

The Ages 231

Chapter 231 Tomb Of The Grim Reaper

Tianming had gained a new understanding of his ancestors. They were a generation of heroes of the Grand-Orient Realm made of flesh and blood. Within his veins flowed their blood, as well as the resonance attributable to Lifesbane.

"The eighteenth ancestor, Li Wushen, was called the Grim Reaper. A mighty title indeed, befitting of a ferocious man who sent the masses scrambling in fear during his time. Countless villains died at his hands. He was the God of Slaughter! As far as I know, the weapon he used was the chain."

Tianming stood before a black, dilapidated tombstone that had five words engraved on it: Tomb of the Grim Reaper.

What kind of man would such a fierce title belong to?

"Come, my son. Serve our ancestor wine. Let your youthful energy relieve his loneliness."

His words had Tianming breaking out in goosebumps. It was as if the Grim Reaper's shadow had already appeared on the tombstone, his malevolent laughter ringing in Tianming's ears.

"Ancestor, have a drink!"

Mustering up his courage, Tianming emptied the jar on the grave. As wine seeped into the soil, he could almost hear the sound of someone drinking.

"Meow Meow, don't be afraid, I'll protect you!" On Tianming's shoulder, the quivering little chick held the black cat.

"I'm not afraid." Meow Meow was filled with curiosity. If it weren't for the little chick holding him down, Meow Meow would have already climbed the tombstone.

"No, you're terrified. I can feel you trembling." the little chick shivered.

"Big Brother Chicken, you're strangling me. I'm really not afraid, I just can't breathe."

"Don't worry. With me around, there's nothing to fear."

Tianming couldn't bear to watch them. Despite the display of fearlessness, the lethal, bloodthirsty little chick was actually afraid!

The third jar of wine went gurgling down. A loud belch sent Tianming jumping up in shock. In an instant, an eerie glow originated from the Grim Reaper's tomb. A total of thirty-three pale white saintly heavenly patterns spread on the tombstone.

On the black tombstone, the saintly heavenly patterns soon formed four words: Life-Death Whip Art.

At the moment, Tianming was still uncertain if this was a unity-ranked or heavenly-ranked battle art.

The saintly heavenly patterns twisted and formed another set of words:

Step 1: Soul Hook.

Step 2: Death Requisition.

Step 3: Transcendence.

These were most likely the three moves of the Life-death Whip Art.

The words faded as the saintly heavenly patterns merged into the Grim Reaper's tomb. A black figure suddenly appeared, his back turned toward Tianming. He was clothed in an eerie blood-red cloak, brimming with a murderous aura. The most terrifying thing was the crimson chain in his hand.

While Meow Meow dully looked on, the little chick felt his throat close up from fear. After composing himself, his eyes widened in surprise. What was this? Battle arts!

Boiling with excitement, the little chick assumed a combative stance of Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven, spurred on by the roc's shadow beside the figure on the tombstone. The presence of the bloody roc signified the possibility of bestial arts.

Just then, the whip flew out and Tianming narrowed his eyes. This was no ordinary whip! From it, Tianming sensed an aura similar to the Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven, proving this was a heavenly-ranked battle art.

However, Tianming could only practice the unity-ranked portion. In other words, the heavenly-ranked battle art had been simplified for a Unity stage cultivator!

At the same time the whip flew into the air, the bloody roc waved its claw. Despite the differing forms, the moves were exactly the same in both trajectory and principle. Weapons were merely the medium, but heavenly will remained fundamental. More importantly, because it was simplified to a unity-ranked battle art, the whip and claw were a perfect combination.

Tianming couldn't quite describe the move. However, just as abruptly as it had appeared, the figure on the tomb vanished.

It took Tianming a long time to calm down. As soon as his eyes fell upon the whip, the dark clouds receded and deathly stillness prevailed, as if all beings had lost their souls.

If his guess was correct, this was the Life-Death Whip Art. Based on this move alone, the profundity of the Life-Death Whip Art was comparable to the Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven.

Tianming took a deep breath, sinking into contemplation.

Soul Hook.... How does one hook souls?

Archfiend appeared in his hand, the bloody chain spread out around him. Tianming was every bit as terrifying as the Grim Reaper. Although his left hand could control the chain, what he lacked was flexibility.

However, the Soul Hook didn't require flexibility, but heavenly will. As soon as that realization dawned upon him, Tianming began meditating.

The realm of cultivation wasn't solely dependent on time, but insight, rest, and recuperation. Tianming reserved time purely for practicing his battle arts every day. Although he hadn't found a suitable battle art in the Grand Hall, the Life-death Whip Art he now had was far superior.

I wonder, with all these ancestors, what other fortunes are there? I'm a descendent of the Li Saint Clan who has awakened Lifesbane. Now I'm in the Li Mausoleum, the blood of countless ancestors flows within my veins. Thus, I shall take on the responsibility of reviving the clan! My ancestors have guided me with care and bestowed me with such fortune. Evidently, they, too, are unwilling to watch the decline of a once brilliant clan. Qingyu has broken the curse of Lifesbane, and I've embarked on the same journey. From this day forth, my future is tied to the Li Saint Clan!

Unbeknownst to Tianming, countless tombstones glowed, projecting light rays onto him. The heroic spirits of his ancestors emerged in him one by one. These were men who once fought against heaven and earth and opposed destiny. Together, their wills would become a storm capable of subverting the entire Grand-Orient Sect.

This scene resembled the day their spirits were projected on Li Wudi. Behind Tianming, the flask in Li Wudi's hand tumbled to the ground. His eyes opened just a crack, revealing a bloody spark that was enough to engulf the heavens.

Chapter 232 - Marriage Contract

The Metal Bloodline of the Li Saint Clan was mainly based out of Goldgleam Mountain, which was named for the abundance of goldgleam ore on the mountain. From a distance in the sunlight, the mountain glimmered like a jewel and looked far more impressive than Fatepath Peak. At night, it resembled a glimmering mountain of silver, thanks to the moonlight.

At night within Goldgleam Hall, the patriarch of the Metal Bloodline, Li Xuanyi, stood with his hands behind his back. In front of him was his favorite and eldest son, gold-eyed Li Xuanchen, who was also the disciple of Yuwen Taiji. Li Xuanchen's glowing eyes stood out rather strongly in the dark.

"Dad, I already sent the wedding gifts over to Fatepath Peak," he said.

"How did it go?"

"The doors were shut tight, naturally. I wasn't allowed in, so I left the gifts at the entrance of Kunpeng Sacred Hall."

"Haha, a vain struggle, if you ask me. With the marriage contract, there's nothing they can do no matter who they complain to." Li Xuanyi smirked coldly.

"Your wisdom back then was truly impressive, Dad."

"It was nothing. Li Wudi was already out of his mind. Since he dared to provoke me despite being crippled already, I made it worth my time." After a hearty laugh, he sighed. "Can'er has it rather bad and doesn't have much talent. He isn't the brightest child either. Being able to find a wife like this is the only thing I can do for him as a father. That girl is a tribane genius from the Apex Branch, after all, not to mention her beauty."

"Dad, don't you worry that he won't be able to control Li Qingyu?" Li Xuanchen asked.

"She is indeed stronger than your brother, but after the marriage, she'll move to Goldgleam Mountain. There's nobody there that will help her defy me. I'll make sure there's nothing she can do but birth children for our family. I'm sure she'll simmer down after a few births."

Li Xuanchen mulled over his thoughts and made his decision. "Dad, I have my own plans for Li Qingyu." His tone sounded rather forceful.

Li Xuanyi was the only saint in the entire Li Saint Clan. Apart from the Wind Bloodline, he controlled everything else in the clan.

"What do you mean by that?" Li Xuanyi said, furrowing his brow.

"My junior, Yuwen Shengcheng, fancies Li Qingyu, so I made a deal with him." He proceeded to brief his father on the deal he made back then. When he was done, Li Xuanyi's expression completely darkened.

"What in the world were you thinking?! She's your brother's wife! We already have the marriage secured by the contract, so why did you go out of your way to mess it up for your brother?!" he said with trembling fury.

"Dad, I was going to ask you what you were thinking, instead. Don't tell me you still harbor lofty ambitions with regards to reviving our clan? Snap out of it. The Grand-Orient Sect is now ruled by the council of elders, and half of them stand with my master! The future of the sect is with the Yuwen Clan! You told me to get on Yuwen Shengcheng and Yuwen Shendu's good side, to what end? To benefit our family, of course! Why do you even bother with Jincan's happiness? Dad, I hate to criticize you, but I think you have tunnel vision."

"Nonsense!" he roared with his palm raised. He had never imagined that his son would say that to him, but he didn't go through with the slap.

"Dad, did you hear about how Yuwen Shengcheng was beat up by Li Tianming at the Abyssal Battlefield?" Li Xuanchen said, now with a lighter tone.

"I did."

"Yuwen Shengcheng's capabilities are far beyond fifth-level Unity, yet he didn't manage to defeat Li Tianming. That means there's no chance we'll get the Kungpeng Sacred Seal for ourselves, because he's a true pentabane."

"That's right." Li Xuanyi didn't even deny that fact. It hadn't even taken Tianming ten days to break through to Unity, so reaching the third level in half a year was entirely possible.

"However, there's still a chance for us to get the seal."

"What do you mean?"

"Li Tianming has a grudge with the Yuwen Clan, so his death is only a matter of time. Once that happens, the Kungpeng Sacred Seal will be mine. With that in mind, if I give Li Qingyu to Yuwen Shengcheng, he and Tianming would have even more to beef about. Their grudge will grow beyond what the seniors can mediate. Even though Yuwen Shendu doesn't care about Li Tianming, there'll come a day when he's forced to act. All we have to do is to get him involved to end Li Tianming. That's why I had to give Li Qingyu to Yuwen Shengcheng."

"With Li Tianming's awakened talent becoming the focus of Elder Ye and the rest, we'll have no chance of getting rid of him once they decide to protect him. Only Yuwen Shendu stands a chance of killing him! The Kunpeng Sacred Seal is useless to the Yuwen Clan, but I'm Yuwen Taiji's disciple. They'll definitely support me in taking over the Li Saint Clan, so we can serve the Yuwen Clan. That is the only way for our clan to survive!" he said with burning agitation.

Hearing that, Li Xuanyi sighed. He had to admit that his son had a point.

"But your little brother is already so pitiful... this will make it even worse for him!"

"Dad, I'm only speaking the truth. Why don't you just let that useless son of yours die? He'll be a parasite on our family for as long as he lives! You should've killed him at the moment of his birth!"

"How could you say that about your own brother?!" Li Xuanyi said with disbelief.

"What brother? That retard can't be related to me."

Li Xuanyi gripped his fists and glared at his son, only to sigh and loosen his hand in the end. "Escort the bride to us tomorrow."

"Dad, I hope you understand where I'm coming from. I'm only doing this for the benefit of our family." Li Xuanchen took two steps back, prostrated himself on the ground, and kowtowed twice before turning to leave.

Li Xuanyi looked at his back as he left.

"Letting the Li Saint Clan serve as the Yuwen Clan's vassals...." He turned back to Goldgleam Hall, where his ancestors rested.

"Li Saint Clan! Li Saint Clan!" Li Xuanyi gripped his fists and knelt.

"Oh ancestors, I am a sinner... I couldn't stand up for the clan, I...."

Back during their golden age, the Metal Bloodline alone could crush Heaven's Elysium. Yet now, their only path to survive was to become the Yuwen Clan's servants. Li Xuanyi was all too aware of how pathetic that was, but he was all too aware that it was their only choice. His son had already set out on that path, so he had no other choice.

"Li Tianming.... No matter who protects him, he's no more than yet another Li Wudi. His death is certain!"

He had no choice but to embark upon the path his son had chosen.

Chapter 233 - Over After a Killing

The moon hung beautifully in the sky, casting its light on the two girls standing under it. One was performing a sword dance while the other watched. Fullmoon Blade glowed as Qingyu moved incredibly quickly. With a loud clang, a flash of moonlight shot out and struck down a huge tree. Wearing an androgynous white and black robe and letting her grey hair down, she looked like a moon goddess.

"Qingyu's so handsome," Feiling said enviously. She wanted to perform a sword dance herself, but that was beyond her abilities, thanks to her weak arms.

"Am I as handsome as Big Brother?" Qingyu asked, sheathing her blade.

"Not even close."

"Too bad. For a girl as beautiful as you, Feiling, you sure have rather bad taste," she said, squinting mischievously. Sitting down beside Feiling, she pulled her sleeve up and revealed the five bright moons on her arm.

"Ling'er, I've scoped out what the Pentamoon Skybane is good for," she said.

"Quick, tell me."

"On nights when the moon shines, I can use it to blend with moonlight. The power of moonlight will permeate my surroundings and assimilate into my body, allowing me to infuse it into my beast ki, enhancing it in the process.

"During a full moon such as this, I feel like I'm half a level stronger, almost like when you use Spiritual Attachment on me."

She managed to achieve that on her own. Even though it required moonlight, it was already rather impressive.

"Awesome. You're going to transform into a moon goddess," Feiling said, smiling.

Goddess? Qingyu didn't quite like that term. If it were up to her, she would rather become a demoness. Her sixteenth birthday was tomorrow; it should have been an occasion worthy of celebration, but the marriage contract ruined it.

"Is Big Brother still in the mausoleum?" Qingyu asked.

"He might return tomorrow. Don't worry, he'll definitely be there," Feiling said confidently.

"Thank goodness you two are with me. Otherwise, I don't know how I would've spent the night," Qingyu said with her head lowered. She raised her long, curved blade. "Actually, I've never killed before. I wonder if I'll have to do that tomorrow."

She stared at her blade dazedly.

"Don't worry!" Feiling clasped Qingyu's hand and smiled. "With him around, you won't have to fight. All you have to do is stick close to your big brother."

"Really?" Qingyu felt like she was dreaming. It truly felt good to be spoiled by a big brother. No matter what trouble awaited her tomorrow, she was no longer so fearful. It was merely a matter of life and death, and would be over after a kill.

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"Just a little bit more..." Tianming said with a furrowed brow before Li Shenxiao's tombstone. He didn't manage to reach the second level of Unity like he had expected. It wasn't that he didn't have enough time; he just lacked one final bit of insight.

"It seems like I underestimated the difficulty of cultivating at Unity. No matter how much talent, or how many resources I have, I still have to take it step by step. Each breakthrough at the Unity stage tests the beastmaster's mental synchronization with his lifebound beasts and the degree of their Unity field's resonance. Going from the first level to the second requires not only an increase in strength, but also synchronicity. However, Ying Huo and Meow Meow have different attributes and distinct spiritsources. Having to synchronize between us three will be much harder than just two!"

He had planned to break through to the second level in ten days, but failed. This was the first time he'd tasted failure since he became a decabane, and he would have to leave the mausoleum today, or Qingyu, Jingyu, and Feiling wouldn't be able to deal with the elites from the three other bloodlines.

"I must've been having it too easy. That's why fate threw an obstacle my way.... My Lifesbane."

Tianming looked at the garish characters on his arm. On some level, his tenfold rate of aging affected his cultivation. While he could endure it, his endurance didn't stop Meow Meow and Ying Huo from being affected by it as well. The Unity stage required all three of them to fuse. It wasn't surprising that he failed to advance to the next level, because the three of them failed at precisely that fusion. Notworthily, even though their spiritsources were large enough already, the fusion of their unity fields wasn't up to par.

"Today's fight is too important, far more important than defeating Yuwen Shengcheng. Yet, fate played a trick on me. Then again, I've been dominating my enemies for the past six months."

Had he been able to make a breakthrough today, he was confident in his victory. Now that he had failed, however, he felt frustrated and distraught.

"Perhaps this is only the start of the Lifesbane curse. There might be more coming my way in the future."

Even though he hadn't managed to make a breakthrough, he did receive two new benefits. First, he had made great progress with the Life-Death Whip Art after ten grueling days of training; it was even more difficult than Demise of Heaven, Apocalyptic Will.

Secondly, Ying Huo and Meow Meow had evolved using the profound mannas imperial wing and electric fang, bringing the number of stars in their eyes to eight.

While their star count may not correspond directly to that of other lifebound beasts', as far as the others were concerned, they were no longer low class seven-star lifebound beasts. Their evolution had also helped unlock even more latent power in their bloodlines. The infernalsource and lightningsource had expanded to ten times the size of a normal spiritsource, while Tianming's humongous nexus was now ten times the size of normal nexuses.

Basically, Tianming's spiritsource was already superior to beastmasters with eight-star saint beasts. Additionally, the Aeternal Infernal Body and Genesis Chaos Body further strengthened his physique. The unlocking of more bloodline seals caused the three's abilities to rise even more, with Tianming now comparable to a beastmaster with a saint beast and the little chick and black cat gaining new tricks.

Ying Huo, for instance, had grown longer wings. Now there were a few black patterns marking its yellow wings and covering the bane marks. The new 'imperial wings' were sharp like two swords.

As for Meow Meow, it revealed its enlarged, lightning-charged, sword-like canines when it opened its mouth—electric fangs. Those two powerful mannas were really suited to their current forms. With Ying Huo's Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven and Meow Meow's melee combat improved, Tianming was prepared to face the upcoming challenge despite not having broken through.

"Godfather, Li Xuanyi will be bringing his son to take Qingyu away for the marriage. Will you come along with me?" Tianming asked.

Li Wudi merely rolled over and continued snoring. Tianming didn't say much else and returned to Fatepath Peak. From a distance, he saw a large group of inbound lifebound beasts dotting the skies with the second, third, and fourth patriarchs in the lead. They were dressed for the celebratory occasion and even came along with an escort band.

Given how high profile they were being, they seemed determined to take Qingyu away. Tianming squinted and rapidly zipped to Kunpeng Sacred Hall ahead of their arrival. Standing there, he watched as the whole group arrived and descended with the beastmasters standing tall on their mounts, looking down at him.

Chapter 234 - I'll Give You a Chance to Kill Me

When the group reached Kunpeng Sacred Hall, a few beastmasters leapt off their mounts. The three patriarchs, Li Xuanyi, Li Yansheng, and Li Yunting were in formal attire, but they weren't just here to receive the bride—they were here to forcefully take her.

Behind them were the youths of the three bloodlines. After they descended, they cast their burning gazes toward the only person standing in front of the hall: Tianming. The doors of the hall were currently shut. Right behind Li Xuanyi were two youths, one of which was Li Jincan in his red groom attire. While he had been given some proper grooming, it couldn't really cover up his bloated face and figure, nor his insidious smile.

Li Xuanchen, standing beside him, was dressed in a long light gold robe that matched his golden eyes. His gaze met Tianming's intensely. This foe was bound to be more troublesome than Yuwen Shengcheng.

"Li Tianming, we are here to receive the bride. Please open the doors to the hall and have Qingyu board the palanquin," Li Xuanyi said, smiling slightly.

"Brother-in-law, where's Qingyu? Has she finished dressing up yet?" Li Jincan poked his neck out to look impatiently.

The reason they came with so many people was so that they could take Qingyu by force if they had to. With the marriage contract in hand, they were fully in the right to do so.

Seeing Tianming keep silent, Li Xuanyi said, "It seems that we have to do this the traditional way. Jincan, have some of your fellow brothers here ram the hall doors open. That'll make for a merry occasion."

"Alright, Dad! Guys, come with me! Have your red packets ready and stuff it in!"

Those red packets were filled with precious spirit gems.

"What are these?"

Tianming saw a few grandly decorated chests in front of him.

"Brother-in-law, this is the wedding gift. Come to think of it, is the dowry from your side ready yet?" Li Jincan asked.

"Oh." Tianming nodded, walked to the chests, and kicked them flying one after another. They flew off the cliff and crashed into the boulder, breaking into smithereens and causing the spirit gems within to spill all over.

That action greatly enraged the youths.

"Brother-in-law, have you gone mad?" Li Jincan snapped. How humiliating it was for their wedding gifts to be treated like that! Li Xuanyi, Li Yansheng, and Li Yunting merely looked at one another. What Tianming had done was within their expectations.

"Xuanchen, take him down so your little brother can wed his bride," Li Xuanyi instructed.

"Yes, Father!" Li Xuanchen stepped forward gallantly, followed by the other youths from the three bloodlines.

At that moment, the Kunpeng Sacred Hall's doors opened, revealing Jingyu and Qingyu. Qingyu was dressed in a long white robe and wielded Fullmoon Blade, walking out radiating full killing intent. Jingyu wore a cold expression and held a dragon-head walking stick. When she thrust the stick on the ground, the hall shook.

"Li Xuanyi, an old crone like me doesn't care about your marriage contract. If you want to take my granddaughter away today, you'll have to kill me first. If you can't, I'll make sure the Metal Bloodline ends with your generation. I'll make sure to kill your two sons!" Jingyu's words completely shocked Li Xuanchen and the others, forcing them to retreat back to where they were.

However, there was no way Li Xuanyi hadn't predicted Jingyu's dedication. They had come today, knowing full well that there would be conflict. There was no way they were going to be able to take Qingyu away without a struggle. Either way, they were still in the right because of the agreement.

"Matriarch, you're already old, so please don't push yourself. Putting aside Brother Xuanyi, if you don't obey the marriage contract as it was signed, like a madwoman, I'll have to take you down to save face for the Li Saint Clan," the fourth patriarch, Li Yunting politely said.

"That's right, Matriarch. Please don't be hasty and fight. I worry that I'll accidentally shatter your old bones. I won't want to be held responsible for that," Li Yansheng said.

"Thanks for trying to talk sense on my behalf. However, today is an auspicious day. You two are my honored guests, so how could I trouble you like that? I can handle this myself," Li Xuanyi said.

"Brother Xuanyi is a saint, while the matriarch is already expiring. It would be overkill to have you fight," Li Yunting said.

Their banter was a mere attempt at scaring Jingyu, who couldn't possibly fight those three at her age. Li Xuanyi was already a saint, so he alone would be enough to take her on. He definitely wouldn't give her a chance to lash out, and stepped toward the hall domineeringly.

Li Jincan straightened himself and said, "Matriarch, don't worry. I'll treat Qingyu well."

To the oblivious fool, the cold expression Qingyu wore made her look as beautiful as a fairy. The thought of taking her as his wife made his mouth water. He had built up a lot of pent-up frustration from being refused by too many girls over the years, all of which he had to somehow vent.

"Matriarch, cease this vain effort!" Li Xuanyi said, stepping forward with his domineering saintly aura. He was nothing but a bully! Little did he expect, however, that the person standing up to him wouldn't be Jingyu, but rather the white-haired Tianming, who still managed to glare at him despite being suppressed by the aura. What kind of willpower would that require?

"Li Tianming, do you want a taste of what it means to be a saint?" Li Xuanyi asked.

Tianming's gaze shot past him without much heed. The threat was nothing short of embarrassing, coming from someone of Li Xuanyi's age and status. Instead, Tianming's gaze settled on Li Xuanchen. Despite the pressure, he cracked a sudden, sinister smile.

"Li Xuanchen, today, I will give you a chance to take the Kunpeng Sacred Seal for yourself so that you can become junior sect master."

Those words immediately silenced everyone there.

"Forget it. Qingyu, come with me," Li Xuanyi said. He didn't pay attention to Tianming at all. Instead, his guard was up against Jingyu, the only one who could cause trouble for him.

"What do you mean, Li Tianming?" Li Xuanchen replied with a burning gaze, much to the surprise of Li Xuanyi. He had been planning for Tianming and Yuwen Shengcheng's relationship to worsen to the point Yuwen Shendu would step in to kill him. That was the only way he would be able to get the Kunpeng Sacred Seal back from a pentabane like Li Tianming, which would allow him access into the mausoleum, though that wasn't Li Xuanchen's main goal. What he wanted was to become the head of the Li Saint Clan so that the Metal Bloodline would rule over the clan! The Kunpeng Sacred Seal was the key to his plan. He had planned to wait long to get it, but Tianming was giving him a chance to skip all that.

"It's simple. I will give you a chance to fight me. If you win and kill me, you'll get your seal. If you lose, the marriage contract will be void and all of you have to leave Fatepath Peak. Do you have the balls to take me up on that challenge?"

Chapter 235 - Dedicate My Life to You

Tianming hadn't negotiated his plans with Jingyu and Qingyu beforehand, despite having made his decision days ago.

"How do you pledge to keep your word?" Li Xuanchen asked warily.

"It's simple. I'll just swear an oath here. All I have said is by my own, Li Tianming's will. Matters pertaining to my own life and death are for me to decide. If I die in battle, the Kunpeng Sacred Seal is yours. It would be nobody's fault but my own. Everyone here shall bear witness. If I die, you, Li Xuanchen, shall not be blamed or punished!" Every word of his had been closely considered. He was decisive and generous with his phrasing, as if death was no object to him.

"Very good. Has everyone else heard that?" Li Xuanchen said excitedly. He was elated that Tianming had made that proclamation himself. That way, nobody could say anything about it if Li Xuanchen killed the junior sect master. He would be able to lay claim to the seal boldly and justly. It would be much faster than waiting for someone to kill Tianming for him, not to mention he wouldn't have to give Qingyu to Yuwen Shengcheng. The crowd would be his witness.

"Brother Xuanyi, what do you think?" The two other patriarchs inquired as to Li Xuanyi's opinion. They had come to receive the bride, but it would be a good deal for them to be able to obtain the seal and kill the junior sect master justly. A mere Qingyu couldn't compare to the value of the Kunpeng Sacred Seal, after all.

Li Xuanyi turned back to his passionate eldest son, then to his chubby younger son.

"Dad, what if Big Brother loses?" Li Jincan asked in a troubled manner.

"Shut up!" Li Xuanchen slapped his brother so hard he almost fell off the cliff. He ended up bawling on the ground with a swollen face.

"Li Jincan, watch closely and see how I'm different from a piece of trash like you!" Li Xuanchen spat before he turned to Li Xuanyi.

"Dad, will you agree to it?"

Li Xuanyi didn't know when he had started losing control of his obedient son, but he couldn't deny his fighting spirit, nor his charisma and guts. Today, even if they escorted Qingyu back, they would have to give her to Yuwen Shengcheng for the sake of eventually getting the Kunpeng Sacred Seal. Now that Tianming had offered them a shortcut, how could he not agree?

"Xuanchen, since the junior sect master agrees, I'll give you a chance to challenge him for the Kunpeng Sacred Seal. Since our junior sect master has such high hopes for you and is willing to entrust you with the heavy burden of bearing the seal, you mustn't disappoint him," Li Xuanyi solemnly said, much to his son's delight.

"Dad, don't worry. I'll give the junior sect master the greatest surprise of his life!"

It was set in stone. As neither Jingyu nor Qingyu were part of the conversation, the former looked anxiously at Tianming, who had put his life on the line without any apparent reason for his confidence.

"Granny, give me a chance. My mother taught me to live up to my own conscience and the confidence of others. Since you two have treated me well, I'll use this chance to repay you. I ask your forgiveness for using the seal as a bargaining chip. If I lose, I'll have failed the Li Saint Clan. However, this is a fight I can't walk away from. This is a fight I won't regret!"

"My precious grandson, you're mistaken. I don't care about that damned seal. I only want you to live on." Jingyu couldn't stop her tears from flowing.

"Sheesh, what kind of grandmother has such little faith in their grandson? Just sit there and wait. Let me show you how I'll send those crooks pissing off crying!" Despite his smug smile, the burning passion in his eyes couldn't be hidden. For this family and his sister, death didn't matter to him. In life, one had to live without regrets and pay back others' kindness!

"Ling'er, come."

Currently, Feiling was attached to Qingyu. He turned back and saw his sister's eyes reddening up, so he gave her a pat on the shoulder.

"Big Brother, I dedicate my life to you! I will tear anyone who dares to harm you apart! I promise I'll cultivate with a hundred times the effort to protect my own dignity and my loved ones, and that includes you!" The look in her eyes was just like Tianming's.

"Little girl, relax. Smile for your brother, won't you?" As Tianming spoke, Feiling transferred into his body. The full synchronization caused his blood to boil.

Qingyu managed to squeeze out a hint of a smile.

"That's right, that's the smile I'm looking for. Now, let your big brother show you what it means to crack a skull open!"

He turned away and stepped toward Li Xuanchen with the Grand Thunderflare Sword in hand.

"Move away! Let them fight!" Li Xuanyi ordered. A space was cleared out right in front of the hall.

Li Xuanchen stood before Tianming, clad in golden chain mail that was definitely a grade-six beastial armament. It protected all the vitals around his body. He held a golden lance in his hand and looked just like a golden god of war. The tip of his lance was two-pronged, and it curled like a pair of snakes. His gigantic golden roc descended from the skies to his side; it looked just like Wei Tiancang and the others' Goldrocs, which was probably a sign that the Wei Clan was descended from the Metal Bloodline of the Li Saint Clan. This particular roc boasted an impressive sixteen golden wings, much more than Wei Tiancang's beast that had only had twelve. It was a Sixteen-winged Gold Kungpeng! Not only did it have a Sixteen-winged Goldroc form, it could also transform into a kun with sixteen fins.

The kungpeng flapped its wings, causing the ground to shake. Li Xuanchen pointed his grade-six two-pronged lance, Aurum Twinspike, at Tianming.

"Die!"

He burst with explosive power toward Tianming, alongside his kungpeng. Tianming only had two puny animals on his shoulder, though they looked much more terrifying than before.

"Kill!"

The little chick leapt into the skies while Meow Meow used Regal Chaosfiend to transform into a gigantic thunderbeast of darkness. Its four canines resembled giant swords covered in lightning bolts.

Tianming's bloodshot eyes contrasted against his white hair as he charged into the battlefield.

Chapter 236 - Where was the Bliss in Life or Pain in Death?

A first-level Unity beastmaster was facing off against one at the sixth level. No matter who emerged victorious, this battle was sure to be recorded in the annals of the clan. Li Xuanchen wasn't afraid of being humiliated; he only wanted to use this chance to get the seal, after which he could still take Qingyu for Yuwen Shengcheng.

Before the astonished crowd, the gold-armored youth furiously clashed with the black-clad white-haired Tianming. When his Aurum Field clashed against Tianming's two large fields, it sparked a violent sizzle. It was soon apparent that the Aurum Field was far more powerful and stable.

However, Tianming's two fields and nexuses that mixed infernal flames together with chaos lightning greatly increased the power of the two fields, to the point they were able to resist Aurum Field.

The Sixteen-winged Gold Kunpeng unleashed its spirit-source ability, Sixteen Wing Aegis. It appeared similar to the Infernal Armor, but was far more beautiful. Each of the golden protective wings layered on Li Xuanchen, affording him incredibly dense protection. It did appear stronger than Tianming's own Infernal Armor, whose purpose wasn't strictly defensive, but also ignited the Grand Thunderflare Sword and covered it with infernal flames.

Even with Feiling's aid, Tianming still didn't have the upper hand when it came to beast ki. However, that wasn't necessarily the case in other aspects. At the very least, Feiling's Temporal Field and Spatial Wall abilities were still improving. Temporal Field layered invisibly on top of Tianming's two unity fields, greatly easing the burden on him.

Li Xuanchen, protected by the golden wings, fearlessly attacked Tianming with the Immortal Vajra Spear Technique, a precious and expensive unity-ranked battle art that Yuwen Taiji had personally taught him. He thrust his lance as his kunpeng sent its sixteen sharp wings thrusting out.

Meow Meow was at the very front and would take the brunt of the first onslaught of attacks. However, it charged forward regardless of what the opponent threw at him. Staying hidden atop its head was Ying Huo.

"Die!" The thunderous black beast rammed towards them with abandon with its mouth opened wide, revealing the four lightning-charged fangs.

"Watch this!" The little chick flapped its imperial wings and zipped in front of Li Xuanchen, performing one move after another from the Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven. Despite managing to shake Li Xuanchen's golden shields, they didn't break.

The lance thrust out with an explosive stream of energy that sent the chick flying back.

"Golden Hellscape!" Li Xuanchen ordered and his kunpeng glowed with a brilliant aureate light, causing many watching to be temporarily blinded.

Halfway through the execution of the spirit-source ability, the Regal Chaosfiend leaped onto the kunpeng and bit in, only for its teeth to be blasted apart by the protection of the golden wing shields.

"You are too weak!" Li Xuanchen laughed at how he was basically invincible, working with his lifebound beast. Just as finished, Tianming came out swinging with his Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven.

As the main fighter of the trio, Tianming boasted the strongest combat power. He sent out six consecutive strikes, all the way from Spectral-Dance to Heavenly-Judgment.

He had to admit that Li Xuanchen truly was powerful. Even under Temporal Field's influence, he was far too quick and explosive. His lance thrust out furiously with enough power to pierce the mountains, seas, and skies, and his last thrust even directly clashed against Tianming's Apocalyptic-Will. When he

executed Three Hundred Piercing Mountains, three hundred thrusts fired out. He then used Six Hundred Sea Piercers for another volley of thrusts, then finished with Nine Hundred Sky Breakers. Nine hundred strands of domination pierced the skies before Tianming's eyes, coloring Tianming's vision an endless, dense gold. His sword clashed against the hundreds of lance tips.

In terms of sword intent, Tianming was definitely superior, whereas his opponent dominated in terms of beast ki and unity field. This time, Tianming was suffering not on account of weaker technique or execution, but raw power.

"Die!" Li Xuanchen roared as he gave his lance another thrust, prompting the little chick to swing its small wing out and execute Apocalyptic-Will. Finally, Li Xuanchen's Sixteen Wing Aegis shattered. The little chick managed to parry the strike that would've been fatal for Tianming. Meanwhile, the Sixteen-winged Gold Kunpeng turned into a golden kun with sixteen sharp fins. Faced with the barrage of attacks from the Regal Chaosfiend, it went berserk and sent out golden blade-like waves—essentially a meat grinder—toward Meow Meow.

"Kill it!" Li Xuanchen yelled, smiling savagely at the comeback. He didn't notice that a blood-red silhouette had struck the gold kun at that precise moment.

It was the power of Soul Hook. That whipping strike was so rapid that the gold kun had no way of defending against it at all, and was able to do naught but squeal in pain. It had been rapidly spinning, which only served to make it easier for Archfiend to wrap around its body and embed its spikes into the kun. The force of the spin even dragged Tianming over.

At the most critical moment for Meow Meow, Tianming had struck with Archfiend and intercepted the golden kun's ultimate move. The next instant, Meow Meow exploded with rage and sent a Chaos Voltball towards the kun's mouth, then caused it to explode. Black lightning enveloped the whole kun in an instant, breaking the golden wing shields that had manifested on it just as Li Xuanchen's had been broken.

"How dare you?!" Li Xuanchen shot toward them like a beam of golden light. Little did he know, he would be greeted by a barrage of flaming needles: Ying Huo's Skyscorch Featherblast.

All he could do was block like a maniac, but that didn't stop tens of needles from piercing into his body and immediately causing infernal flames to burn all over him.

"Don't think I'll let you pass!" the little chick said with bloodshot eyes. It had been a long time since it'd faced a foe like that. "I'll burn you to a crisp if you dare touch my brother!" As it said that, it drew the needles that didn't hit their target back to its body and let them blast out once more.

"I'm going to kill you for sure!" Li Xuanchen yelled in agony as he charged toward the little chick, who immediately turned tail and ran, though Li Xuanchen would soon catch up to it with his speed.

At that instant, his lifebound beast let out a horrible shriek. Li Xuanchen turned back to look and saw that Tianming had cut off one of the kunpeng's wings. The kunpeng had turned into its roc form and tried to fly into the sky, only to be slammed to the ground by Archfiend and pulled toward Tianming. One Hell-Shaker later, the wing had come off.

That didn't stop Li Xuanchen from his pursuit.

However, while he could definitely get the little chick given a bit of time, would he be able to defend his kunpeng? The moment he turned back to the little chick, he saw a flash of blood red in front of him.

Nine Hundred Sky Breakers! A crisp sound rang out as weapons collided. The bloody, snaky object came attacking once more, much to Li Xuanchen's surprise.

"I will tear you into a million pieces!"

A beam of golden light darted toward Tianming. Li Xuanchen's lance strikes were too forceful, easily breaking through Feiling's Spatial Walls. Tianming had Ying Huo and Meow Meow take care of the injured Sixteen-winged Gold Kunpeng while he pinned it to the ground. Flames burned in his left eye and lightning crackled in his right.

"Li Xuanchen, I have to admit you're much stronger than I imagined. You made me understand how endless the path of cultivation is, and how much I still have to learn. I admit that I'm not your match, but I also want to thank you for making me realize that there are many ways victory can be obtained on the battlefield other than raw power!"

On the endless path with countless experts, pride was the greatest pitfall!

"Only raw power and cultivation decides life or death! Since you're weak, you deserve to die!" Li Xuanchen bellowed.

"Is that so? Then I'll show you what undying willpower looks like!" Tianming's Soul Hook had struck the kunpeng, and his next move agilely snaked around. Each time he was sent stumbling back by Li Xuanchen, he stood up and found more wounds on his body. However, his bloodied figure was proof that he wouldn't fall. Li Xuanchen couldn't kill him!

"As long as I'm here today, none of you can take Qingyu away. I won't let you, because she's my little sister and family. Unless I die, you will not be able to touch my family. Otherwise, crooks like you shall be beset by countless disasters!"

Soul Hook or Apocalyptic-Will didn't matter. The strongest thing in this world wasn't techniques, but rather fighting spirit. Tianming hadn't died in the past three years, and had managed to kill Lin Xiaoting within two hours before an audience of thousands. He had completely changed. Nobody knew how truly cold he had felt during those two hours. At the very end, he had even smiled as Lin Xiaoting breathed his last breath under his blade.

He had truly turned into a demon at that moment.

On that day, he had said that his emotions were his inner demons, and he couldn't outrun them. As long as he couldn't stop his blood from boiling, he wouldn't be able to stop being influenced by his emotions, whether they be love, friendship, familial affection, gratitude, or protectiveness. All those things formed the person that was Tianming. He didn't fear death, for where was the bliss in life and pain in death?

If he was to die, he would go out with a bang.

However, he had made a pledge on that day to kill, but never be killed. That was his will to defy fate itself! As such, he didn't fear foes like Li Xuanchen, who were stronger than him. He was brimming with sword ki as he broke free from his chains.

The black and gold figures clashed and exploded into a fight in front of Kunpeng Sacred Hall. It seemed that Tianming would be getting pretty beat up today; however, his spirit burned with passion to the point that his gaze sent chills down Li Xuanchen's spine. He had never seen anything like this... it was as if the most savage of beasts had been angered from having its fur or scales ruffled.

While he might not have been that worried about it in the beginning, he eventually felt fear as the fierce gaze remained locked on to him the entire time. Not to mention, he still hadn't managed to kill Tianming. Every time he got close, he would be intercepted and the enemy would grow even more ferocious.

"Die!" Li Xuanchen's thrust broke through Tianming's Infernal Armor and struck him on the shoulder, embedding the tip of the lance three centimeters deep. While the lance was caught on his bone, Tianming grabbed it with his other hand. Li Xuanchen had wanted to pierce the lance through his heart, but froze when he saw Tianming smile.

A gigantic shadow suddenly appeared and slammed Li Xuanchen to the ground, then blasting a Chaos Voltball his way, electrocuting him so badly that he turned black from the shock. His ear-piercing shriek echoed through the air. In the next moment, his body was wrapped in chains. His golden chain mail couldn't protect his entire body, so the spikes of Archfiend found their way through the weak points in his armor.

Li Xuanchen yelled as he exploded with beast ki. He shivered, feeling the spikes embedded deep in his body. The more he struggled, the deeper the spikes would dig their way into him.

"Stop struggling, loser."

When Li Xuanchen looked up, he saw Tianming holding the Grand Thunderflare Sword against his heart.

"Your next move might just kill you."

When he saw the white-haired youth's smile, he shivered and ceased all motion. Looking in the distance, he saw his bloodied lifebound beast on the ground and a blood-covered chick standing on top of its head, mockingly chuckling in Li Xuanchen's direction.

Li Xuanchen had completely lost, and felt true fear. Losing wasn't the terrifying part; admitting his loss was. What was worse was that Tianming motioned toward his two lifebound beasts after restraining Li Xuanchen with Archfiend and manifested his unity field, actually beginning to train in front of Li Xuanchen.

He even smiled and said, "Li Xuanchen, I have to thank you for helping me comprehend the Unity stage even deeper. The essence of this stage is the beastmaster fighting alongside his beasts, counting on one another with their lives on the line. I've finally gained insight and am about to make a breakthrough!"

It was finally time for him to advance to the second level of Unity. What infuriated Li Xuanchen even more was that Tianming hadn't defeated him after his breakthrough, but rather before. If he had broken through during the battle, Li Xuanchen would've been more convinced of his loss. Instead, it had happened in the opposite order!

It didn't help that he couldn't move at all while Tianming was training, or he would risk even more spikes piercing into him.

Tianming was only a step away from breaking through before the battle. When he linked hearts with his lifebound beasts, he managed to make his breakthrough and step into the next level in only ten breaths of time.

He was now stronger than ever before, much to Li Xuanchen's admiration.

Seeing the youth growing stronger, Li Xuanchen felt powerless and spat out a mouthful of blood. He then slumped to the ground, struggling to find the tears he didn't have from the sheer shock he felt.

Kunpeng Sacred Hall was completely silent. The crowd's shocked gazes mirrored that of Li Xuanchen.

Chapter 237 - Hot-blooded Youth, Standing Brave and Tall

How in the world did a first-level Unity beastmaster defeat one at the sixth level, then break through after the battle? It was one of the things that nobody would believe unless they had witnessed it with their own eyes. As for the patriarchs of the three bloodlines, they were completely dumbfounded to see Li Xuanchen fall and shudder at Tianming's feet.

Their mouths were agape and their expressions pale. Many youths from the three bloodlines gasped in disbelief as their legs began unconsciously shaking with fear.

All of them had clearly seen it. Initially, Li Xuanchen held the upper hand and put his prowess as the top genius of the Li Saint Clan on full display, and yet he had still lost in the end. In that battle to the death, the dedication, fighting spirit, and ferocity Tianming showed were the keys to his victory, not to mention his two lifebound beasts. In a chaotic fight like that, Tianming had the advantage in numbers.

He had managed to cut off one of the kunpeng's sixteen wings, and was even able to resist Li Xuanchen's barrage of attacks until his lifebound beasts could come to his aid. The two beasts also performed magnificently in battle, working alongside Tianming with praiseworthy teamwork. The crowd was stunned, not from unwillingness to accept the outcome, but rather from the sheer shock that they had been convinced by Tianming's victory.

Even though Tianming was wounded and had a bloody hole on his shoulder, that didn't take away from his domination of Li Xuanchen one bit. The blood covering him only made him look more sinister.

"Tianming, my grandson!"

Hearing that, the crowd thought the matriarch had gone mad. She was jumping around like a lively young girl, despite her age.

"That was a swift victory! O hot-blooded youth, standing brave and tall, never yield! Your performance astonished even an old crone like me! You of the three bloodlines, do you see it now? This is the descendant of the Apex Branch! Your useless progeny can't even compare to my grandson! Hahaha!"

Jingyu laughed so loudly with her hands on her hips that those from the three bloodlines felt a ringing in their ears. What was worse was they had no retort for it, but could do nothing other than look down in embarrassment. Li Xuanchen was the only direct disciple of a sect elder in the clan, Yuwen Taiji, and was among the best the clan had to offer. How could Tianming even compare?

Today had to be the most relaxing day for Jingyu, to say nothing about Qingyu, who was already tearing up. Tianming had given her a lesson today about the willpower of an avenger. This battle would leave an

imprint on her for the rest of her life, though its main purpose was still the annulment of the marriage contract. He stomped on Li Xuanchen and turned to glare at Li Xuanyi.

"Second Patriarch, please heed our previous agreement to void my sister's marriage contract. From now on, that matter shall never be brought up ever again," he said, emphasizing each word.

Everyone's gaze turned to Li Xuanyi. Ever since Li Xuanchen was defeated, the three patriarchs had kept quiet. Li Xuanyi's lip trembled, possibly from the doubts and worries only he was privy to.

The son he was proudest of was actually defeated by someone at the first level of Unity, who then proceeded to break through to the second level while his own son was beneath his feet. Forget half a year; it seemed like he wouldn't need more than half a month to reach the third level! How could Li Xuanyi be happy with how this turned out?

"Li Xuanchen was the one who made that bet with you, not me. Li Tianming, the marriage contract has the elders' signature on it, and shall not be voided. Doing so would be disrespecting the elder who signed it!" Li Xuanyi argued.

"Is that so?" Tianming smiled and tightened Archfiend.

"Gaaaaah!" Li Xuanchen groaned in agony as the spikes easily pierced his flesh.

"Time is running out. Piss me off and I'll crush his spirit sources. Regret will be pointless by then!" Tianming removed a spike from Archfiend and placed it against Li Xuanchen's chest.

"Dad! Stop fooling around! Save me, Dad!" Li Xuanchen said, panicked. If his spirit sources were crippled, it would be over for him.

Li Xuanyi's face darkened as his eyes filled with killing intent. "You know what'll happen if you threaten me! Nobody in the Li Saint Clan will be able to save you!"

"Looks like you like to talk a lot of crap."

Li Xuanyi thought that he could threaten Tianming on account of being a senior, but he was dead wrong. Tianming raised his spike and thrust it toward Li Xuanchen's spirit source.

"Stop!" Li Xuanyi helplessly yelled as he held out the marriage contract in hand.

"Dad, no! Not my marriage contract!" Li Jincan bawled and threw a tantrum on the ground. A chubby fellow like him could really cause the ground to shake a little with his sheer mass.

"Granny, please check and see if it's the real thing," Tianming said.

Li Xuanyi tossed the contract to their feet. Since it had been signed by an elder, he wouldn't dare to tear it to shreds himself. Jingyu, hand shaking, picked it up and recognized the signature of the elder.

"It's real!" she said agitatedly, then proceeded to publicly tear the contract apart. Tianming and Qingyu, seeing the deed done, relaxed. All these years, she had been afraid of her sixteenth birthday. But from now on, she was free to soar in the skies like a caged bird that had suddenly been released.

"Sonny, are you badly hurt? Let Granny treat your wounds," Jingyu said with a pained look.

"I'm fine. They're only flesh wounds." He could easily heal from them, given his body's regenerative capabilities.

"Li Tianming, release him now!" Li Xuanyi bellowed. As long as Li Xuanchen was still in Tianming's hands, there wasn't much he could do. But there was no way someone of his status would just leave like that. He was the strongest in the Li Saint Clan, yet he was threatened with his son's life; he would never be able to live it down if he didn't regain some face.

"Will you obediently leave if I let him go and stop causing us trouble?" Tianming asked. He was more careful than anyone else. Knowing Li Xuanyi's character, he definitely wouldn't mind giving Tianming a sound beating if there were no witnesses around.

"Enough nonsense! Let him go now!" Li Xuanyi said, his golden eyes glowing.

Tianming smirked. "Granny, can you tell Elder Ye Qing that the marriage contract has been voided by them of their own accord?"

While the marriage contract was still valid, it wouldn't be appropriate for the Ye Clan elder to step in and stop Li Xuanyi. But now, it was different. Tianming was confident the elder would stand on his side.

"There's no need. We are here."

All of a sudden, three experts stepped out from the forest surrounding Fatepath Peak and walked toward the crowd.

Chapter 238 - Chief Prime Disciple of Azure Immortal Sword Mountain

When Tianming saw the elders appear, he relaxed, knowing that his role was over. They were there the whole time, chiefly because they wanted to see if Tianming was truly a pentabane.

The one leading the three was a green-robed middle-aged man who stood tall and sported some white hair at his temples. He was none other than Elder Ye Qing, one of the thirty three elders in the council. Beside him was a smiling white-robed youth wielding a folding fan. He was Exalted Master Ye Shaoqing, Ye Qing's son. To their right was a woman dressed in traditional robes. While she was no doubt a beauty, her aura was fierce and heroic. Tianming had met her before; she was Sacred Mountain Chief Ye Yuxi, the younger twin sister of Ye Shaoqing.

The Ye Clan of the Grand-Orient Sect was dubbed the Clan of the Azure Dragon. Back in the day, they were second to only the Li Saint Clan. Nowadays, they had declined considerably. Now, the top three of their clan were present.

The Clan of the Azure Dragon was the only one that dared to care for the Li Saint Clan after their downfall. With the three of them now here, Fatepath Peak was safe.

"Greetings, Elder Ye, Exalted Master Ye, and Mountain Chief Ye," Tianming and Qingyu greeted respectfully.

"Tianming, let Xuanchen go," Ye Qing said.

"Understood." Now that the elder was here, Li Xuanchen was worthless as a hostage. After Archfiend was untangled, Li Xuanchen, bloodied all over, crawled back to his father's side.

It went without saying that Li Xuanyi grimaced the entire time, unable to do a thing to retaliate after his son was let go. All he could do was greet Elder Ye Qing.

"Li Xuanyi," Ye Qing said with his arms behind his back, his intimidating power stunning all.

"Yes, Elder," Li Xuanyi said with his head lowered.

"As the only saint in the Li Saint Clan, you should know that the appearance of a pentabane is a blessing from your ancestors. Yet not only did you not protect him, you even tried to suppress and kill him for the sake of your own ambitions over your son's future. You don't embody the burning spirit of your ancestors at all. All I can say is that I'm hugely disappointed in you." Every word was enough to make Li Xuanyi's scalp tingle.

"Elder, I have made a mistake." After Li Xuanyi knelt, Li Yansheng and the others followed suit.

"There is no need for this. You aren't affiliated with Azure Immortal Mountain, so I have no authority over you. You're beholden to nobody but yourself for your actions. However, I feel the need to remind you that Li Tianming and Li Qingyu are disciples of Azure Immortal Mountain. Since I said I would protect them, you'd better not touch them. Otherwise, there will be consequences," he said with a hint of killing intent.

"Yes, Elder! This humble Xuanyi understands his mistakes!" he said in a panic. Never would he imagine that after that battle, everyone in the three bloodlines would be robbed of their chance to deal with Tianming. The only way he could be killed was if he died at the hands of the Yuwen Clan. At the very least, the three bloodlines' harassment of those living in Fatepath Peak would no longer be tolerated.

"Just be conscious of your actions and their consequences." The elder waved and no longer bothered with him. Turning around and looking at Tianming, he cracked a slight smile. "I witnessed the whole battle just now. Tianming, you have shown yourself to possess guts befitting of the Li Saint Clan, as well as your power as a pentabane. I'd thought that setting a challenge for you to break through to the third level of Unity would be proof enough that you were a pentabane, but now that you managed to reach the second level in merely half a month, it's only a matter of time until you reach the third. No matter what others say, I believe that you're a pentabane without a doubt."

His words were just as good as conclusive for the rest of the clan. From now on, Tianming's pentabane status would no longer be a matter of doubt even for Li Xuanhe, Li Chenhong, or the rest of the Wind Bloodline, who were watching from afar.

"Thank you, Elder!" Tianming said. He was helped by the elder yet again.

"I didn't do anything. You've proven yourself and won their respect. Frankly speaking, I can see the shadow of the Li Saint Clan's ancestors on you." The more the elder looked at Tianming, the more satisfied he became.

"You flatter me, Elder." Tianming had never thought his fight for Qingyu's freedom would end with so many benefits. He glanced up and saw Ye Shaoqing and Ye Yuxi's approving gazes.

"Elder, I heard Shaoqing will be accepting an appointment from the council to become one of the thirty-three elders today," Jingyu said.

"That's right. We will be heading there in a moment."

"Congratulations, Elder! The Ye Clan now has two elders in the council!" Jingyu cheered. The stronger the Ye Clan was, the safer the Li Saint Clan would be.

"Matriarch Li, there's also something I'd like to congratulate you on," Ye Shaoqing said as he fanned himself.

"Me?" Jingyu hadn't the slightest clue what he was referring to.

"That's right. After I become an elder, the council will give me Azure Dragon Sword Mountain. I still don't have any direct disciples myself, so I'm planning to take in two direct disciples for a good start," he said with a wink.

"Two direct disciples...."

Even Li Xuanyi couldn't help but look up in shock. In the whole of the Li Saint Clan, there was only one direct disciple: Li Xuanchen. The rank of a direct disciple is second to only that of a prime disciple. Direct disciples didn't just enjoy cultivation resources, they also had the protection of an elder. And who would dare mess with a disciple an elder spent so much effort to guide and train?

In other words, Li Xuanyi wouldn't be able to casually mess with Tianming or Qingyu, or he'd be directly provoking an elder.

Direct disciples were completely different from inner disciples, who numbered in the tens of thousands. In each generation, there could only be less than ten direct disciples. Even Ye Ziyi wasn't able to become one.

Currently, Ye Shaoqing didn't have any disciples, so his first two were crucial. All this time, many had tried to recommend their children for the post, but he had refused them all—including his own elder brother, who had sent his daughter, Ye Ziyi, to be tested. It was clear that he held really high regard for his prospective disciples, as any elder would, since the first disciple's standard, in a way, represented the reputation of the elder.

A bad first disciple would only bring humiliation.

"Shaoqing, who are you going to take in as your direct disciples?" Jingyu said, her eyes beaming with hope. Ye Shaoqing had congratulated her, after all. Could it really be?

Everyone's gazes fell on Tianming and Qingyu.

Chapter 239 Come To My Room Tonigh

Under everyone's attention, Ye Shaoqing smiled at Tianming. Shaking his fan, he said, "Li Tianming, the position of junior sect master obviously means a lot to you. But what if I offer you the identity of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain's senior disciple? Are you willing to accept it?"

Sure enough, everyone else had foreseen this—the new sect elder wanted to make Tianming his senior disciple! It all made sense.

After all, the talent of a pentabane, coupled with Tianming's performance today, was enough to impress the elder. The only thing that might stop Ye Shaoqing was the insoluble hatred between Li Wudi and the Yuwen family. Although Ye Shaoqing didn't seem to have considered this point, Tianming was well aware the opposite was true.

And now that he had considered it, he was still willing to accept Tianming as his disciple. What boldness and vision he displayed!

Ye Shaoqing was very capable, having just been named the youngest elder; all in all, he was a man with a promising future. Even if he was just an elder, Tianming wouldn't hesitate. What was there to contemplate, since Ye Shaoqing not only respected him, but was also willing to defend him?

Thus, without the slightest hesitation, he said, "Disciple greets master!"

Life was truly interesting. Back then, he hadn't become Mu Yang's disciple, and he had certainly never expected to come to the Grand-Orient Sect and meet a master like Ye Shaoqing.

"Young man, patience! There's no point in worshipping now. Pack up your belongings tonight, then head to Azure Dragon Sword Mountain tomorrow for the formal ceremony," replied Ye Shaoqing.

"Yes, sir!"

As the saying goes, once a teacher, always a father. Tianming knew that he had good talent, but he was never impetuous, nor did he overestimate his own strength. Meeting Ye Shaoqing was a blessing.

He was now filled with respect for the man, especially since he had accepted him as a disciple despite Tianming's special status. More importantly, Ye Shaoqing's actions represented his thoughts and stance on the matter.

A master-disciple relationship was equivalent to sharing weal and woe, even life and death. With how generous and kind Ye Shaoqing was, could an appreciative man such as Tianming be any less grateful? Although he hadn't said much, Tianming regarded the three Ye family members as benefactors.

Tianming could sense envy emanating from the Li Saint Clan disciples. Their gazes held no contempt or mockery, only envy and awe. In the Grand-Orient Sect, the position of junior sect master might be a joke, but being the senior disciple of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain was undoubtedly an honor!

"Tianming, you must thank your master. With a master, you'll have someone looking out for you in the future," said Li Jingyu, with tears in her eyes. In the beginning, if someone had dared accept Li Wudi as a disciple, the family wouldn't have been reduced to this.

In fact, Ye Qing felt guilty about it. Back then, Li Wudi had seemed destined to be his disciple. But due to certain events, estrangement grew between them. Moreover, Li Wudi was easygoing and carefree by nature, making him unpopular with the elders, unlike the calm, stable Tianming.

With an elder's support and Tianming's official status as a disciple, his place in the Grand-Orient Sect was firmly cemented.

"We share the fate of master-disciple, so there's no need for thanks. Your future achievements will depend on destiny," said Elder Ye Qing.

Tianming nodded, though he was curious about who Ye Shaoqing would accept as his second disciple. Qingyu, perhaps? As far as he recalled, Qingyu had once mentioned the goal Ye Shaoqing had set for her—to reach sixth-level Unity before seventeen. With her present talent, it wouldn't be a problem at all; she was only a level away.

"Qingyu, when you defeated Ye Ziyi the other day, I was watching," Ye Shaoqing smiled.

"Exalted Master," Qingyu lowered her head, failing to hide the excitement in her eyes.

"You're calm and willing to suffer hardships. For more than ten years, you relied on yourself and moved step by step to your current achievements. And you've always been the most serious disciple in class. I watched you grow up, and with your character, I'm certain you'll do well in the future. As the saying goes, heaven rewards diligence. I didn't give Ye Ziyi a chance, because I firmly believe that her heart is impetuous and she lacks the will of the strong. Although her talent is no worse than yours, teaching her will be a challenge. On the other hand, you're a dedicated, unpolished gem. Thus, I'm willing to make you my second disciple. Will you accept my offer?"

Ye Shaoqing was a straightforward man, unafraid of publicly listing the differences between Ye Ziyu and Qingyu. His words reflected his observation that spanned many years. Due to his decision, contradictions had arisen between the brothers, causing no lack of frustration. However, his standards and criteria remained unchanged.

He made himself clear; if anything, they could go to his father and make Ye Ziyi a direct disciple. Accepting one's grandchildren as direct disciples, regardless of their talents, was something many elders within the sect practiced. However, the Ye family had always taken a different approach to such matters. Unable to stand firm against his eldest son and granddaughter's pestering, Ye Qing had promised to make Ye Ziyu his direct disciple. If it weren't for that, Ye Shaoqing's offer to make Qingyu his disciple might have caused an uproar.

Privy to such details, Qingyu was far more excited than Tianming, because this was the greatest affirmation of her efforts. As soon as Ye Shaoqing finished speaking, she nodded fervently, too delighted to speak.

"Very well then. Continue to work hard in the future, so you don't disappoint me or your parents," Ye Shaoqing patted her on the shoulder.

"Yes, master. I will!" Qingyu

Naturally, Tianming was happy for her. However, Ye Shaoqing had made a mistake; Ye Ziyu's talent was certainly incomparable to Qingyu!

"Alright, come to Azure Dragon Sword Mountain tomorrow for the ceremony," Ye Shaoqing chuckled. He had to drop by the council of elders and make his official appearance.

"Goodbye master, Elder Ye and Chief Ye," bowed Qingyu.

"What a lovely young woman," praised Ye Yuxi. She couldn't help looking toward Kunpeng Sacred Hall, only to discover a drunk man standing at the entrance. With a flask in one hand, he stroked his round belly with the other, smiling wickedly at Ye Yuxi.

"Beautiful, make sure to wash up before you visit my room to serve me."

Beads of cold sweat dotted Ye Yuxi's forehead. "Get lost!" she roared.

"Hey, what a fierce beauty! Me likey," laughed the drunk man.

Ye Shaoqing looked up, his gaze falling upon the man. Smiling faintly, he nodded, then whizzed away with his father and sister.

The drunk man was none other than Li Wudi.

"Father!" shouted Qingyu as she ran toward him, arms open for an embrace.

"Get away from me. You stink! Don't you dare sully my clean, sweet-scented body!"

With that, Li Wudi hurried back to the Li Mausoleum, leaving a silly Qingyu behind. Had her father just rejected her for being too stinky?

"You're the one smelling of alcohol and body odor. You've not taken a bath for hundreds of years, you stinky man!" Qingyu retorted.

Dealing with one such father was difficult enough. Fortunately, Tianming and Ye Shaoqing were different.

1. A teacher is as respected as a father.

Chapter 240 Yuwen Shengcheng Soars In Strength!

The three bloodlines returned home in shame. Li Xuanyi and Li Xuanchen sat on the back of a giant kunpeng, their expressions growing uglier by the minute.

"Li Tianming stepped all over me and is now valued by Ye Shaoqing! He's become a direct disciple, so not even you can do anything to him!" Li Xuanchen gritted his teeth. The moment Ye Shaoqing had accepted Tianming as his disciple, Li Xuanchen's features twisted into an ugly grimace.

Li Xuanyi was ashen. "We've been thoroughly embarrassed today!" He couldn't blame his son; Li Xuanchen hadn't performed poorly. It was Tianming who had performed too well. As a result, he was now more miserable than his son.

The bet they had agreed upon in the past was completely abolished today. Not only had he made a fool of himself, he'd even given Tianming an opportunity to step on them and affix himself to the Ye family.

Vexation, depression, and bitterness weighed on his chest like a heavy stone. And to top it all off, Li Xuanchen had suffered multiple injuries. Li Jincan's incessant sobbing sounded from a distance.

"If he keeps making a fuss, I'll cut off his tongue!" threatened Li Xuanchen.

"That's enough!" yelled Li Xuanyi.

Well aware that he had messed up today, Li Xuanchen composed himself.

"Why is the Ye family so bold? Are they planning to go against the Yuwen family? Especially that Ye Shaoqing! I heard it was Yuwen Taiji who first guaranteed his position as sect elder. Now that he's achieved his goal, he turned his back on them?" Li Xuanyi couldn't quite comprehend.

"The Ye family has always been close to the Li Saint Clan, especially the Apex Branch. It's been the case for many generations. Is it true the Ye family's rise to power was assisted by the Li Saint Clan? Perhaps the servility in their bones is at work!" Li Xuanyi mocked, sounding as if he wasn't part of the Li Saint Clan.

"Ye Shaoqing was once good friends with Li Wudi, while Ye Yuxi pursued Li Wudi for a while. When Li Wudi chose to marry Mu He, it led to a period of time when the two parties were at odds. Later on, Elder Ye Qing must've felt sorry that Li Wudi was crippled, hence the support he's showing Tianming. However, the Yuwen family of the past is completely different from the present! Ye Shaoqing is incomparable to Yuwen Taiji. Looks like the Ye family is lost in the illusion of the past, thinking they're still the second greatest family. Just wait and see; they won't end up too well. Just because Li Tianming has become Ye Shaoqing's direct disciple doesn't mean he can sit back and relax. Right now, the Yuwen family can't be bothered to deal with a nobody. But the moment they decide to pay attention, he's dead!"

Father and son were speaking with crimson eyes.

"Xuanchen, find a way to add fuel to the fire on Yuwen Shengcheng's end," Li Xuanyi's eyes flashed with coldness.

"Father, don't worry. I'm best at this sort of thing. Yuwen Shengcheng is still waiting for me at home," replied Li Xuanchen.

Yuwen Shengcheng was ready to replace Li Jincan on his wedding night. How could he have predicted their failure?

Arriving back at Goldgleam Mountain, Li Xuanchen endured his injuries and went straight to meet Yuwen Shengcheng.

The Yuwen scion waited anxiously. If one looked closely, his mouth appeared empty, his four front teeth knocked out so he spoke each word with a lisp. The thirteen-year-old boy's eyes were brimming with malevolence.

After waiting for so long, his patience had long run out.

"Li Xuanchen, you're back. Where is she?" greeted Yuwen Shengcheng.

"There's been a slight hiccup. Listen to me. I'll tell you everything," explained Li Xuanchen.

"You failed?" Fuming, Yuwen Shengcheng pushed him away. "Are you an idiot? Can't you handle something so simple?"

Having his front teeth knocked out in front of all the beauties in the Abyssal Battlefield was so embarrassing he couldn't help shaking at the thought of it. Only when Li Qingyu was trembling beneath his feet could he forget the hatred in his heart!

"Listen to what I have to say..." Li Xuanchen began describing the incident.

"Ye Shaoqing accepted him as his disciple? Is the Ye family planning to challenge the Yuwen family?" sneered Yuwen Shengcheng.

"Shengcheng, I think this is no trivial matter. You must return and inform your elders. We can't allow Li Tianming to rise. As a pentabane, his talent is extraordinary. You must inform your father, so he acts at once," urged Li Xuanchen.

"Rest assured, my father is well-informed. He probably knows all about it by now. You don't have to be so nervous. Even if Li Tianming's talent is outstanding, he'll only end up dead if he continues annoying us. Li Wudi's past is a lesson. Look at how easily my father dealt with him!" Yuwen Shengcheng gloated.

"In fact, your father doesn't have to do anything. If your brother is willing to stand up for you and teach Li Tianming a lesson, all it'll take is one move from him." At the thought of Yuwen Shengcheng's brother, Li Xuanchen was filled with admiration.

"My brother's lifebound beast has evolved into a fourth-order saint beast. He's too proud to ever consider any disciple in the Grand-Orient Sect a worthy opponent. It won't be easy to get his help. However, in a few days time, my father will evolve my lifebound beast into a second-order saint beast. I'll strive for a breakthrough at the time and reach sixth-level Unity. When that happens, neither you nor Li Tianming will be my opponents!"

"Second-order saint beast?" Li Xuanchen was envious. "With a second-order saint beast, as well as a breakthrough, crushing Li Tianming will be all too easy."

In a short span of time, the thirteen-year-old boy had caught up to him.

"In terms of strength, there's nothing to worry about. More importantly, what about my Qingyu?" Yuwen Shengcheng irritably demanded.

"Don't worry. Although Li Qingyu has also become a disciple of Azure Dragon Sword Mountain, she won't always remain on the mountain. Shengcheng, just wait for me to come up with a perfect solution. When the time comes, there's no way Li Qingyu can escape. What can she do once you've bedded her?"

"Isn't she now a direct disciple? Will it bring us trouble?" Yuwen Shengcheng asked.

"I have a hundred different ways to keep her mouth shut so she's too afraid to say anything! I'll make sure she's your exclusive property," Li Xuanchen said with a cold snort.

"Is that so?"

"There's only one thing I require, which has a wonderful use. I'll inform you as soon as I obtain it," persuaded Li Xuanchen.

"What is it?"

"I'll keep it to myself for now."

"Alright then, I'll leave it to you to handle."

Li Xuanchen didn't care about the risks. All he wanted was for Tianming and the Yuwen family to come to a violent confrontation. When that happened, he would happily reap the benefits.

Anyway, Yuwen Shengcheng was carried away by anger and desire, unaware he was blinded by emotion.

Tomorrow, Tianming would officially worship his master on Azure Dragon Sword Mountain, leaving Li Xuanchen fewer opportunities to obtain the Kunpeng Sacred Seal.

He had no retreat.