We need to find her, big brother..."

Li Tianming had the same thought in mind, but how? He glanced at the vast Abyssal Battlefield around him. Not far away was a pond with a strange, oval shape.

"This must be the aftermath of the lifebound beast's fight with the Bluefire Vermilion Bird, since there's no bodies of wildbeasts around. Looks like a water-type one." Li Tianming wanted to look around for evidence.

"Who was Qing'er fighting with?"

"Probably someone from Aquamarine — they have the most water-type beastmasters. There isn't any hatred between the two nations, so she should be fine," Li Tianming explained.

"Aquamarine..."

"Don't worry, let me take a look around first."

Li Tianming used the Celestial Wings, so that he could fly higher and check out for other traces. As he scanned the surroundings, he took a second look at a particular pond, which looked like something a lifebound beast's body could create.

"I forgot about someone. She is a water-type beastmaster too." Li Tianming's voice was now cold, icy.

"Who?"

"Mu Qingqing." Li Tianming frowned, "I heard that with the help of Lin Xiaoting, her Deepsea Bluewhale evolved from five-stars to seven-stars, into a Rage-Dragon Whalelord! The shape of this pond is the exact shape of the whalelord!"

The Rage-Dragon Whalelord was a massive creature, and it was also the largest lifebound beast present in Vermilion Bird's Heaven's Sanctum! Even though Mu Qingqing came from Windhaven, where wind-type lifebound beasts thrived, she actually had a water-type beast.

"So this battle was probably between Qing'er and Mu Qingqing, then." Jiang Feiling felt more at ease now, since Mu Qingqing barely made it into the leaderboard. She shouldn't be as strong as Jiang Qingluan.

"Let's go and find them." Li Tianming took a deep breath; his revenge was drawing closer and closer.

Chapter 124 - Submit, or Perish!

Vermilion Bird's famous Land of a Thousand Lakes was towards the north of Ignispolis. It had beautiful scenery, clear lakes, and was a well-known sightseeing spot.

One lake, the Lake of Islands, was particularly famous. It was as vast as a sea and its claim to fame were the innumerable islands floating on it. Each and every island boasted endless fields of fragrant flowers that were serenaded by birdsong, creating a picturesque locale.

However, few playing at the Lake of Islands knew that it had a counterpart in the dead and gloomy Abyssal Battlefield. Its counterpart also boasted of a lake as vast as a sea, but its water was a turbid black that stunk to high heaven. Dense, black mist drifted above the lake, rendering even the vision of beastmasters useless.

Strange aquatic lifeforms lurked in this lake. Reportedly included in their number were hibernating wildbeasts, who spent their days waiting for prey to pass by.

Logically speaking, the Abyssal Battlefield's Lake of Islands should be a place beastmasters kept a respectful distance from. However, a white-clothed, flawless young woman was currently drifting across the surface of the lake. Her calm and tranquil demeanour, combined with her breath-taking visage, made her seem like a lotus flower.

The lotus flower grew in muddy water or swamps, and the Abyssal Battlefield's Lake of Islands was precisely that sort of place. Like the proverbial lotus, the white-clothed young woman remained unsullied by all the filth around her, giving off the sense of being pure despite having such muddy origins.

The only blemish on her would be her pale complexion, which had even affected her red lips — it was less rosy than it could have been. A learned doctor might think her anemic, such was her paleness. The

strangest of all, however, was a purple imprint between her brows. The imprint constantly wriggled in a chaotic and demonic manner, one that was reminiscent of feelers digging into her flesh and feeding on her blood.

However, the white-clothed young woman didn't concern herself with the purple imprint, her eyes fixated on what lied ahead; she was apparently looking for something.

Her act of standing on water and moving forward without pause would raise eyebrows. However, a closer inspection would reveal that she wasn't standing on the lake's surface, but instead on a giant beast. The giant beast was cruising along in the water, making detours around the various islands as it headed deeper into the lake.

Dragon-like scales could be seen on the beast, their azure tint glistening even in the black water.

Flipping to page three thousand, eight hundred and sixty-two of the Vermilion Bird Lifebound Beast Compendium would reveal the identity of this beast. It was a low-tier seven-star water-type mammal lifebound beast — the Rage-Dragon Whalelord.

The sea was the Rage-Dragon Whalelord's world. The Lake of Islands was large, but it still wasn't large enough for the whale to roam freely. Still, as a whalelord that was yet to mature, it would need another twenty years if it wanted to really make a splash in the lake of islands.

"Blueshine, have you found it yet?" The white-clothed young woman looked down and said gently to the giant beast.

"Yes. It'll notice us in a minute too," the whale replied telepathically. Even though the lifebound beast had advanced from a Deepsea Bluewhale to a Rage-Dragon Whalelord, she hadn't changed its name. That name had become a habit after twenty years. However, some things had changed. For one, the whale had probably forgotten that it had once had a playmate called Midas.

To its left was a flood dragon. It had purplish scales, a large maw filled with razor-sharp teeth, four muscular limbs and a tail covered in spikes.

On its right was a giant turtle. It had a dark-gold shell that was densely covered in barbs, making it reminiscent of a mountain of spears.

It was obvious that they were different from lifebound beasts like the Rage-Dragon Whalelord. Their eyes, in particular, lacked any semblance of intelligence whatsoever, filled only with a bestial savagery.

These two wildbeasts, a Purple-Scaled Flood Dragon and a Gold-Plate Barbed Turtle, were natives of the Lake of Islands. Each were rulers of their own region of water. They were four-star wildbeasts, and if in water, they could unleash combat power surpassing even the Jade-Scaled Flaming Eagle.

Why then, were they following the white-clothed young woman?

A strange purple imprint was fixed on their heads too. It resembled the one on the young woman's forehead, and as it continued to drain their blood without end, these beasts grew even more savage by the minute.

"It'll be great if I could learn this Purple Blood-Imprint too. Blood is something I have more than enough of." The whale looked at the young woman with a trace of regret.

“It can’t be helped. Lifebound beasts can’t learn secret techniques, especially taboo techniques.” The white-clothed young woman looked ahead sternly. “This is the most important chance of my life. Whether I follow him to Heaven’s Elysium or wait for him back at Lightning Manor depends on this.”

“I know.”

“What’s there to fear in life and death?” A gentle smile touched her lips, as if nothing was worth mentioning now. She looked back at the two beasts following. With three giant beasts under her control, she was much stronger — even if the process made her look frail.

“Go.” She ordered. The quiet Lake of Islands exploded into battle with her single word, the three beasts under her command charging into the depths of the lake. The sounds of battle echoed out from the depths of the lake, with countless spines suddenly appearing in those murky depths. Each spine was as thick as a thigh, and over ten metres long. Sharp barbs containing dark-green venom also grew all over them.

The main thing, however, was that there were over a hundred such spines!

The three attackers began to unleash their spiritsource and innate abilities as they besieged the spiny monster.

With a mighty yank, the flood dragon pulled out its foe, revealing a sea urchin-like wildbeast. Its body was like a ball covered in over a hundred sharp spines, without a mouth or nose visible.

This wildbeast was a five-star wildbeast, the Hecatoncheires Black-Devil! The Black-Devil was the strongest wildbeast of the Lake of Islands, its overlord.

The flood dragon and turtle could only tremble in awe at it. Five-star wildbeasts were something only Unity stage powerhouses could fight. If it was a mature wildbeast, these three would be doomed to lose.

However, now it wasn’t yet mature, and its combat prowess was at most a four-star wildbeast. The one called the overlord of the lake wasn’t actually it, but its mother had died of old age. But now it was alone, unable to withstand the attacking beasts. Furthermore, there was a beastmaster who hadn’t made her move yet.

The white-clothed young woman stood on an island, watching the ongoing battle impassively.

It didn’t take long for the young Hecatoncheires Black-Devil to be utterly defeated, its body completely riddled with injuries. Although its regeneration speed was fast, there was nothing it could do against the relentless assault by the three giant beasts.

The Black-Devil trembled. It wasn’t intelligent and didn’t know why it was being attacked, but it could still feel very clearly the threat of death.

At this moment, the white-clothed young woman stepped on the waves and rushed to the whale’s head.

The Black-Devil subconsciously trembled when it saw her purple imprint at her forehead. It could see similar marks on the flood dragon and turtle.

“Submit, or perish,” the young woman uttered coldly as she began to activate a technique. A small knife appeared in her hand, which she used to nick her wrist. Fresh blood began to pour out of her, and she

began to look no different from a bled corpse, as she prepared to do something to the Hecatoncheires Black-Devil.

Chapter 125 - I Specialise In Killing Princesses!

Instead of dripping into the lake, the blood had congregated in front of the girl instead, an eerie sight to behold. As blood continued to flow out of her wrist, her face paled even further. Her body trembled, and pants escaped her lips — which, incidentally, were as white as snow. In a matter of seconds, about half a litre of blood was floating in front of her. That was no doubt the reason for her weakening.

“Purple Blood-Imprint, gather!” Even though she was clearly not well, a sickly smile adorned the girl’s face, giving her a frightening look. The blood was gradually manipulated into a purple formation in mid-air that twitched like snakes.

The imprint landed onto the Hecatoncheires Black-Devil’s forehead, the formation etching itself onto the creature’s skin.

“Awoooo!” Although the Hecatoncheires Black-Devil’s mouth couldn’t be seen, it was clearly screaming and shrieking in pain. Waves crashed violently onto the lake’s many little islands, as the beast thrashed around wildly.

Around an hour later, the Hecatoncheires Black-Devil finally stopped moving. Like the Purple-Scaled Flood Dragon, it had now submitted itself to the white-clothed young woman. However, it was obvious that her physical state had deteriorated even further.

“How about we stop here? These three wildbeasts and me are more than enough for you to dominate the Abyssal Battlefield,” suggested the Rage-Dragon Whalelord.

“No, I need more. I cannot just win — I must kill everyone!” Although her face was drained of all colour, her eyes remained bloodshot.

“Why is it called a trial? It’s called that because everyone is controlled by the Elysium, watched for mere entertainment! They won’t let us go until only one remains! Taboo techniques? That’s nothing compared to death! I shall be the one to have the last laugh!” No one knew how much determination she held, nor the things she had gone through just to get here.

She took a deep breath and looked up at the gloomy sky of the battlefield. “Blueshine, no one will be able to stop me from now on, not even Lin Xiaoting! I’ve been bullied since I was young — only with power can I earn my own dignity. Whoever stops me shall die!”

“In that aspect, the Flameyellow Continent is no different from the Abyssal Battlefield.”

“Qingqing.” Her whalelord gazed at her. “It’s alright, I’ll always be by your side.”

“Let’s go, I’ll need at least two more wildbeasts.”

“Can you handle that?”

“Don’t worry, I won’t die from that.”

During this time, the Hecatoncheires Black-Devil had been completely tamed.

“The Purple Blood-Imprint should dissipate in ten days’ time. But from the looks of the Heavenly Pattern Barrier, ten days is more than enough. Even if I get gravely injured from using this taboo technique, it’s all worth it if I can enter Heaven’s Elysium. With this technique, no one can match me.” She stared into the distance.

“It’s too bad I can’t find you, Li Tianming. But I know you must be searching for me, and I look forward to the day we meet. You probably think that you already have it in the bag, but get ready for a huge surprise! I await that day...”

The white-clothed young woman moved on with her four beasts, looking for her next prey. However, it wasn’t long before they ran into someone.

A young couple had arrived at the Lake of Islands. The girl wore a sapphire blue dress, and there was a shade of blue in her pupils as well. She had the beauty of a lively young girl, and even her skin seemed to give off a watery glow. Compared to the pale girl blocking their way, she was far healthier, far more charming.

As for the boy, he had a very straight figure, his robe the same shade of blue as the girl’s. He had handsome facial features that made him look like a perfect match for the girl beside him.

The couple saw the purple formation on the white-clothed girl’s forehead immediately.

“Purple Blood-Imprint? Are you out of your mind? That will kill you!” The girl in blue seemed shocked.

The boy in blue frowned. “Using forbidden techniques that would harm yourself is unacceptable! Who are you, and where are you from?!”

The couple had both heard of the Purple Blood-Imprint, and knew about its effects. But they would never expect anyone to use it during the Abyssal Trials, since the Purple Blood-Imprint was amongst the top three techniques that were strictly forbidden in Aquamarine!

“Surely you should introduce yourself first before asking for another’s name?” The white-clothed young girl replied with a faint smile. Her appearance was frail and weak, but the same couldn’t be said for the four beasts standing behind her.

The boy scoffed. “Li Qingcheng, son of the Aquamarine Admiral. Beside me is the seventh princess of Aquamarine, Gu Suyu! Who are you to use the taboo technique? I shall report you to Heaven’s Elysium!”

“You must be dreaming, using the taboo technique and still thinking that you can win. The first person that technique will kill is yourself!” Gu Suyu exclaimed.

They had expected the white-clothed girl to be scared by their accusations, but she just tidied her hair and smiled.

“So, you are a princess, and his surname is Li. And you are a couple, am I right?” she asked.

“So what if we are?” Li Qingcheng replied.

She laughed. “I specialize in killing princesses, as well as people surnamed Li.”

“Madwoman!” Gu Suyu’s face twisted in disgust.

“Princess, we need to get rid of her now before she becomes trouble for us. Even if she has wildbeasts in her command, those wildbeasts have no intelligence. She herself has lost all fighting power too, so it should be easy for the two of us to take her down,” said Li Qingcheng.

“That’s right, maybe the Elysium will reward us for taking down the rule-breaker too.” Gu Suyu frowned. They were beastmasters from Aquamarine, which made the Lake of Islands the perfect arena for them!

“Take this madwoman down before she harms anyone else.”

Once they came to an agreement, they summoned their lifebound beasts. Li Qingcheng’s beast was a giant toad. While toads were ugly creatures in most people’s impressions, that was not the case for his toad.

In contrast to its name, the Torrential Theo-Toad was actually a dazzling creature that looked like it was made purely from gems and quartz. It was a low-tier seven-star lifebound beast, and a rare dual-type one too, belonging to a special species. It had both the poison and water elements, making it a poison-water-type amphibious beast.

The Torrential Theo-Toad lit up the battlefield with a bejeweled brilliance as it appeared. Its specialty was that it could fight on land just as well as it did in water, something the whalelord couldn’t do, as it was weakened significantly on land.

But the toad didn’t stay in the spotlight for long, as Gu Suyu’s lifebound beast appeared. The royal clan of Aquamarine was also known as the Regina Jellyfish Clan, since that was the beast that members of the clan held.

The Regina Jellyfish had the most supreme bloodline a jellyfish could possibly have. Jellyfishes were supposed to be the simplest aquatic creatures that lacked offensive means, but that wasn’t the case of the Regina Jellyfish.

Gu Suyu’s beast was the Rainbow Regina Jellyfish, a water-type cnidarian beast. When the rare creature made its appearance in the Lake of Islands, the filthy lake water became crystal clear in a matter of moments. Floating in a now-transparent lake with a prismatic glow, the jellyfish gave off a dreamy aura.

The Rainbow Regina Jellyfish also had purification elements to it, and it was gorgeous compared to the Hecatoncheires Black-Devil, the Purple-Scaled Flood Dragon or the Gold-Plate Barbed Turtle. Most importantly, it was a mid-tier seven-star lifebound beast.

“Ohh, so it’s you. I heard that the only mid-tier seven-star beast for the Abyssal Trials came from Aquamarine.” Even against the magnificent beasts the couple had, the white-clothed girl was still smiling.

“Are you scared now? It’s too late,” Gu Suyu sneered.

“Not that.” The white-clothed girl looked at the jellyfish with admiration. “What a beautiful beast.”

“And?”

“It’s mine now.” She smiled. One of the main reasons why the Purple Blood-Imprint was banned was because it could be used on lifebound beasts too.

Once their beastmasters were dead, that is.

“Oh, I might as well have that toad too.” The girl in white laughed eerily, sending chills down the couple’s spines.

She continued to laugh. “Once you’re dead, once everyone is dead, the ticket to Heaven’s Elysium will be mine. Am I not wrong?”

“She really is mad,” Li Qingcheng said with a disgusted look. “Torch Dragon doesn’t have any water-type beastmasters. Coupled with that whale being her lifebound beast, I know who she is!”

“Mu Qingqing of Vermilion Bird!”

Chapter 126 - Seventeenth Day of the Abyssal Trials!

Fifteen days had passed, but Li Tianming hadn’t seen hide nor hair of Jiang Qingluan.

It was the same for the next day, and the next...

“Where the heck did everyone go?” Li Tianming felt a headache brewing. Truth be told, it was an expected result. A mere twenty people had been sent into this huge Azure Domain, and even though the Heavenly Pattern Barrier was shrinking, the chances of running into anyone was still abysmally low.

Most importantly, neither Li Tianming or Jiang Feiling could relax until Jiang Qingluan was found. Other than that blue feather, no new leads had popped up either.

“I feel like it’s up to luck. Even if we do go searching, we’ll be moving like headless flies,” Li Tianming said.

“We can only pray for Qing’er’s safety,” Jiang Feiling said softly.

“It’ll be fine. She has the looks of a lucky person. Heck, we might even run into her in the next two days.” As long as she was fine, they were bound to meet as long as the formation kept shrinking.

Li Tianming continued his journey.

“Why does the terrain here look so familiar?” That afternoon, Li Tianming crested a black peak, and a mountain range that extending on and on greeted him.

“I don’t find it familiar.”

“Me neither.”

“Of course you won’t. This... is the place where I found the Saintbeast War-Soul.” At that time, Li Tianming didn’t have Ying Huo yet, nor had he met Jiang Feiling.

“It doesn’t look very special here.” The little chick perched on his shoulder and examined the place. It was right. Still, this was the very place that had birthed the War-Soul and changed Li Tianming’s fate.

“Well, let’s take a trip down memory lane.” Li Tianming quickly navigated through the jungle in the mountain range. Within moments, he had crossed yet another mountain, the one right before where he had gotten the War-Soul.

Li Tianming remembered there was a lake there that wasn't too large, nothing comparable to any of the lakes in the Land of Thousand Lakes. He had obtained the Saintbeast War-Soul from the bottom of that lake. At first, Li Tianming had just thought it was an ordinary feather, unaware of the miracle he had picked up. Of course, there was no such second feather here — Li Tianming had left no stone unturned in this lake.

Li Tianming returned to the lake once more and dipped his foot inside. "The water's temperature seems higher than before."

His third eye saw something a moment later.

"What's that?" Although the water was murky, it didn't stop his third eye from seeing clearly. A spirit herb sat in the lake's center, heating up the water around it. Only half a metre, it had but three leaves, each of them as red as fire. And yet, even with so few leaves, the herb had managed to bear a small, thumb-sized fruit.

The fruit was a deep red.

At first, Li Tianming wasn't that interested in it, given its tiny size. However, his eyes widened a moment later as he saw the indigo heavenly pattern on it. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. An indigo pattern was grade six; this spirit herb was a treasure of treasures!

Li Tianming quickly ventured forth, having made a second revelation — this spirit herb was growing right smack on the spot he had found the Saintbeast War-Soul.

This spirit herb should have grown in the last three years. No one must have passed this area in that time, which wasn't all that surprising since the lake did look ordinary.

"It fits the description of a helios fruit. A helios fruit tree has three leaves, and even the leaves have blue patterns. The helios fruit tree is very small as well." Jiang Feiling recalled what she had read before. She was much more well-read than Li Tianming, given that she didn't need to cultivate. She would read books when she was bored, giving her a large breadth of knowledge.

"Are you sure?"

"Won't you know once you look at the leaves?"

Li Tianming looked at the leaves, which did have blue patterns on it!

Such spirit herbs were beneficial to even Unity stage powerhouses. His so-called father, Li Yanfeng, was in the Unity stage, but perhaps he had reached the Heavenly Will stage by now. And yet, if he was here personally, he would still try to seize it.

"Mhmmmm, brother, let's split it!" Saliva was already dripping out of the little chick's beak. Although it wasn't obvious looking at it, there was a terrifying amount of spiritual energy within the fruit.

"Have you lost your mind? You'll blow up from eating this," Li Tianming replied. Even his father would need to refine this slowly.

"Pfft. What a coward. We're real men — since when do we fear tiny fruits?! These fruits should fear us!" the little chick scoffed.

“Are you for real?” On second thought, the little chick did have the infernal source and Infernal Blaze. Its stomach had shocking refinement abilities — directly refining royal manna was a non-issue.

If it could quickly refine the energy in this fruit, progress was inevitable.

“Nonsense. If you’re too scared, just eat the leaves!” the little chick said complacently, seizing a chance to finally mouth off in front of Li Tianming.

To be honest, it didn’t actually matter who ate what. Their exchange of beast ki during symbiotic cultivation would share benefits made by either party...

Logically speaking, the little chick’s refinement abilities were higher than Li Tianming. The current Li Tianming could easily handle grade four — green patterned — spirit herbs. Grade five, or blue patterned herbs, would need some tests, however, since he never tried refining them before.

“Spirit herbs like this have the best medicinal effect right after being picked. For a scaredy-cat like you, you can have the three leaves. Real badasses like me eat them fruits.”

“Sure, keep bragging. Don’t say I didn’t warn you when you’re missing a stomach later.”

“Heh.”

In the end, Li Tianming decided to refine it after all.

Still, as a precaution, the little chick and him each refined a leaf first, which served to give the little chick a reference too. It was an Aeternal Infernal Phoenix, with undeniable talent in this area, but safety was most paramount. Once their initial tests were done, the duo plucked out a helios leaf each and began to refine it on the spot.

As the leaf entered his body, Li Tianming’s throat began to burn, making him moan. It didn’t feel like he’d eaten a leaf, no. The sensation was closer to having swallowed a dollop of magma, which had then decided to stick around in his throat for some inane reason to explore it, sliding down only when satisfied.

Li Tianming’s skin reddened as his blood vessels began to burn up. The outline of his internal organs were now visible from outside.

However, what was truly miraculous was that Jiang Feiling, who was attached to him, hadn’t been affected. Instead, she was even able to help Li Tianming regulate his energy. Truly, she was a perfect assistant in both cultivation and battle. She knew Li Tianming’s body even better than he knew it himself.

Even that part.

Li Tianming wanted to snigger whenever he thought about it.

“Big brother, can you get your mind out of the gutter? We’re refining something!” The embarrassment and anger in her tone was clear.

“What? I’m a gentleman.” Li Tianming gave a light cough as he hurriedly replied.

“Focus. There’s almost a hole in your stomach.”

“Ah.”

“Ling’er, how do you know my thoughts?” Li Tianming asked jokingly, the Aeternal Infernal Codex in full blast.

“Hmph, I’m not answering that.”

“Have you ever had indecent thoughts about me? Men like me are simply too irresistible to women. If you’ve had them, don’t worry — it’s normal!”

“Shameless.”

“Don’t be like this. You have to follow your heart!”

“Hey, if you keep getting distracted, you’re going to explode soon.”

“...”

Wait, I’m really about to explode! Fortunately, Li Tianming managed to hang on, doubling down on his refinement efforts once the danger passed. Still, if blue heavenly pattern spirit herbs were this terrifying, could that little chick really take on the helios fruit?

That question lingered on as the duo finished refining their leaves.

The little chick placed its wings on its hips. “The helios fruit is mine. You take the last leaf, and feast your eyes on how a real man should act.”

“Why have you been so excitable recently? Is the possibility of being neglected once number two is born making you attract as much attention as possible?” Li Tianming asked.

“Don’t flatter yourself!”

Li Tianming had already plucked that last leaf while they were bantering back and forth. However, instead of eating it, he placed the leaf into a jade box. Doing so was the best way to preserve as much of the leaf’s medicinal power as possible.

“Why are you keeping it?” The little chick was confused.

“To sell. Sage Chen is chasing me for my debt.” Li Tianming smiled. He hadn’t forgotten that matter.

“Did refining that leaf earlier somehow scare you?”

“Wrong.” Li Tianming reached out for the helios fruit. Tearing it into two, he tossed one half to the little chick.

As for the other half, he casually tossed it into his mouth.

The little chick was stunned. “Are you crazy?”

Li Tianming gave one last grin before the volcano erupted. “I never let my brothers go into danger alone.”

“I’m almost tearing up. Li Tianming, you blockhead, let’s see if you survive this.” It had the Infernal Blaze, but Li Tianming didn’t. Li Tianming might have a Primordial Chaos Beast’s body, but it wasn’t a mature one. Was his stomach going to be burnt through?

When the fruit entered his body, Li Tianming learnt what it meant to be burnt alive in full detail. Fortunately, it was only half the helios fruit, which liquefied a moment later, spreading through his body with a searing heat.

Chapter 127 - Saving Apprentice-Brother Mo Lin!

Li Tianming could no longer feel his own throat from the burning sensation, and more importantly, his body was on the verge of blowing up.

The flames on his body flared up as muffled explosions shook his body, reaching three metres in height. As he was at the bottom of a lake, the water around him vaporised immediately, creating bubbles of steam that charged upwards.

“Since you are not afraid to die, I’ll follow along.” The little chick hopped onto his head and began to roost on his burning hair. Without hesitation, it chucked down the helios fruit and began to refine it with its infernalsource. Its infernalsource was in its stomach, which suited its nature as a sun-eating Aeternal Infernal Phoenix.

Li Tianming’s body worked differently. As a human, his spiritual energy was stored in his dantian, where his beast vein was. Even though they both had the Aeternal Infernal Body, there were bound to be differences between a man and a chicken. The little chick had unique abilities that made refining spiritual energy easy, while Li Tianming had easier access to spiritual energy through his dantian. Even if his infernalsource wasn’t as good at refining as the little chick’s, the stability of his dantian was able to balance out his power.

Since they were refining together, if Li Tianming could take the impact of the helios fruit, the little chick would surely have no problems with it. The fruit’s effect was the strongest at the first bite, the most stressful period for their Aeternal Infernal Physique. Once the first wave was over, the refining process would be a cinch; they were immune to fire after all.

During symbiotic cultivation, Li Tianming’s nine beast veins would connect with the nine in the little chick, forming a special connection between their infernalsources. Even if he didn’t have the Infernal Blaze, part of the spiritual energy from the helios fruit would be directed to the little chick through their beast veins. This would form a cycle, where the energy travelled from Li Tianming to Ying Huo, and then back to Li Tianming. This process was one of the benefits of symbiotic cultivation, and people called it the ‘symbiotic cycle’.

Through this symbiotic cycle, the duo refined the energy of the helios fruit with their Aeternal Infernal Codex. There was so much the fruit could offer, and generally beastmasters would need to refine them slowly to absorb its full benefit. Though it resulted in little waste, there was one problem: the process was too damn long.

Even though the two had eaten it without apparently giving it much thought, it was in fact an effective way of utilizing the full effects of the fruit. They just needed to withstand the first wave of destruction, and it would be smooth-sailing from then on.

Conflagrations were raging on their bodies now. The entire lake had boiled over within minutes, exposing the muddy lakebed. There wasn't much to be said about the aquatic life that once thrived in it — all of them had perished long ago.

And yet, Li Tianming was safe. Even though he wasn't as good at refining as the little chick, Ying Huo was handling seventy percent of the symbiotic cultivation process. As for the other thirty percent, he still had Jiang Feiling, his personal assistant. In her spiritual form, she could control the flow of spiritual energy in his body and reduce the damage to his innards.

It felt great, all things considered.

The little chick sighed loudly, as if the world was coming to an end. "I can't help but feel violated when our infernalsources are connected, especially when energy is coming from you."

"Screw off." Li Tianming rolled his eyes. That was not unique to them, since all beastmasters in the world cultivated the same way with their beasts.

Their cultivation entered its final stage. Li Tianming did as much as he could, doing his best to take on the remaining thirty percent of the refinement process. Without him, the little chick would need a lot more time, but more importantly, Li Tianming would never let his brother venture into danger alone.

Many people in this world were unwilling to treat lifebound beasts as their brothers, with many even considering the lifebound beasts to be mere animals or mounts. Given that lifebound beasts had no intelligence when they were just born, they were heavily reliant on their beastmasters.

But Li Tianming was not one of those, and he considered Midas to be his real brother. Like real brothers, they cultivated together, battled together, and went through the ups and downs in life together. While the little chick did not grow up with him, the relationship between them could only be explained with the word 'brotherhood'.

"Finally, fifth level Spiritsource." A breakthrough followed once the fruit was fully refined. After absorbing the essence of the helios fruit, the duo's infernalsource expanded once again. Before today, it was already eight times the size of an average spiritsource; it had grown even more today.

While it was true that they were just fifth level Spiritsource, they could even match those at eighth level when it came to beast ki and physical strength. And with the help of his 'sidekick', the adorable Jiang Feiling, overcoming ninth level opponents was no pipe dream. This breakthrough, made possible by a tiny fruit, had just reinforced his dominance in the trials!

"From what I heard, those attending the trials other than me are all eighth level Spiritsource. Ji Changyan's supposed to be one of the stronger ones, and there's no geniuses at Lin Xiaoting's level within Torch Dragon or Aquamarine. In other words, we are invincible in the Abyssal Battlefield, and we should be able to secure the first place as long as we don't receive a joint attack," Li Tianming analysed, a small smile on his face.

"But the problem now is that the barrier is still shrinking, and we are still clueless to the rules of the Abyssal Trials. What does the Elysium exactly want? And Jiang Qingluan..."

Although the refining of the helios fruit took them only an hour, it was still a race against time. The more they dallied here, the more danger Jiang Qingluan would be in.

“What’s so special about this lake, and why would the helios fruit grow here?” Li Tianming dug up the lakebed once more, but learnt nothing new.

There was no time for them to waste, and more importantly, the Heavenly Pattern Barrier was closing in on them. In the next ten minutes or so, this lake would be outside of the barrier.

“Let’s go.” Li Tianming, together with Jiang Feiling and the little chick, left the lake.

“Do you reckon we will find anything if we walk along the sides of the barrier?” Normally speaking, the contestants would be kept on the move due to the barrier. Perhaps they could run into those who happened to be at the border of the barrier.

It was also quite a safe option for them to stand right beside the barrier. Should they encounter any danger, they could choose to just run into it, and the barrier would teleport them to a random area within its radius.

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Day eighteen of the Abyssal Trials.

“Look, there’s someone fighting in front!” They hadn’t seen anyone for a long time.

They were still a distance away, so Li Tianming leapt up into the air with the help of the Celestial Wings, and flew towards the direction of the battle.

“YEE-HAW!” While they were in mid-air, Ying Huo spread its wings out, enjoying the breeze as it sat on its head.

Li Tianming couldn’t help but feel ashamed. As a rule of thumb, beastmasters rode their beasts, but for him... he didn’t want to think about it anymore than was necessary.

“If you weren’t a Primordial Chaos Beast, I’d have stir-fried you long ago. I await the day you gain some more meat after you evolve...” Li Tianming hissed.

He looked forward to the day when he could actually mount the little chick, since that would be the day it returned as the real Aeternal Infernal Phoenix. How strong would he be by then? Would he become the strongest person in the entire continent? Li Tianming had no idea.

They flew over hills and lakes along the border of the Heavenly Pattern Barrier, until they finally arrived at the scene of battle. There were two pairs of masters and beasts fighting, and one of them was none other than the Guardian of Merits’ disciple, Mo Lin! His lifebound beast was the low-tier seven-star Tempest Ink Butterfly, a wind-wood type bug beast. It was a very special creature, and possessed many unique techniques that defied its weak-looking appearance. Those were the techniques that earned him a place right behind Lin Xiaoting on the leaderboard. As a dual-type lifebound beast, not only could its wings summon the power of the wind, but it could also manifest the power of nature. This was demonstrated from the black veins growing out from the ground, something that looked right at home in an ink painting.

Mo Lin’s weapon was an ink pen, each stroke carrying a lethal threat. Like Li Tianming’s chainblade, it was quite an uncommon weapon. Li Tianming didn’t know much about weapon trends in Flameyellow Continent, but in Vermilion Bird, the longsword ruled the charts.

As proof of his words, the girl Mo Lin was fighting was using longswords. In fact, she held one in each of her hands, her fighting style employing each sword separately. By the looks of it, the battle hadn't lasted for a long time, but the girl was already overwhelming Mo Lin. Lethal cuts lined his body, which was already soaked with blood. Even his Tempest Ink Butterfly's wings were already torn and tattered.

The girl was no doubt aiming to kill!

Everyone was at eighth level Spiritsource, so Li Tianming couldn't quite figure out why she was so overwhelming. His eyes drifted over to the dragon-esque beast beside her. Was it due to that beast?

Chapter 128 - Killed Five People!

Dragons and phoenixes were existences that appeared only in myths. Even the weakest of them would be a top-ranking beast.

Although the nation of Torch Dragon was known as a country of dragons, they didn't have even one real dragon. As for Vermilion Bird, the nation was busy being unassuming; the word 'Phoenix' didn't even deign to appear in the nation's name.

Li Tianming had seen a 'dragon'-type lifebound beast from Torch Dragon before— Ji Changyan's Volcanic Drake. However, low-tier seven-star lifebound beasts would at best be dragons with impure blood, even if they matured. However, the lifebound beast of the girl in front of him looked even more like a true dragon! It was even bigger than the Volcanic Drake, and its scales alternated between blue and white, giving it a very holy and noble appearance.

Its long and slender body, razor-sharp teeth and claws and the dense draconic scales that lined its body made it the spitting image of a true dragon; it was just missing the horn.

"Big brother, this is the high-tier seven-star lifebound beast, the Blizzard Dragon. It's a storm and ice-type dragon lifebound beast. It can just be barely counted as a true dragon." Jiang Feiling was deeply shocked, as the data Mu Yang provided had indicated that their strongest opponent would be a mid-tier seven-star beast.

The Volcanic Drake and Blizzard Dragon were different. One was a reptile species, while the other was a dragon species. The former was closer to being snakes, while real dragons could soar through the skies and possessed an apex bloodline.

There were other apex bloodlines as well on the continent, but Vermilion Bird didn't have any of them.

Of course, apex bloodlines didn't mean more ordinary species were useless. The legendary phoenix would be classified as an avian species, though of course it would be the sovereign of all avians. As for the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix, it would be far beyond that.

From the little chick's dream, Li Tianming knew that Ying Huo stood far beyond the average phoenix.

"Which means that the Blizzard Dragon is a dragon, but one of the poorest bloodlines amongst them," Li Tianming mused.

Jiang Feiling nodded. "Honestly, being classified as a dragon can be said to be just for the sake of making the Blizzard Dragon look good. There are arguments that went the other way. Some say that even the

poorest of bloodlines for dragons, phoenixes and qilins should be at least eight-star imperial beasts. To some others, being a saint beast is the minimum qualification.”

With so many books and opinions about lifebound beasts in Vermilion Bird, there was no way they would all be unified.

Li Tianming still had quite the distance before he reached the battlefield, so he was able to get a clear view of the Blizzard Dragon and its beastmaster without being swept up into the fight.

The girl was dressed in a long blue and white dress, and even from afar, it was clear she was a beauty capable of toppling countries with her looks alone. Her two blades continued to dance elegantly as she pressed the attack.

However, Li Tianming had no reaction to that beauty. That was because the most beautiful girl was already in his heart. And also, in his body.

More importantly, that beautiful girl was evidently attempting to kill Mo Lin, from how every swing of hers drew blood.

“The information Uncle Yang gave didn’t have her. How did she enter?” Li Tianming quickly recalled the data. “Her strength and lifebound beast are much stronger than apprentice-brother Mo Lin’s. Did she hide her abilities so well that even Vermilion Bird’s Heaven’s Sanctum isn’t in the know?”

That was the only possibility. Li Tianming could tell that she was suppressing Mo Lin with ease; for that to happen, she had to be ninth level Spiritsource.

“I remember someone. That’s a contestant from Torch Dragon called Yue Lingji. The information says she’s eighth level Spiritsource with a low-tier seven-star lifebound beast, the Snowy Drake. It should be her!” Still, that information differed from what the data said.

When Li Tianming entered the battlefield, he saw her cut apart Mo Lin’s brush.

“That’s definitely a grade six bestial weapon, which is against the rules set by Heaven’s Elysium.” It didn’t matter if her level and lifebound beast were strong, because that was her strength. However, she had no right to use a grade six bestial weapon!

In the data, this Yue Lingji was classified as someone who was paid little attention to, and even Li Tianming had overlooked her. Mu Yang had said that the strongest contender should be Aquamarine’s seventh princess, Gu Suyu. She was the only one with a mid-tier seven-star lifebound beast.

Who knew that Yue Lingji had hidden her cards so well? Had she never fought before in Aquamarine? The breakthrough in level might have been in the Abyssal Battlefield, but if it wasn’t Ying Huo, it was impossible for a lifebound beast to evolve in tier in this short amount of time.

At this moment, one of Yue Lingji’s swords stabbed towards Mo Lin’s throat. Of her two swords, the left contained the power of storms, while the right contained the power of ice and snow.

The Blizzard Dragon followed up with a spiritsource ability, turning Mo Lin’s Tempest Ink Butterfly into an icy sculpture that dropped onto the ground a moment later, injuring it grievously.

Li Tianming had done his best to reach the battlefield, and his efforts were now paying off. He was now in range.

“Ying Huo!” Even before Li Tianming had spoken, the little chick was already rushing towards Yue Lingji, belching its Infernal Blaze at her. A fiery phoenix ripped apart the air as it descended on Yue Lingji, who was forced to abort her attack to dodge the fiery manifestation. It wasn’t that she hadn’t noticed Li Tianming — she never expected him to arrive this quickly.

Just as the Blizzard Dragon was about to crunch onto the butterfly, Li Tianming’s chain flew over. The first thing it did was to smack the dragon away, before wrapping around the butterfly and dragging it to where Mo Lin was.

“Die’er!” Mo Lin’s hands were covered in blood, his eyes bloodshot. His body was covered in injuries, and now he saw his lifebound beast dying.

Li Tianming and the little chick continued to block Yue Lingji and the Blizzard Dragon, preventing them from harming the distraught Mo Lin. If it weren’t for them, Mo Lin and his beast would already be dead.

“Thank you, Tianming. But you should run! We’re not her opponent! She’s ninth level Spiritsource and she has a grade six bestial weapon!” Mo Lin struggled to his feet.

Mo Lin hurriedly used some spirit herbs to treat his beast before transferring it into the lifebound space to recuperate.

“It’s fine.” Li Tianming pointed behind him. “The formation is almost reaching here. If I can’t hold her off anymore, pass through the formation to get away.”

That had been Mo Lin’s goal in retreating during the fight. However, the opponent had known his plan and hadn’t allowed him to get near it.

“Tianming!” Mo Lin was anxious.

“Don’t worry.” Li Tianming gave him a look that made Mo Lin unable to continue his entreaties.

Jiang Feiling’s voice echoed out too. “Treat your beast first. At least, stop its bleeding. Also, you need to see if you can warm it up with the proper spirit herbs after it was chilled by the frost so much.”

As they spoke, Yue Lingji and the dragon had arrived. Yue Lingji’s face was covered in a white veil. Blood dripping off her swords, she gazed at Li Tianming coldly.

“My luck is quite good. Another person has come to deliver me his head. Saves me the trouble of finding people.”

Although the Blizzard Dragon was very beautiful, it was also very ferocious, eyeing Li Tianming greedily.

“Counting you two, I’ll have killed seven. Let’s see, there are twenty altogether, so I suppose I’ll be first in the trials.” She seemed very pleased with Li Tianming’s appearance.

She had already killed five people? Were any of them from Vermilion Bird? Meeting her was no different from a death sentence, considering her strength!

Li Tianming had a bad feeling. “Why kill when there aren’t even any rules?”

“Naive. These are trials, so we’re here to be tested. I even killed people from my Torch Dragon, so why would I stop from killing you?” She shook her head, chuckling.

Yue Lingji thrust out with her Wind Cometh Blade and flaunted it. “This is a grade six weapon, and I’m allowed to use it. Are you happy?”

“Apprentice-brother Mo Lin, go first.” Li Tianming didn’t want her to injure Mo Lin, since she was so merciless. He was also planning to have a grand fight with this arrogant and cold woman once he was gone.

“No. I go when you go.”

Mo Lin stood up, having just fed himself some medicine. He wasn’t the kind that would flee alone, and would rather die than leave Li Tianming here. After all, he had no idea of Li Tianming’s strength.

Alas, Li Tianming wouldn’t be able to spare him attention when the fight started, making it too dangerous for him.

“Big brother, it’s best to bring him away first,” Jiang Feiling said. The slightest careless mistake would cost Mo Lin his life.

Li Tianming nodded. “Alright.”

“You want to leave?” Yue Lingji wanted to laugh when she heard that conversation, exploding into motion a moment later. Her target, however, wasn’t Li Tianming, it was Mo Lin!

Since her goal was to kill, she would naturally go for the heavily injured Mo Lin first. As for the dragon, it made its way to block Li Tianming.

How could Li Tianming not understand her intentions? Since Mo Lin didn’t want to go, Li Tianming had no choice but to bring him away.

Li Tianming unfurled the Celestial Wings and took to the skies. “Temporal Field.”

“Yes.” Jiang Feiling quickly activated the Temporal Field with Li Tianming at the centre, enveloping both Yue Lingji and Mo Lin.

With Yue Lingji restricted by the temporal field, Li Tianming quickly appeared in front of Mo Lin, grabbing him and whizzing away in a flash. With the Celestial Wings, there was no one who could catch up to Li Tianming if he wanted to leave.

“Don’t you dare!” Yue Lingji’s expression was cold. With the Temporal Field affecting her — not that she even knew what it was in the first place — Li Tianming’s flying speed was far beyond her expectations. “Chase!”

Chapter 129 - Nineteenth Day of the Abyssal Trials!

Yue Lingji was naturally unable to fly by herself, and so she needed to mount the Blizzard Dragon. Although it was wingless, it could draw on the power of storms to rush into the sky and chase down Li Tianming!

Unfortunately, the distance would immediately open up whenever she entered the Temporal Field.

Li Tianming couldn't defeat Yue Lingji, not with an injured Mo Lin around. Still, he understood he would have done the same if he was in Mo Lin's shoes. As such, Li Tianming's only recourse was to bring Mo Lin to the Heavenly Pattern Barrier, which was closing in.

"Apprentice-brother Mo Lin, I don't know if we can go to the same place after we touch the barrier. If we don't, hide first and focus on recovery. Don't consider Heaven's Elysium anymore."

"Alright. Thank you for saving me." Mo Lin looked behind and finally relaxed, seeing that Yue Lingji wasn't able to catch up. The two of them being able to escape with their lives was the best outcome to him.

Without the barrier's ability to teleport anyone it touched away, Yue Lingji would have continued her chase like a vengeful ghost. And considering that this trial was a free-for-all, where an oriole could show up anytime, escaping was for the best.

The barrier itself was now in sight. Tightening his grip on Mo Lin, Li Tianming slammed into it. As for the little chick, it had already entered the lifebound space to prevent itself from being swept away by what was to come, and a storm whipped up as the teleportation began.

The power of the storm was too terrifying. Even though Li Tianming was using his chain to secure Mo Lin, they were forced to separate with a ghastly yank. The world spun around Li Tianming, who dropped from the skies a moment later, landing on his bum with a bump. There wasn't anyone around him, be it person or wildbeast. The intricacies of the barrier had indeed teleported them away from their pursuers.

"I don't know where apprentice-brother Mo Lin went. I hope he's fine. He's going to need a veterinarian for his lifebound beast after this." Li Tianming could only pray for his safety.

"Yue Lingji. Ninth level Spiritsource, a high-tier seven-star lifebound beast, a grade six bestial weapon and five kills under her belt." Li Tianming frowned. This would most likely be his greatest opponent. "If apprentice-brother Mo Lin wasn't here, I'll show you a thing or two."

Li Tianming disliked that look where you acted like everything was under control. So, he drew a conclusion. "Both are girls, but Ling'er is cuter."

For other people, no one knew what kind of heart was hidden under a beautiful appearance.

"My only worry is that Qing'er is among the ones she's killed." This whole time, Jiang Feiling had been worried sick.

"She'll be fine." Li Tianming could only comfort her. He himself wanted to protect Jiang Qingluan, but the problem was he still couldn't find her! He had met Xing Que, Chen Hao and Mo Lin so far, but he just couldn't meet the two people he actually wanted to find, Mu Qingqing and Jiang Qingluan.

"It's the eighteenth day. The enclosed area has shrunk quite a bit." Li Tianming flew up and examined the size of the formation.

"Now that I think about it, the barrier is a sphere. So, the highest point should correspond to the centre of the whole sphere when it shrinks down!" Li Tianming smacked himself on the head for missing the obvious.

Since he couldn't find them, he just needed to go to the place most people would be. Li Tianming only needed to go along the formation in the sky, until he found the highest point. That was when he would arrive at the centre. At the very start, the formation had been very high up, all the way above the clouds. However, as it shrunk, the ceiling of their battleground lowered — right now, it should be below the lightning-filled clouds.

Li Tianming flew through the dense black lightning. It was a risky move, given that getting hit was almost guaranteed to be fatal. However, it was a risk he had to take to find Jiang Qingluan.

Inside his lifebound space, 'number two' would start to get excited every time he got near the lightning. It would push against the shell, causing the cracks on it to increase until there were three more.

In between the slits, lightning could be seen surging.

On the contrary, the little chick didn't look all that excited to see his little brother move. That was because him and Li Tianming were keeping count.

"One, two, three... fifteen, sixteen, seventeen!" When they hit seventeen, all movement halted. The sounds of snoring could be heard if they pricked up their ears.

This damned cycle had already repeated dozens of times. Every single time, the bugger inside would always fall asleep, right before it pushed for the seventeenth time.

"What a lazy punk. I bet it won't be any useful even after hatches!" the little chick said disdainfully.

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Day nineteen of the Abyssal Trials!

Li Tianming had found the highest point. When he looked down, he saw a region of water. Black mist lingered on its surface. Who knew how many wildbeasts lurked within this region of water?

"This position should correspond to the Lake of Islands on Flameyellow Continent. The Lake of Islands is one of the biggest lakes in the Land of Thousand Lakes." Li Tianming descended, hiding in one of the mountains next to the lake.

"Are there others already here and in hiding?" It would be difficult to find people in this omnipresent miasma.

Li Tianming flew around the lake — whether he stirred up a disturbance or not he didn't care.

"Tianming." An hour later, someone actually called out to him. Li Tianming quickly zipped over and found Mo Lin, who was hiding in a cave. Now that a day had passed, his countenance looked far better.

"How's your lifebound beast?"

"Its injuries have stabilised."

"Why are you here, apprentice-brother Mo Lin?"

"I was teleported here. According to Xing Que and Chen Hao, this will be where the formation shrinks to in the very end."

“They’re here too?” Li Tianming looked inside, to find Xing Que and Chen Hao both inside a cave. Their heads were lowered and their expressions ugly. Neither met Li Tianming in the eye.

“You two, what’s wrong?” Mo Lin asked curiously. They had been chatting just fine just now.

“Maybe a stomach ache. The climate must not be agreeing with them.” Li Tianming entered the cave. “Have any of you seen Princess Ling?”

“I haven’t.” Mo Lin said.

Li Tianming looked at the other two, but they didn’t want to respond.

“Have you two met her?” Mo Lin could see that there was a grudge between them, so he helped Li Tianming with his enquiry.

“No.” They finally shook their heads.

Mo Lin found it a little strange. Logically speaking, if these two didn’t like Li Tianming, they would have attacked him. However, when Mo Lin saw their injuries, as well as how they lowered their heads in front of Li Tianming, he made a speculation. Still, is Li Tianming really that strong?

“Apprentice-brother Mo Lin, what’s your next step?” Li Tianming asked.

“There’s no next step. Yue Lingji is too strong. No one can handle her. She’s already killed five, and I’m sure that kill count will go up in the next few days. Furthermore, we’re all injured. So, we’re planning to wait out the Abyssal Trials here. Yue Lingji did say the trials are for killing everyone else. So, we can’t go out anymore if we want to live.”

Xing Que stood up. “That’s unless it’s not a battle of life and death at the end. The Vice-Potentate said before for us to prioritise our lives.”

Although they hated Li Tianming’s guts, they were all of Vermilion Bird and wouldn’t start killing each other at this juncture.

“Li Tianming, how about you?” Mo Lin asked.

“I want to go for number one,” Li Tianming said.

“Then wait to die.” Chen Hao sniggered.

“Do I really need to smack you again?” Li Tianming asked curiously.

Chen Hao snorted, but he didn’t dare to make any other response. Li Tianming wouldn’t show mercy when he smacked people, and Chen Hao had no desire to be smacked in front of Mo Lin.

“You defeated them, even when they were working together?” Mo Lin was shocked.

Li Tianming chuckled in reply.

“Impressive. However, Yue Lingji doesn’t conform to logic, so be very careful if you fight her.” Mo Lin said.

“Are there any other powerful people apart from her?”

“I’m not sure. I haven’t really met people from the other two countries. There seems to be so few people that I suspect many have died,” Mo Lin said, pity tinting his words. These Abyssal Trials were too cruel.

They were all future pillars of their countries, but now, so many had died a quiet death here without a whole corpse left.

Jiang Feiling got more worried about Jiang Qingluan the more she heard. Could she have ended up like Ji Changyan, dying without anyone the wiser, her corpse burnt to ashes?

The cave fell silent.

“You all stay here. I’ll go and find Princess Qing,” Li Tianming said.

“Apprentice-brother,” Mo Lin said.

“Yes?”

“If you have the skill, help our Vermilion Bird earn some glory.” Mo Lin’s eyes blazed with passion. He felt something of a slump after being routed by Yue Lingji like that.

“No problem.” Li Tianming wasn’t doing this just for himself, but also for his mother! She would lose all hope if Li Tianming didn’t get first.

This was the last chance Wei Tiancang had given him, and Li Tianming had promised not to ask him again if he failed.

He had no other choice.

Get first place, and he could crush that dream of Mu Qingqing and Lin Xiaoting to be together! He could also move to that vaster world — Heaven’s Elysium!

Heaven’s Elysium stood at the apex of the continent, and Li Tianming was starting to feel more and more yearning towards it.

Li Tianming left the cave.

“Perhaps, Qing’er and other people are also hiding in some cave here because of the danger.”

Li Tianming looked outside, and noted that the rate of shrinking seemed to be increasing. Perhaps, the true Abyssal Trials would be in two days’ time.

The Abyssal Battlefield was covered by a ceaseless night. The Calamitous Sun hung sinisterly in the sky, unmoving. When Li Tianming finally exited the cave, he saw a girl standing at the centremost island of the Lake of Islands, a Blizzard Dragon coiled up beside her.

Yue Lingji was here! However, what was she doing there, especially with such a high profile?

Chapter 130 - Draconic Water Obelisk!!

Everyone who participated in the Abyssal Trials were in the higher echelons of society. As such, the Blizzard Dragon — which was classified as a real dragon — was instantly recognised, and deterred virtually everyone else from making a move on Yue Lingji, who was standing on the island in the lake’s

centre. Strangely, the black mist that had shrouded the Lake of Islands was beginning to disperse, and even without his third eye, Li Tianming had a good view of his surroundings.

That also meant that he had a better view of Yue Lingji, along with everyone else who was hiding in the area around her.

Her Blizzard Dragon took to the air a moment later, and Yue Lingji looked down on the area around her. "Those who are still alive, come over and fight! Six have fallen by my hand, and I'm pretty sure some of you have killed others too, so there's only so many people left alive."

"As expected, no one here has a spine. Well, no matter. The barrier's closing in, after all." Her words echoed around the lake, but no one answered her.

At least for Mo Lin's group, they didn't intend to get themselves killed. They had never put their hopes up high for the trials to begin with, since even Mu Yang had told them that something was off and they should prioritize their own life. Could that the 'something off' was related to Yue Lingji? Even now, no one knew the real rules to the trials!

Yue Lingji snickered, knowing that there were people hiding somewhere around. As her beast continued to roar, even the wildbeasts in the region seemed to have escaped. Her every move stank of arrogance and disregard for the others.

Sure enough, there were people who had seen her. For example, at one corner of the lake, a white-clothed girl was seated on a rock, her legs dangling by the lake. Her countenance was paler than paper, as if there was not a drop of blood running through her body. The most obvious thing was the purple imprint squirming around her forehead. It was like a leech, draining her blood as if it was a living thing.

She stared indifferently at Yue Lingji without any intention to move. She was waiting for someone else, after all. The girl was the first to discover that the Lake of Islands was the eye of the ever-shrinking Heavenly Pattern Barrier, and she had been waiting for her prey here ever since.

As for her prey, their corpses were already fish food, resting in the bottom of the lake...

All that lingered in the region was the smug laughter of Yue Lingji, making the others wonder if killing the most meant first place. Even if they remained in hiding, when the barrier forced them out, they would have to face the terrifying Yue Lingji.

Perhaps the only way left was for the survivors to gang up on Yue Lingji. But the risk remained that they could stab each other in the back anytime. As such, no one made a move.

The Heavenly Pattern Barrier closed in slowly on where Mo Lin's group was hiding. The lakebed was their next option, but they would definitely be spotted the moment they moved. It was somewhat astounding to see how a young girl had cowed three stately geniuses into inaction.

Something unbelievable happened at this moment, right in front of Yue Lingji. The lakewater around the island she stood on began to glow blue, as if a giant sapphire had appeared underneath the island! The breathtaking glow, a hundred metres in radius, dyed the black lakewater a crystal blue, scattering the turbid waters.

But that was just the beginning. Within the circle of glowing water, nine light beams a metre wide shot up into the sky. As the beams increased in intensity, the water in the nine small circles began to bubble, shooting up into the sky a moment later in the shape of dragons!

Boom!

The abnormality was like a spotlight for Yue Lingji, who basked in the center of the nine beams. A mysterious smile danced on her face, as if she was anticipating this all along. The nine dragons formed by the lake's water circled the sky for about three breaths before exploding into a torrent of rain.

Li Tianming was completely confused. Just what was happening?

"Big brother, this could be the 'Soaring of Nine Dragons', a type of manna phenomenon..." Jiang Feiling's voice trembled slightly.

"Elaborate."

"According to legends, out of the four different types of manna — royal, profound, terrestrial and celestial — manna profound-ranked and above will give rise to strange phenomena when they appear. From what I read, nine water dragons soaring into the sky marks the appearance of the draconic water obelisk, a profound manna!" Jiang Feiling explained.

"Profound manna?" He narrowed his eyes. The Lake of Islands had been searched through thoroughly before, and there was no way that a profound manna was there!

Even though profound manna and royal manna were only different by a single tier, their values were incomparable! If royal manna was worth about thirty times the net worth of Flamehaven, then a profound manna was worth at least an order of magnitude greater, and perhaps even more!

If the evolution was successful, an eight-star lifebound beast — an imperial beast — would be born. One could count the number of imperial beasts in Vermilion Bird with their hands. With an eight-star beast, a beastmaster could easily reach the higher levels of Heavenly Will with a decent bit of talent. It was a power that could easily dominate the entire nation.

It could be said that the value of a piece of profound manna was close to that of the Saintbeast War-Soul, and it was even easier to use. While Saintbeast War-Souls was used to make powerful beasts even stronger, a profound manna could change the very nature of a beast!

What could it mean, for a profound manna to appear in the middle of the Lake of Islands during the Abyssal Trials?

"Heaven's Elysium must have placed the manna here, arranging it to appear at this very moment. Is obtaining the manna the condition to take first place in the trials? After all, even if the winner lacks aptitude, the manna is able to make up for that." It wasn't just Li Tianming, but every other survivor who had that exact same thought.

Everyone stared fervently at the profound manna, and rightfully so, since it was an item enough to completely change their fate! It was an unimaginable gift from the Elysium, and everyone present gulped as they looked at it.

The last one standing wins? No, whoever takes the manna wins!

However, that was easier said than done. Yue Lingji wore an excited smile, since she was standing right on the island where the manna appeared. She was closer to it than anyone else, and even with Li Tianming's Celestial Wings, he wouldn't make it in time.

Without hesitation, Yue Lingji dived into the lake, reappearing after three breaths of time. In her hands was a gem about the size of her finger, with nine miniature dragons circling it. It was the draconic water obelisk!

She stowed it away a heartbeat later, the smile still on her face. As the manna vanished from sight, the phenomenon at the lake ended, leaving behind no clue that something world-shaking had appeared there. But it was clear to all that the trophy for the Abyssal Trials was in her hands. The only comfort was that the Heavenly Pattern Barrier had yet to reach the Lake of Islands, which meant that they still had a chance to contest for the manna before Heaven's Elysium ended the trials.

"The draconic water obelisk is in my hands! Does anyone want to fight me for it? I have six kills already; won't hurt to make it ten!" Yue Lingji's voice travelled to every corner of the Heavenly Pattern Barrier, smugness dripping off every syllable now.

As expected, the profound manna was too tempting to pass up, and others had reached her before Li Tianming could. They were two brothers from Aquamarine, and were evidently as strong as Xing Que and Chen Hao. Together, they besieged Yue Lingji with their lifebound beasts, and a heated battle erupted on top of the Lake of Islands!

Alas, Yue Lingji was much stronger, and within minutes, two heads had plopped off, their lifebound beasts shredded to pieces by the Blizzard Dragon!

With a splash, the corpses fell into the lake, dyeing it a bloody red. Some blood had dirtied Yue Lingji's face as well, dirtying her veil. She took it off, revealing her stunning appearance. The only flaw was that her eyes were narrow, making her look rather unkind.

"Anymore? I need two more to reach ten. If not, I'll take the manna gladly, as well as the position in Heaven's Elysium. It's a place worthy only for people like me, and trash like you all can waste your life away in this lovely backwater."

"Ji Changyan, are you dead yet? I know you are somewhere around." She scanned her surroundings with a smile on her face and the two swords in her hands. Right now, she looked like an invincible wargod.

Li Tianming knew that no one else would dare to appear after she killed those two from Aquamarine. The difference in strength was blatantly obvious, and Mo Lin, Xing Que and Chen Hao had all gone back into hiding.

But he couldn't let the Abyssal Trials end here! Since he couldn't find Jiang Qingluan and Mu Qingqing, then if he revealed himself, they could find him instead. The barrier was constantly shrinking, and there was not much time left for him to fight for the manna.

And as such, there was only one course of action left to him.

He will fight and snatch the draconic water obelisk from Yue Lingji!