

The Ages 91

Chapter 91 - Mystery of Flameyellow Rock

“Ling’er.” Li Tianming approached her. “I didn’t scare you, did I?”

“Nope. I support big brother on this. She was the one who suggested the bet, and she bore vile intentions, so it was only natural she upheld it,” Jiang Feiling said.

So, it did turn out there were people who saw reason. The more Li Tianming interacted with her, the more he realised she wasn’t the foolish young girl her appearance suggested her to be. She had her own principles and views.

In this situation, if Li Tianming had lost, would Wei Lingxuan have looked the other way?

“Big brother, would you like to try if the two of us together can challenge peak synchronisation?” Jiang Feiling asked.

“We’ll know when we give it a shot.” Li Tianming looked at the Flameyellow Rock.

If Li Tianming challenging level four synchronisation and making Wei Lingxuan pay the price was a sensational affair, then what was challenging the peak synchronisation no one had accomplished in over a thousand years?

No one expected Li Tianming to continue walking towards the Flameyellow Rock. In the first place, they couldn’t understand how his talent was sufficient to achieve level four synchronisation. Considering his age and cultivation stage, even level one would be impressive enough.

Yet, he had the guts to challenge the peak that generations of Heaven’s Sanctum geniuses had failed to scale. That was why when he revealed his desire to try, he only drew mockery to himself.

“If it was Lin Xiaoting, it might still be reasonable. He’s the closest to it after all.”

“Lin Xiaoting attempted it once after obtaining the Saintbeast War-Soul, but failed within thirty breaths of time. That just goes to show how hard it is.”

“Li Tianming got level four synchronisation probably by a fluke. Yet, he still wants to go further? Those who don’t know how to quit when they’re ahead always suffer.”

“Honestly, with his age, he’ll never catch up to the standard of Heaven’s Sanctum even with level four synchronisation. It’s wasted on him.”

Even though Wei Lingxuan had left, the Flameyellow Pagoda was still bustling with activity. They had been planning to return to their cultivation, but Li Tianming and Jiang Feiling’s conversation had put an end to that.

Now, many youths watched Li Tianming, mockery in their eyes, as Jiang Feiling used Spiritual Attachment on him and merged together.

To be honest, many were envious of this. Who wouldn’t want to be so intimate with Vermilion Bird’s number one beauty?

The title of 'number one beauty' wasn't something Jiang Feiling had conferred on herself, but rather from her many admirers who had taken her to be a celestial being. The country was vast and filled with numerous beauties, but she was the only one who seemed like a fairy from the heavens.

After the Spiritual Attachment, Li Tianming underwent some fundamental changes. Without another word, the little chick and him walked back to the fourth ring.

What lay beyond was the fifth ring, which was so close to the Flameyellow Rock that it could be touched. It didn't have a large area, but the spiritual energy storm there could only be described as horrifying.

And Li Tianming fearlessly stepped in.

"He really went in!" Honestly, Li Tianming's sheer fearlessness did make them feel some grudging respect that they couldn't hide from their faces.

"He really isn't afraid of dying..."

As soon as Li Tianming stepped in, he could feel the storm. He was only three metres from the rock now. No one had encroached here for so long that he was like fresh meat to the Flameyellow Rock. The storm, seemingly carrying apocalyptic might, crashed forward!

Li Tianming felt like his body was being ripped apart.

"It's a little uncomfortable, big brother." Even Jiang Feiling, who was in spirit form, could feel it.

"Let's endure it together." Li Tianming's tone had a reassuring quality to it.

"Alright."

"Flirting? Did you two forget I'm here?" the little chick snapped. Alas, he really had been forgotten. That was the cruel reality of things.

Li Tianming smiled. He could still hold on. He considered for a moment, before deciding to press on. "Spirit ore with ten millennia old black heavenly patterns...what mysteries could this symbol of the institute have?"

He was very curious. While only three metres separated man from rock, it took an inexorably long time to cross it. Pushing and straining, an untold amount of time had passed when he finally reached it. His hand reached out, its target the rock, and the audience outside — which was on the periphery of his attention now — began to stir.

However, Li Tianming didn't care. After all, it would be a waste if he didn't touch those black heavenly markings after coming all the way here. The spiritual energy storm that had battered at him the whole time was actually generated by this very rock; at his current position, his organs were already on the verge of rupturing.

Fortunately, however, Jiang Feiling's Spiritual Attachment seemed to be stabilising Li Tianming's body.

Li Tianming hesitated for a moment, right before he was about to touch it. After a moment of contemplation, he removed the glove from his left hand, taking care to prevent the audience from seeing the unveiled beast claw.

“Big brother, why is your left hand a beast claw?” Jiang Feiling asked.

The little chick gave a heartfelt sigh. “You don’t understand. He was alone for just too long. He trained and trained his left hand, until it became what you see today.”

“What does that mean? I don’t understand.” Jiang Feiling stumbled over her words, clearly embarrassed.

The little chick sighed, as if it was bemoaning the state of mankind and the universe. “I absolutely can’t tell that you don’t understand from your tone of voice. Ling’er, I didn’t think you were this sort of person. Alas, when will I ever find someone as pure as me?”

“Ying Huo, you’re a meanie.”

While the two teased each other, Li Tianming focused all his attention on the rock. Then, the beast claw touched the rock, the red eye on it coming in direct contact.

Li Tianming’s body shuddered as what felt like an electric shock coursed through it. However, this sensation was actually the horrifying spiritual energy storm making use of his left hand to surge into his body, threatening to tear it apart!

Chapter 92 - Perfect Synchronization!

BOOM!

The Flameyellow Rock shook, and the black heavenly patterns began to wriggle, as if it was trying to form some kind of picture. The changes to the formation was immense!

When the Flameyellow Rock shook earlier, the whole pagoda had shuddered along with it. Such a development would have alerted a lot of people, but Li Tianming was past caring about that now.

“LET GO!” the little chick screamed. Li Tianming could feel the impact too. If it wasn’t for the black arm enduring the shockwaves that came from simply touching the rock, the outburst of spiritual energy would have blown his entire arm off.

It was too dangerous. Had he held his hand there any longer, it would have sundered his Aeternal Infernal Body, and ripped Jiang Feiling out of his body too!

Thankfully, the black arm managed to absorb the hit, allowing him to break contact with the rock immediately, saving his own life. It was an encounter that left two humans and one chicken in shock and awe.

“I saw the patterns form some kind of a picture just now, but I wasn’t able to endure the spiritual energy storm,” Li Tianming said.

“I saw it too, and it looked quite mysterious. There must be other secrets hidden in this rock other than its spiritual energy,” Jiang Feiling agreed.

“No, you won’t make it out alive if you touch it again,” the little chick said worriedly.

It was right. Li Tianming knew that at his level, he wasn’t able to withstand the storm. It wasn’t the right time to discover the secrets of the rock.

“Well, well, weren’t you quite the daredevil earlier, so why are you backing down now?” Li Tianming laughed.

“Me, scared? I was just worried that the two of you would both die here without any offspring.” Ying Huo smirked.

“You don’t have to find yourself an excuse for being a timid chicken.”

“Ha!”

Li Tianming reconsidered his plan to explore the Flameyellow Rock. For now, he would focus on cultivating, and he could prove himself to have perfect synchronization if he could last an hour here. In fact, it was a lot easier with the help of Jiang Feiling. The spiritual energy gushing into his body could be guided by her. Not long later, Li Tianming and Ying Huo started their Aeternal Infernal Codex and began to refine the immense spiritual energy the stone was emanating.

“Ling’er, word has it that you aren’t related by blood to the Vermilion Bird King. Do you know about your own past?” Li Tianming asked randomly. While she did not have any lifebound beast with her, the powers sealed within her fingernails were simply incredible.

“I don’t know. Father said he picked me up right after I was given birth, and even my umbilical cord was freshly cut.” She sounded a little moody. That was only natural, since she didn’t even know who her true parents were.

“Where did he find you?”

“In the Abyssal Battlefield.”

Abyssal Battlefield again? It wasn’t much of a surprise, considering that it was the most mysterious place on the Flameyellow Continent, home to some of the greatest mysteries of the age. For example, it was there where Li Tianming found his Saintbeast War-Soul.

“Oh Ling’er you poor thing. But worry not, as big brother Ying Huo will shower you with love, and be the harbour for your soul,” the little chick consoled.

“Nah, you are more like a little brother that needs taking care of.” Jiang Feiling grinned.

The little chick could only sigh as it turned its attention back to the spiritual energy storm, diverting its attention away from its failed attempt to charm the girl. For now, the three of them would focus on cultivation only.

For Li Tianming, the so-called one hour mark didn’t even bother him now. He would prove that with his perfect synchronization, the innermost ring was his and his alone, and he could stay there for as long as he wanted!

A burst of flame engulfed both him and Ying Huo and formed a fiery tornado. No matter how violent the spiritual energy storm looked, it would be absorbed by the tornado the moment it got close to Li Tianming. The spiritual energy was then sent to the pair's infernal sources, which would then expand rapidly. In fact, it was even more effective than eating spirit gems!

Entering the sanctum was the correct move after all! Only in this sacred place would Li Tianming find the resources that could let him maximise the potential of the Primordial Chaos Beasts, allowing him to catch up with those his age! The day when he could surpass them was drawing close.

The Flameyellow Rock had brought him hope like never before, not to mention that he had perfect synchronization. Putting these thoughts at the back of his mind, Li Tianming went back to cultivating.

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Even Li Tianming himself had no idea how much of a commotion he had caused when the Flameyellow Rock shook. Everyone thought he was looking for his own death when he had touched the rock. That was because the sanctum had strictly forbidden any disciple from touching the rock. Historically, anyone who had tried touching the rock all left the ring as a corpse, without a single exception.

The disciples hadn't even managed to react when Li Tianming touched the rock, such was their shock. But before they could yell at Li Tianming, he had already drawn back. Furthermore, Li Tianming acted as if nothing had happened, and sat down within the fifth ring to cultivate.

"Why hasn't the spiritual energy storm torn him apart?"

"No way, when was the last time a disciple with perfect synchronization appeared?"

"More importantly, why can that fool do it? Is there something wrong with the rock?"

"Why don't you give it a try?"

Many were eager after hearing that. They refused to believe that Li Tianming was more talented than any of them there, choosing to blame it on the rock's sudden malfunctioning instead.

"I'll go, I'll go."

Soon a handful of them entered the rings, some of them at level three synchronization level. But when they tried cultivating in the fourth ring, every single one of them ran out, beads of sweat dotting their foreheads.

The conclusion was obvious. There was nothing wrong with the Flameyellow Rock.

Every disciple in the sanctum had endured the spiritual energy storm before, and naturally they understood what a feat it was to cultivate in the fifth ring. And to make things worse, the one who achieved it was someone they had looked down on and despised! Those who were still jeering at Li Tianming just now could only stare at Li Tianming with dropped jaws.

"What's going on?!" A cold voice sounded from the stairs leading to the second floor of the pagoda, as two women dressed in long white robes walked down the stairs. The one in the lead was a middle-aged lady, her slender feature mature and charming. But the freezing aura that she released was enough to keep disciples away from her.

She was none other than Supernal Mentor Liu Xueyao. Following behind her was an alluring teenage girl who gave off the impression of a white lotus, her expressions calm and unreadable. The pair walked down the stairs, their expressions puzzled from the commotion happening on level one.

If Li Tianming wasn't that focused on his cultivation, he would have turned around to find Mu Qingqing and her supernal mentor, Liu Xueyao.

"I'm asking a question, right? What's going on here?! The pagoda is not a place for disciples to fool around!" Liu Xueyao gazed at the disciples crowding outside the rings, her expressions clearly annoyed.

"Supernal mentor, please look at that." One of the disciples pointed to Li Tianming.

"That's—!" When Liu Xueyao's eyes landed on Li Tianming, her frosty expressions melted instantly, shock and surprise written all over her face. The fiery tornado had blocked Li Tianming's appearance, and thus she did not recognise him.

"Which disciple is that to challenge perfect synchronization? Since when did we have someone like this in the sanctum?" Liu Xueyao's jaws were slightly apart with a look of disbelief on her face. The same could be said for Mu Qingqing, as she frowned at the back of the teenager enveloped in fire. Why did that person look familiar?

"Supernal Mentor Liu must know him. He already met all the supernal mentors at the Hall of Ancestry."

"Wei Guohao?" Liu Xueyao mentioned the first name on her mind. But that shouldn't be the case, since he didn't have the talent for that.

"No, it's Li Tianming," another disciple replied.

"Li Tianming? Who?" Liu Xueyao was startled for a moment. She didn't remember any genius in the sanctum by the name of Li Tianming.

But Mu Qingqing shuddered when she heard that name, her gaze falling on the boy in the fire. Her pretty face contorted at that moment, her beauty vanishing like dust in the wind.

"That can't be real, you must have gotten the wrong person!" she shouted, her frenzied voice trembling madly, her nails digging deeply into her own palm.

For the second time in three years, she was panicking. The first time it happened, Li Tianming had just defeated Lin Xiaoxiao and was flaunting in front of her. His presence then had already made her feel threatened. How could a boy she had abandoned and long forgotten come back to haunt her again?

Today was the second time. But this time, she could no longer take the boy as a mere joke! Even if she had strong willpower, she could no longer stay calm as she gawked at Li Tianming, who was right beside the Flameyellow Rock.

"There is no mistake about that. Li Tianming has been there for a while, and he even had a bit of conflict with Wei Lingxuan and the Wei Manor just now."

"What conflict?"

Liu Xueyao finally recalled who Li Tianming was. It was that fool of a prime disciple who was unwanted by all of the supernal mentors, and without Vice-Potentate Mu Yang he wouldn't even be in the sanctum by now.

It was only a few days, and that jester had overtaken Lin Xiaoting to become the new top genius of the sanctum?!

Liu Xueyao's eyebrows knitted together as she thought of what she said about Li Tianming back at the Hall of Ancestry. For some reason, her face felt rather sore.

Chapter 93 - Heaven's Elysium

Several of the disciples narrated the details of the conflict to Liu Xueyao.

"How presumptuous! Isn't he fearful of Wei Lingxuan killing him?" Liu Xueyao narrowed her eyes. Did he think of his challenge of peak synchronisation as a springboard to success?

"He lasted two minutes in there, even longer than Xiaoting. Qingqing, your thoughts?" Liu Xueyao asked.

"Master, I don't want to dredge up old matters. He's already paid the price, and I wish him nothing but luck now that he's back cultivating. We were friends once upon a time after all." Mu Qingqing lowered her head. This was the only way she could allay suspicions when Li Tianming left Flameyellow Scions Institute, only to meet an assassination attempt by Bloodflower Chamber.

"I'm just afraid he'll let hatred cloud his judgement. He may now believe he has some chance of revenge. Be careful," Liu Xueyao said.

"Yes, supernal mentor."

"Still, no need to worry too much. Firstly, he hasn't lasted one hour, so he may not actually have peak synchronisation. That'll be too incredible. Secondly, his starting point is too far behind. His cultivation stage now is weak, so even having peak synchronisation won't let him catch up." Liu Xueyao was feeling shocked. Just like everyone else, she couldn't understand how this was possible.

Mu Qingqing relaxed somewhat after hearing that. "Don't worry. I believe Li Tianming has seen the errors of his ways and will cherish his second chance."

Yet, she couldn't stop herself from continuously casting glances at a certain youth. As time passed, the possibility of Li Tianming having peak synchronisation grew, as well as the torment in her heart. She was well aware of the terrifying talent peak synchronisation represented, but she continued to maintain a placid expression.

"Xiaoting is currently in seclusion in this very Flameyellow Pagoda. I wonder how he'll feel if he knew Li Tianming, who he once crippled, is challenging peak synchronisation right now," Liu Xueyao said ruefully.

"Big brother Ting is a good person. I think he won't do anything since he's already levied a punishment on Li Tianming," Mu Qingqing said.

"Fortunately, the ones he'd offended were the two of you. If it had been anyone else, his corpse would have rotted away in the three years since then," Liu Xueyao said.

“Yes.” Mu Qingqing didn’t deny this part.

“Xiaoting does treat you well. Your talent wasn’t considered high before you joined Heaven’s Sanctum, and your lifebound beast was only five-star. For your sake, he took out the royal manna, Aquatic Dracosoul, from Lightning Manor. That thing is as valuable as a city! It elevated your lifebound beast to become seven-star, a royal beast. That’s how you achieved meteoric improvements in the past three years, reaching eighth level Spiritsource and creating an unbridgeable gulf with Li Tianming, who used to be on your level.”

Liu Xueyao looked at Li Tianming with distaste. “Honestly, you two belong to different worlds now. Don’t keep targeting him, lest you feed the rumour mill.”

“Supernal mentor, all of Lightning Manor has treated me well, and I’m deeply grateful for it. Actually, the Aquatic Dracosoul just happened to be a good fit for me, and there weren’t any good candidates among Lightning Manor’s direct line of descent. I was just lucky,” Mu Qingqing spoke happily, a hint of pride in her words.

“Luck is part of your abilities,” Liu Xueyao said.

While she tended to be frosty to others, she treated her own disciples well. Furthermore, Mu Qingqing’s link to Lin Xiaoting would help keep her seat as a supernal mentor secure.

Although they were talking, they kept their attention on Li Tianming. As time passed, their mood worsened.

“Supernal mentor, if he really does have perfect synchronisation, will his future cultivation be very fast?” Mu Qingqing couldn’t resist asking anymore.

“He will be fast, but without background or resources, it will never be fast enough to catch up to you two. You may also get more fortuitous encounters in the upcoming Abyssal Trials as well. Focus on it instead; it wasn’t easy getting your slot,” Liu Xueyao said solemnly to Mu Qingqing.

“I have to thank you for that.” Mu Qingqing said.

“I didn’t do much. The credit goes to Lin Xiaoting and the Tempest Marshal. That family is full of good men. You haven’t married him and aren’t considered a true part of Lightning Manor. Yet, you can join others like Wei Guohao, Princess Qing, Mo Lin, Chen Hao, Xing Que, all direct descendants of powerful clans, in the Abyssal Trials. You can fight for the chance to join Heaven’s Elysium.”

Liu Xueyao stroked Mu Qingqing’s head, her eyes full of hope.

“Big brother Ting really hopes I can join Heaven’s Elysium together with him. I’ll definitely try my best in the Abyssal Trials.” Mu Qingqing’s expression was serious. As someone who craved advancement, she possessed a fighting spirit that actually wouldn’t lose to anyone.

“In this final stretch, I’ll try to help you grasp more trump cards. After all, the Abyssal Trials won’t just have competitors from our Heaven’s Sanctum, but also premier geniuses from other countries. Add on the multitude of fierce wildbeasts, and the death toll will be high.” Liu Xueyao became worried when she mentioned this.

She knew that in the Abyssal Battlefield, even the most heaven-defying of geniuses could get killed in a moment of carelessness.

“I’m willing to take the risk, all for the chance of joining Heaven’s Elysium.” Mu Qingqing bit her red lips.

“Not bad. That’s what I like about you. Although you look soft on the outside, you’re tougher and more hardworking than anyone else. Your accomplishments today were a foregone conclusion. The competition will be fierce, but I believe in you.” Liu Xueyao was clear why Mu Qingqing was so persistent.

Heaven’s Elysium was a true paradise. She herself had dreamed of going there when she was young. Only after going there would one know how vast the world truly was.

It was Lin Xiaoting’s destiny to go there after obtaining the Saintbeast War-Soul. His horizons would be broadened, and if he went alone, his life may not have a Mu Qingqing thereafter.

So, whether Mu Qingqing followed him to that vaster world, or stayed here to wait and wait for him was all up to the Abyssal Trials.

Mu Qingqing swore that no one, absolutely no one, would stop her path forward!

In the grand scheme of things, Li Tianming was just an insignificant thing, unworthy of mention. He was the past, and what would determine her future was the Abyssal Battlefield.

If she was still worrying about him getting perfect synchronisation, that was the real joke. Liu Xueyao was right. They no longer belonged to the same world.

Hence, when Li Tianming finally lasted one hour and everyone present burst into an uproar, she was busy completing her mental preparations for what was coming. “From now on, if a god blocks my way, I’ll kill the god. If a devil blocks my way, I’ll kill the devil!”

Mu Qingqing bit her tongue, and the taste of blood immediately roused her emotions to bursting point. In that moment, the coldness in her eyes seemed to rise another level. The sanctum geniuses who were busy feeling shocked over Li Tianming now seemed rather meaningless, because Mu Qingqing knew this was not where her future lay.

“What is he doing?”

“It seems he made a breakthrough, right next to Flameyellow Rock!”

“He’ll be famous if it gets out that he has perfect synchronisation. I bet the supernal mentors are all going to fight over him...”

“I heard he rejected all of the supernal mentors and wanted to be the Vice-Potentate’s disciple, though...”

“That... might actually be possible now.”

Li Tianming’s performance had convinced many disciples.

Li Tianming's power madly rose, as he finally entered second level Spiritsource. However, because of Spiritual Attachment and his Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki being much more majestic than others, he seemed to possess power of sixth level Spiritsource to others!

It was imaginable that with his perfect synchronisation, his rate of growth would be much quicker. Surpassing most here was a very real possibility. Li Tianming was no longer considered mediocre in Heaven's Sanctum.

"Let's go, supernal mentor," Mu Qingqing said coldly.

"He actually has perfect synchronisation. Many of the supernal mentors will be regretting it soon, I bet." Liu Xueyao couldn't help but let out a sigh of admiration, well aware of how hard perfect synchronisation was.

"Good for him then," Mu Qingqing said.

"You don't want to see him?" Liu Xueyao asked.

"I've forgiven him, but he still hates me. I don't want to see him strutting around in front of me after he accomplished a bit. Besides, I need to go prepare for the Abyssal Trials." Mu Qingqing said.

"Alright. From my point of view, it's disgraceful when a despicable person has good talent." Liu Xueyao didn't say anything more. As the commotion continued, she and Mu Qingqing headed for the Flameyellow Pagoda's second floor.

None of the Heaven's Sanctum disciples noticed, but when they vanished into the upper floor, Li Tianming threw that direction a glance.

"Big brother, why aren't you happy even though you made a breakthrough?" Jiang Feiling asked.

"I think I saw someone detestable." Li Tianming frankly. It was only a glimpse of a skirt he caught, but that snow-white clothing was what she liked the most.

"Mu Qingqing?" Jiang Feiling asked.

"Yes." From the commotion, it seemed many people had come.

Li Tianming wanted to go out for a break. He had just reached second level Spiritsource, so he needed to rest and consolidate his gains. That definitely wasn't possible next to the rock.

After he came out, Jiang Feiling also undid her Spiritual Attachment, flitting out of him like a small bird. It had been like a date, and the two were exceptionally happy. When Li Tianming thought of how he could use this as a reason to bring her out more often in the future, a warm, fuzzy feeling flooded his heart.

"Hah! With perfect synchronisation as an excuse, we'll see how Jiang Qingluan stops me from bringing out Ling'er everyday!" Just thinking of Jiang Qingluan's stunned expression was enough to make Li Tianming chuckle. He left the cultivation region a little while later, hand in hand with Jiang Feiling like a couple getting married. The first person Li Tianming saw was Vice-Potentate Mu Yang, whose eyes were burning with passion. He wasn't alone for long; soon a dozen odd supernal mentors appeared by his side.

There were as many supernal mentors now as there were on that day in the Hall of Ancestry. The only one missing was Liu Xueyao, who had already left with complex feelings.

As Mu Qingqing's supernal mentor, there was no way she wanted to personally witness how popular Li Tianming was.

Chapter 94 - Too Lewd For A Chicken?

Li Tianming didn't expect such a big hoo-ha because of his perfect synchronization. But now, almost every supernal mentor had shown up, and even the Vice-Potentate had appeared.

Back at the Hall of Ancestry, all the supernal mentors were indifferent to his plight, and some of them had even mocked him outright. But now, after walking out of the innermost ring unscathed, all Li Tianming could see was them gawking in disbelief.

"Perfect synchronization....."

"When was the last time we had such a genius?"

"But why is it him? I'd rather believe that Lin Xiaoting had it."

"Is the rock malfunctioning?"

"If he had cultivated beside the Flameyellow Rock since young, he would have been stronger than Lin Xiaoting by now!"

As the supernal mentors of the sanctum, they knew the Flameyellow Rock better than anyone else, the true importance and meaning of Li Tianming's feat.

On their side, a lot was going on in their mind, considering that their attitude had changed from one of disdain to envy. Quite a few of them had even jeered at him when he first appeared in front of them as the prime disciple. But now that he had redeemed himself with his perfect synchronization, how were they supposed to react now?

Who would still think of him as the joker from three years ago? Who would still consider him to be an unqualified prime disciple?

"How did you even do that?" Mu Yang was standing at the front of the crowd, and even he could only shake his head in shock.

Li Tianming shrugged. "Of course I did it with my talent that the supernal mentors were not interested in."

He savoured the supernal mentors' expressions. Li Tianming never intended to keep a low-profile, and he never could, considering the power of his Primordial Chaos Beasts. Now that the opportunity presented itself, he wouldn't hesitate to stomp on their faces.

"Having perfect synchronization is enough to mark you down as one of the legends of the Flameyellow Scions Institute. Not bad, not bad at all." Mu Yang wasn't going to hold back his compliments. Given Mu Yang's authority in the sanctum, his words signified that Li Tianming's situation had changed completely.

Supernal Mentor Feng Wuguang sighed. "It's been years since someone with perfect synchronization appeared. We did make a wrong judgement that day."

"Too bad Li Tianming was born in the countryside, and we only found out about his talent for cultivating now. If he had been born in a reputable clan in Ignispolis, he would be so much more." Another of the supernal mentors, Gao Yuanding, set aside his opinions and praised Li Tianming.

Mu Yang's lips curved when he heard that. He knew that Li Tianming was in fact born to one of the most powerful clans in the nation. Unfortunately, he didn't grow up there.

"With the Flameyellow Rock's recognition, his cultivation will rise at an unimaginable pace. It shouldn't take long for him to make up for all those lost time and catch up with those of his age," Supernal Mentor Qin Shi added, having felt that Li Tianming and Jiang Feiling being together wasn't all that bad now.

Hearing the compliments from the supernal mentors, the rest of the disciples who were still there knew that the tide had changed for Li Tianming.

"Don't be too happy about this. With your current level, you will be needing a long time to match those of your age even with your perfect synchronization. On top of that, your lifebound beast is only six-star, and with its poor bloodline you shouldn't be considering yourself the top of the sanctum." However, a different opinion came from Supernal Mentor Zhao Tianchen.

"WHAT? Whose bloodline are you calling poor? Your bloodline is the trash one!" the little chick snapped back, clearly enraged by the insult.

Most beasts could only telepathically communicate with their own masters, and this was probably the first time Zhao Tianchen got scolded by a lifebound beast.

"Supernal Mentor Zhao, my beast is still young, and I apologise if it offended you. But I will remember what you have said, and one day I will make sure you take back those words." Li Tianming smiled at Zhao Tianchen. He was obviously not suppressed by that rude mentor.

"Take back my words? Keep dreaming." Zhao Tianchen sneered, and said nothing else. After all, Mu Yang was still here, and he shouldn't be talking too much.

"Vice-Potentate, Li Tianming once mentioned that he wanted to be your disciple. Are you in the mood to mentor anyone today?" Qin Shi asked, her opinions of Li Tianming changed after seeing his perfect synchronization.

As she spoke, Li Tianming saw Jiang Qingluan standing beside her, winking in his direction. Despite her shocked face, he could tell that she was genuinely happy for him.

Well, it would have been better if she hadn't followed that up with a fearsome stare, clearly a sign warning him to stay away from Jiang Feiling.

That being said, Jiang Qingluan was probably the one that prompted Qin Shi to say that. Clearly, she was helping him.

Thoughtful, really.

"I did make a promise to him. The day he defeats Wei Guohao in a fight would be the day I accept him as my disciple. It's fair since they are about the same age," Mu Yang announced, in an inexplicably good mood.

Wooo!

That sparked another round of gasps from the crowd. That rumour about how Li Tianming could be the Vice-Potentate's disciple had been proven true after all! Everyone knew how difficult it was, considering that the previous disciple he accepted was that monstrous Lin Xiaoting. Furthermore, Mu Yang would be taking over as the new Potentate soon, meaning that his disciple would stand a chance of being the next Potentate afterwards!

If Li Tianming really managed to become Mu Yang's disciple, he would literally reach the peak a disciple could possibly achieve in the sanctum!

"Well, even with his perfect synchronization, he's still three levels lower than Wei Guohao."

"That's right, breaking through the later levels of Spiritsource is the true wall here."

"More importantly, Wei Guohao is still going to cultivate, and as someone with level four synchronization level, their difference in talent is not that obvious."

"It's a formidable task to catch up with all that lost time."

"Which is why I'm saying, this challenge Vice-Potentate has for him is practically impossible."

"Sounds about right. Furthermore, it's hard to imagine Lin Xiaoting accepting Li Tianming as his apprentice brother, given the bad blood between them."

"Li Tianming should just make use of this opportunity to settle on a supernal mentor who is willing to guide him."

"If he missed this opportunity, he would only be wasting his perfect synchronization."

"But look at him, clearly he won't go for anyone other than the Vice-Potentate himself."

"Then too bad for him, because he'll soon find out talent is useless without proper guidance."

The Flameyellow Pagoda was spacious and enclosed, meaning that many of the discussions and murmurs amongst the disciples had travelled to Li Tianming's ears too. There were a whole bunch of them there, some impressed while others jealous. And Li Tianming would prove them all wrong!

Still, without a mentor, Li Tianming would not be a proper member of the sanctum, and this would cause him to lose out on some opportunities.

"If there's nothing else, you all are dismissed. Li Tianming, follow me," said Mu Yang, while the crowd continued to chatter within themselves.

"Yes, Vice-Potentate "

The supernal mentors have seen Li Tianming's synchronization level with the rock and had nothing else to do there. But what they did realise was that Mu Yang seemed to pay quite a lot more attention to Li

Tianming. This puzzled them. How would Lin Xiaoting, who was in seclusion on top of the Flameyellow Pagoda, think?

The crowd gradually dispersed. Mu Yang would bring Li Tianming with him, and Jiang Feiling needed to return too.

“Vice-Potentate, let me send off Princess Ling first,” said Li Tianming.

“Go ahead.”

Li Tianming brought her to Jiang Qingluan. Although this was their first ‘date’, it was a pity that he wouldn’t be able to send her back home, and could only leave her with Jiang Qingluan.

“Greetings, Supernal Mentor Qin.” Li Tianming was polite.

“Just do your best.” Qin Shi dropped this and left the pagoda as well, leaving Li Tianming with the two princesses.

“Look at you, Li Tianming. Are you here to show off your perfect synchronization?” Jiang Qingluan asked.

“Naturally. Are you still going to ask me to go back to farming?”

“Who told you someone with perfect synchronization can’t be a farmer? Don’t think you can do whatever you want just because of that, our Ling’er isn’t that easy to score points with,” Jiang Qingluan warned him.

“Yeah, your difficulty level looks lower.” Li Tianming grinned.

“You! Grrr, jokes aside, your perfect synchronization is pretty impressive. I will put it out here, if none of the supernal mentors are willing to accept you, you can choose to serve the Vermilion Bird clan. I promise we will treat you well,” Jiang Qingluan said.

Li Tianming nodded. “I don’t mind.”

“That straightforward?” Jiang Qingluan didn’t expect to earn her clan a genius this easily.

“Obviously. He wants to be the king’s son-in-law after all.” The little chick chipped in.

“Keep dreaming.”

“Why are you so nervous? It’s not like he wanted to marry you,” the little chick asked.

“...” Jiang Qingluan was lost for words.

“Then I will make my stand clear too. The two of you are the only friends I have in the sanctum and no matter what happens, I’m willing to take a blade for the two of you,” Li Tianming replied. No matter how much he joked with Jiang Qingluan, he had always treated her as a genuine friend of his. As for Jiang Feiling... hmmm. If only he could add another word in front of ‘friend’.

“Pretty sure there’s something else you wanna take, isn’t there?” The little chick suddenly chuckled.

What else could I take from these two girls?

“KHHHH!”

Li Tianming was done. How could that damned chicken make such an honorable promise sound so obscene? That had to be a talent, no?

Luckily, the two girls hadn't figured out what Ying Huo meant, or they might have just strangled the chicken on the spot.

Chapter 95 - A Second Sore Poin

"What is this little chicken even talking about? Whatever. Li Tianming, I have one more thing for you." Jiang Qingluan stared at him.

"Go on."

"In a few days' time, I will have to leave the institute for a period of time. You better protect Ling'er properly, but don't you dare bully her. If I return and find out that you've done bad things to her, you'll become eunuch Li." Jiang Qingluan was fiercer than ever.

"You're leaving?" Li Tianming's eyes lit up. Does that mean... unlimited dating with no one to interrupt the two of us?

"This is a stern warning. Do you understand, eunuch Li?"

"Aye aye, don't you worry. I'm the most pure and innocent person I myself have ever known." Li Tianming grinned, and Jiang Feiling, who was watching them talk, giggled.

"Qing'er, let's go, the Vice-Potentate is still waiting for him," said Jiang Feiling.

"For the sake of your lower half, you better watch out!" Jiang Qingluan left with one last warning. It was only after the two vanished did Li Tianming belatedly realise that he hadn't questioned her about why she was leaving and where she was going to. Oops.

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Once they were gone, Li Tianming hurried back to Mu Yang's side.

"You had a bit of a conflict with Lingxuan?" Mu Yang asked.

"Just some small issues," Li Tianming replied.

"Alright. Just do what you deem fit," Mu Yang replied.

Li Tianming had half-expected Mu Yang to tell him off for getting into trouble, but to implicitly encourage it? Now that was another story. "Vice-Potentate, what do you mean?"

"Simple, really. If you want to earn a place in Wei Manor for you and your mother, you have to earn it through your own performance. If you manage to leave the Wei Manor disciples in the dust, I'll be able to talk more about you in front of my master," Mu Yang explained.

"What's there to talk about with my pathetic level?" Li Tianming rolled his eyes; those in the Wei Clan were a haughty bunch.

Mu Yang smiled. "Levels are nothing. Your talent — your perfect synchronization — is something I can talk to him about. I won't be asking about your mother, and instead, I'll bring up topics like your Saintbeast War-Soul and your synchronization with the Flameyellow Rock."

"I see. Guess it's better to have something to talk about. If I, who was born and raised outside, can exceed the descendants that he raised himself, surely that would make him appreciate me more," Li Tianming said. His strength would show just how effective Wei Jing's teachings were.

"Glad you understand that. Let me explain one thing my master has always worried about." Ever since Mu Yang met Wei Jing, he had always been on their side.

"Please do."

"Wei Manor is the core of Heaven's Sanctum, and for countless generations, most Potentates were members of the Wei Clan. For my generation, I managed to surpass Wei Tianxiong, allowing me to become the new Potentate. Normally speaking, I would focus on nurturing my master's grandkids, so that the Wei Manor would regain control of the sanctum. This is my way of showing my gratitude to my master. The sanctum had been running this way since its very beginning, which is also why the Wei Clan had always been in control of the sanctum," Mu Yang explained, letting a sigh a moment later.

"However, I have never accepted Wei Guohao, nor any other member of the Wei Clan, as my apprentice. Though you may consider them to be the best in the sanctum, they are not good enough for me."

"So is the Vice-Potentate saying that their talents are lacking?" Li Tianming clicked his tongue.

"Not exactly lacking, but as members of the Wei Manor, they really should at least be able to put up a good fight against Lin Xiaoting. So it's not because I don't want to accept Wei Guohao, but because my master doesn't approve of him and doesn't allow me to take him in," Mu Yang said.

Li Tianming got the picture now. Wei Guohao was definitely not an average disciple, but if he were to be the future Potentate candidate, he had to be the champion of the sanctum. Only then could he resume the tradition and let the Wei Manor control the sanctum once again. In other words, Wei Tiancang was unsatisfied with his grandkids.

"And this discontent he has with his grandchildren is the second sore point of his. You should very well know what the first one is." Mu Yang sighed again. He knew Wei Tiancang far too well. For a legendary figure like himself, his descendants had sure failed to live up to his expectations.

"I get what the Vice-Potentate means now. By encouraging me to challenge Wei Lingxuan and even Wei Guohao, you are trying to show him that he has a capable grandkid. And if I manage to be the solution to his second sore point, then chances are that he might just fix the first one himself. If he treasures his face so much, then all I have to do is make him proud of me." Li Tianming had found a hope for saving his mother, thanks to Mu Yang's advice.

"Not bad, if you understood my message. I figured this is the only opportunity you had after talking to my master these few days. Once rumours that you're from Wei Manor spread, and when people know that your mother is Wei Jing, would he still possibly let her die alone in the Rainforest Pavilion?" Excitement crept into Mu Yang's voice; he too did not want Wei Jing to die.

"I understand now." Li Tianming was now clear on what he needed to do. Both his goals of taking revenge on Lin Xiaoting and saving his mother shared the same process: cultivate! Become stronger!

"I didn't put much hope on you to begin with, because I thought you weren't worthy. But with your synchronization level, and how you got the Saintbeast War-Soul, I'm having second thoughts about this. Things might look tough for you right now, but I have faith in you," Mu Yang said, patting his back. Li Tianming never thought that he would meet a senior that trusted him so much.

"Li Tianming, even though I pointed out the way for you, there is one thing you need to be clear on."

"I'm listening, Vice-Potentate. "

"Even if my master doesn't approve of Wei Guohao's generation, it doesn't mean they are bad. For the you right now, they are impossible targets. Remember, your perfect synchronization is impressive, but their fourth level ones aren't much worse than yours. You have about a year's time to achieve that, as I can keep your mother alive for only that long. If, within this year, you cannot overcome them, then there's nothing I can do too," Mu Yang said. "The old man is more stubborn than you can possibly imagine."

"I understand." Li Tianming couldn't wait to get started, as he finally had a specific direction to work on.

"Oh. In the days to come, Wei Guohao would leave for the Abyssal Battlefield. You better pray that he doesn't find any fortuitous encounters there, or you'll never be able to match him again."

"Will Princess Qing be heading to the Abyssal Battlefield too?"

"Yeap, they are the same batch."

Just as Li Tianming wanted to ask him their purpose for going to the Abyssal Battlefield, Mu Yang changed the topic. "You made a breakthrough beside the Flameyellow Rock, no? I'm willing to help such talent shine with all my might. Just tell me if you need anything, be it battle arts or other resources."

Mu Yang also had a vested interest in keeping Wei Jing alive, which was why he wouldn't be stingy when it came to helping Li Tianming, even though he wasn't Li Tianming's mentor.

"If you face any other difficulties in cultivating, feel free to find me at the Mu Manor. Your Chief Mentor Mu Wan misses you too."

"Thank you, Vice-Potentate. In fact, I'm looking for some advanced source-ranked battle arts." Li Tianming seized the opportunity when he saw it. He was rather familiar with the Nine Flying Bolts and the Skyfire Soulbinder, all intermediate source-ranked arts. But in order to face opponents like Wei Guohao and Mu Qingqing who were above eighth level Spiritsource, he needed stronger skills.

"Very well then, I will bring you to the Hall of Combat and you can pick for yourself."

The Hall of Combat was where the sanctum stored its battle arts. Ever since he entered the institute, Li Tianming had heard stories of how the Hall of Combat was home to some of the most unique and powerful arts of all levels.

The Hall of Combat was under one of the four guardians, the Guardian of Combat, Zhao Yuanji. He was the youngest guardian, someone in the same generation as Mu Yang.

The hall itself was hidden in a secluded forest down the western side of the sanctum. Generally, supernal mentors themselves would bring their disciples here to choose a battle art. This time, however, it was Mu Yang who brought Li Tianming there.

A hulking middle-aged man in black robes walked out of the hall as they arrived. There was a deep scar on his face, the kind that would scare the living daylights out of any disciple who dared to lay eyes on him. This man was none other than the Guardian of Combat, Zhao Yuanji.

“Elder apprentice-brother.” He called out to Mu Yang.

As it turned out, this Guardian of Combat was Wei Tiancang’s disciple too.

Chapter 96 - The Mystery of the Princess’s Panties

The four guardians had almost the same status as the chancellor. Although Zhao Yuanji was about the same age as Wei Zikun, Wei Zikun was only a mere hall overseer in the institute. Clearly, Wei Tiancang’s descendants weren’t faring that well.

Right now, the ones in control of the sanctum were either Wei Tiancang’s brothers or his disciples.

“Apprentice-brother, he must be that Li Tianming, the one with perfect synchronization. I’ve just heard the news.” Zhao Yuanji looked at Li Tianming.

“Yeap, find him three advanced source-ranked battle arts,” Mu Yang requested. That was Li Tianming’s own request, since three battle arts were enough for him to chew on for a while.

“Alright, Mo Lin, take your junior apprentice-brother with you and let him pick three arts,” Zhao Yuanji instructed.

A teenager walked out from the hall, his slender figure dressed in a black robe and his long hair reaching his waist. His handsome features gave him a quiet, scholarly look, his mild demeanour adding on to that impression.

He first greeted Mu Yang with a bow, before gesturing towards Li Tianming. “Apprentice-brother Li, please, come with me.”

Li Tianming followed him as they passed through the various chambers in the hall. The youth guiding him must be the disciple of the Guardian of Combat, Mo Lin.

“I just heard that apprentice brother Li has perfect synchronization. Congratulations.” Mo Lin turned and smiled at him. His movements were effused with grace, the bearings of a confident, assured teenager.

“Thank you, elder apprentice-brother.”

“No worries. This is the region for the source-ranked arts, and the advanced ones are all the way inside. Feel free to help yourself, and do ask me if you have any queries.” Mo Lin smiled. He was merely a guide and nothing more, treating Li Tianming like any other disciple. This was something Li Tianming didn’t encounter often, considering that everyone was biased against him given his ‘reputation’.

After thanking him, Li Tianming entered the room. Its interior was simple, with all the battle arts stored on wooden shelves, unlike the Xing & Chen Repository. But despite the room's austere decor, any battle art here was actually worth a fortune.

After going through almost all the arts in the room, Li Tianming finally found two advanced source-ranked battle arts.

The first one was a movement art known as 'Flaming Shadow Flash'. It was a more advanced version of his Confounding Mirage Walk, allowing him to retain the mirages while increasing his speed. Once mastered, he would be like a flaming shadow that could appear anywhere in the blink of an eye. A flexible move, it would definitely come in handy when dodging his opponent's attacks. Even the little chick could make good use of the Flaming Shadow Flash with its tiny figure, turning it into an even deadlier assassin.

The second art Li Tianming had picked was named the 'Three-Spring Heavy Strikes'. Unlike the Dragon-Mammoth Heavy Strike he knew, this new boxing art took inspiration from solar flares. Furthermore, it contained a fiery aspect to it that could utilize their Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki better. The destructive move not only suited Li Tianming's black arm, but its bestial art version, the Three-Spring Heavy Claws, also synergised well with Ying Huo's claws. Like its name, the art was made up of three different stances, each blow more powerful than the last one.

Li Tianming also wanted to look for a whip art that he could use with his grade five weapon, the Blazing Dragon Chainblade, but he couldn't find any.

"Elder apprentice-brother Mo Lin," Li Tianming called out.

"Yes?" Mo Lin walked into the room.

Li Tianming didn't expect Mo Lin to be actually waiting outside while he was looking through the battle arts. Li Tianming treasured that respect this apprentice-brother had shown him.

"Out of interest, what is brother Mo's cultivation level?" Li Tianming asked with a smile, realising that they should be about the same age.

"Eighth level Spiritsource," Mo Lin replied.

"What about your synchronization level?"

"I lose out to brother Li in terms of that, since I can only cultivate in the fourth ring." Mo Lin smiled.

"The guardian must be proud to have a disciple like you." Li Tianming complimented, knowing that Mo Lin was about Wei Guohao's standard.

"Haha, I hope I don't bring shame to my mentor."

"Will you be making a trip to the Abyssal Battlefield soon?" Li Tianming asked.

"How do you know about that? My slot hasn't been confirmed, and I'm awaiting the sanctum's final decision," Mo Lin said.

"What will you be going there for?"

“I’m sorry I can’t tell you about that, since the sanctum has yet to announce it officially.”

“Never mind then.” Li Tianming paused for a while, before he continued, “Brother Mo, I’ve been looking for a whip art, but I don’t seem to be able to find any here.”

“Whip art? Let me take a look.”

Mo Lin started searching in the room. About fifteen minutes later, he returned to Li Tianming with a black-covered book, but he didn’t pass it to Li Tianming.

“This is the only whip art we have, but I’m afraid I can’t pass it to you just yet,” Mo Lin said.

“Why so?”

“Firstly, this is a supreme source-ranked battle art, while the Vice-Potentate told you to pick three advanced ones. Therefore, I must seek their opinion before giving this to you. Secondly, this is a vicious and cruel battle art. It’s not suited for disciples since it is only intended for killing others. Finally, your level of cultivation is not enough for you to understand this art,” Mo Lin explained.

“I see. If that’s the case, can you let me take a quick scan of the book while you confirm with the Vice-Potentate? Just tell him I want this art,” Li Tianming said.

“Sure.”

“Thanks for the trouble.”

Mo Lin handed Li Tianming the book before walking out. He was right that Mu Yang only mentioned advanced arts, and supreme arts were miles apart from advanced ones, be it in terms of its power or its rarity.

This supreme source-ranked whip art was called the ‘Soulless Seven Howls’; the name alone already suggesting that this was a malevolent art. A brief glance through its content told Li Tianming that the art consisted of seven deadly stances. The most unique aspect of this art was that its user could vibrate the whip to produce a howling sound that could mentally affect the opponent.

“Attacking through a sound wave? I wonder how this would work when it’s coupled with my Bewildering Eye?” Li Tianming blinked twice, and continued to read.

According to the book, every time the opponent heard a howl, an illusionary ghost would descend upon them. Over time, the victim’s hallucination of being surrounded by more and more ghosts would intensify, peaking at seven such illusions. It was especially effective when used with his Blazing Dragon Chainblade, since it was easier to produce sounds with metal chains compared to regular whips. Li Tianming was already in love with this whip art before he even started on it.

As he was reading, Mo Lin had returned with a smile. “Congratulations, brother Li, the Vice-Potentate had agreed for you to take whatever you wished. Looks like he really trusts you.”

“You have my thanks, elder apprentice-brother Mo Lin.”

“You are welcome.”

Li Tianming kept the three arts and headed outside together with Mo Lin. Inside the courtyard, Mu Yang was playing chess with Zhao Yuanji, and the two disciples came out just in time to see Zhao Yuanji win the game.

“It’s been thirty years, yet you’re still this bad.” Zhao Juanji laughed.

“You don’t have to say that out, right? Save some face for me.” Mu Yang rose to his feet and beckoned at Li Tianming. “Let’s go.”

“See you around.”

The moment the two of them left the Hall of Combat, Mu Yang turned to Li Tianming and said, “I need to go too. Focus on your cultivation, and find me at the Mu Manor should you need anything.”

With that, Mu Yang disappeared in a flash, before Li Tianming could question him about the Abyssal Battlefield.

“Darn it. Looks like I’ll have to ask Jiang Qingluan instead. While I’m at it... let’s go find Ling’er!” He had already visited the Nebulous Pavilion once this morning, and it was already nearing night time now — Jiang Qingluan probably wasn’t going to let him in at night. Therefore, Li Tianming returned to his own house to learn the new battle arts and work on his Bewildering Eye instead.

“If I continue cultivating my Godsoul Canon and reach Skypolarity Eye, the Spirit Core will open the gate to the Wondersky Realm. What would that place be like?” Li Tianming had always been curious about this mysterious power. As a result, he had never stopped cultivating his Bewildering Eye. Like a tireless ant, he continued to work on the spirit veins on his third eye, until the wee hours of the night.

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Underneath the moonlight, Li Tianming took the second egg out of his lifebound space. Just as he placed it on the table, the egg shook violently and tilted from side to side — the creature inside was clearly having the time of its eggy life.

“I say, when will you come out? You’ve been shaking for at least a month already.” Li Tianming waited and waited, but his second beast just wouldn’t leave the egg. He had a feeling that even if this little thing hatched, it would probably be a lazy bummer, completely different from the hardworking little Ying Huo.

After staring at it for a while, Li Tianming kept the egg back into his lifebound space. It could take its time, since one Primordial Chaos Beast was already enough of a headache to him.

Speaking of Primordial Chaos Beasts, where on earth did Ying Huo go? Was it pecking at worms somewhere?

“Hey bro, I got some goooooood stuff for ya.” Speaking of the devil, Ying Huo had sneaked back.

“What?” Just as he turned around to find the chicken, a red undergarment flew right into his face.

“That’s Jiang Qingluan’s hahaha, you will have some explaining to do tomorrow!”

“Ying Huo, you little piece of shit!” Li Tianming quickly dumped it into the furnace and made sure nothing remained of it. Becoming an eunuch would be a reality if Jiang Qingluan saw that.

Unfortunately, there was nothing Li Tianming could do about that damned chicken.

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It was still early the next morning when Li Tianming arrived at the Nebulous Pavilion. Because of that undergarment the little chick stole last night, Li Tianming was feeling uneasy when he knocked on the door.

“Better not give anything away, if not how will Ling’er see me.” He took a deep breath.

There was some bustling going on in there, and it took awhile for Jiang Qingluan to open the door with a frown.

“Where’s Ling’er?”

“Still doing her makeup inside, why are you here again?” Jiang Qingluan stared at him.

“And why can’t I be here?” Li Tianming invited himself in. There was a clear displeasure with Jiang Qingluan’s vibes, and he wondered whether it had anything to do with that red undergarment.

“Bro, remember that red cloth you were using as a handkerchief last night? Do you reckon that vermilion bird sewed on it could be Princess Qing’s lifebound beast?” Ying Huo suddenly interrupted him.

“LI! TIAN! MING!” Fire spewed out of Jiang Qingluan’s eyes as she stomped towards Li Tianming.

“Just a misunderstanding—” Before he could explain himself, Jiang Qingluan’s hands had already found his neck...

Chapter 97 - Torch Dragon and Aquamarine

“What are you two doing?” Jiang Feiling walked out, curious about the commotion.

“Nothing. I just don’t like his face.” Jiang Qingluan gritted her teeth, but ended up letting Li Tianming go in the end, since she didn’t want others to know about it.

Li Tianming was thankful that he managed to get away with this.

“Ying Huo, watch out when we get back later. I’ll definitely cut your tongue off.”

“With just you?” The little chick rolled around, laughing madly. Li Tianming could only blame his own luck for landing himself such a lifebound beast.

“Big brother, have a drink.”

“Thank you, Ling’er, you are way more polite than a certain someone.” Li Tianming sat down, Jiang Feiling at his side.

“Hah? Don’t act like you have the moral high ground.” Jiang Qingluan glared at him.

“Girls shouldn’t be so aggressive. Anyway, I came over today to ask you a question,” Li Tianming replied.

“Before that, I have a question for you.”

“What?”

“Did you steal the wrong one?” Jiang Qingluan asked, the meaning behind it obvious: Were you trying to steal Jiang Feiling’s?

“Yea.” Li Tianming could only acknowledge that unwillingly. Had he said no, wouldn’t that imply that he was interested in her? To Li Tianming, Jiang Qingluan was more like a rival...

“Outrageous, I should have never let Ling’er interact with you,” Jiang Qingluan rebuked. Little did she know that it was all Ying Huo’s prank, and the mastermind itself was still laughing its ass off on the floor.

“What are you two talking about?” Jiang Feiling was the only one who had no idea what was going on.

“Nothing much. Li Tianming, what do you want?” For a princess, she sure wasn’t acting like one.

“You mentioned that you will be leaving for a period of time. Are you going to the Abyssal Battlefield?” Li Tianming asked. He was banking on the question to disperse his awkwardness, and it didn’t let him down.

“Yeah, how did you know?” Jiang Qingluan looked puzzled.

“I heard that Wei Guohao would be going too, when would that be?”

“So you really want to defeat Wei Guohao and become the Vice-Potentate’s disciple? You sure know how to dream,” Jiang Qingluan jeered.

“Just tell me when.”

“It’s not confirmed, but it should be within a month or two,” Jiang Qingluan replied.

“And how long would you be staying there?”

“Less than a month.”

That basically means that Wei Guohao would disappear for about a month sometime this year. It probably won’t affect Li Tianming overtaking him, provided he didn’t find any opportunities in the Abyssal Battlefield.

“What are you all doing there? How many people are going?” Li Tianming asked.

“Things are not confirmed yet, and the supernal mentors forbade us from telling others.”

“Come on, not even to a friend like me?” Li Tianming asked, curious about the details.

“Friend?”

“Then you should know what will happen to Ling’er once you are gone.”

“And you should get ready to be a eunuch.”

Li Tianming licked his lips. “Ha, Ling’er’s beauty is totally worth it,”

“Qing’er, just tell him. You already broke the rules by telling me.” Jiang Feiling chipped in.

“You!” Jiang Qingluan didn’t get why her own sister was on Li Tianming’s side.

“You heard her.”

“Basically, Heaven’s Elysium has locked down Azure Domain inside the Abyssal Battlefield, placing some things there that could be either challenges or opportunities. The Heaven’s Sanctum of three different nations would be sending out their younger disciples for the Abyssal Trials, and the winner will enter Heaven’s Elysium,” Jiang Qingluan explained.

“Heaven’s Elysium? What’s that?” Li Tianming was confused.

“Wait, you don’t even know what Heaven’s Elysium is?”

“Farmer, remember?”

“True.”

“Please enlighten me, O princess.”

“I suppose you should at least be aware that Vermilion Bird is just one of the many nations on Flameyellow Continent, and we hardly know much about what goes on outside. But every single Flameyellow Scions Institute on the continent, as well as the Heaven’s Sanctums, were built by Heaven’s Elysium. Even our sanctum is just one of its many outposts.”

“Is it very strong?”

“Obviously. Supposedly, it’s a world that we can’t even imagine. Based on my knowledge, there’s only one person from Vermilion Bird in the past hundred years that gained the recognition of Heaven’s Elysium. And that person is about to join.”

Li Tianming did have a bit of knowledge regarding the world outside of Vermilion Bird nation. He knew that the continent was colossal, but exactly how big it was, no one knew since few had stepped foot out of the nation before. From what he knew, other than the endless wastelands, there was a ‘Torch Dragon’ towards the northwest, as well as a ‘Aquamarine’ towards the isles in the south. The three nations all lay on a peninsula near the south-east region of the continent, and the path to the centre of the continent was blocked by endless mountains. Therefore, these three nations knew of each other’s existence, but nothing of the rest of the continent.

Heaven’s Elysium was definitely somewhere in the continent centre. If Flameyellow Continent was indeed as huge as the rumours said, then Heaven’s Elysium must be incredibly strong. After all, they could set up countless institutes in different nations and yet only accept their best disciples.

“Who has been selected to enter Heaven’s Elysium?” Li Tianming asked.

“Lin Xiaoting. The Saintbeast War-Soul was enough to guarantee entry. His seclusion this time is a final stretch for him. Once he makes a breakthrough to the Unity stage, there will be people to collect him and bring to Heaven’s Elysium. Did you know what my father said about this?” Jiang Qingluan said.

Li Tianming never imagined that Lin Xiaoting was facing such an opportunity. He could only count on his luck that he returned to Ignispolis in time, or he wouldn’t even be able to find Lin Xiaoting. That also

meant he had even less time to take his revenge. Once Lin Xiaoting leaves, where would Li Tianming find that mysterious Heaven's Elysium?

"What did he say?" Li Tianming knew that Jiang Qingluan's father was the Vermilion Bird Emperor himself.

"He said, the day Lin Xiaoting returns from Heaven's Elysium is the day he and Mu Yang will prostrate at Lin Xiaoting's feet."

"I see."

That was enough to cast a glimpse on the power of Heaven's Elysium. A disciple who returned from there could make the emperor of a nation as well as the Sanctum Potentate submit? Just how powerful could he become?

That was all Jiang Qingluan knew about Heaven's Elysium, so Li Tianming didn't ask anything more about it.

"So basically, you all are going to the Abyssal Battlefield to fight for a single spot in Heaven's Elysium with the disciples from the sanctums of two other nations? The one who wins the Abyssal Trials will be selected to cultivate in Heaven's Elysium?"

"That's right. And since it's organized by Heaven's Elysium, they will not be guaranteeing our safety, which means this is a really dangerous trip."

"I told her not to go, but she just won't listen," Jiang Feiling said with a puppy face.

"Ling'er, this is the only chance in my life to explore the world outside of Vermilion Bird. No matter how dangerous it is, I must give it a try," Jiang Qingluan said, just like how she had told Ling'er countless times already. As a princess of the royal clan, she would not back off from danger.

"So is Lin Xiaoting not taking part in the event?" Li Tianming asked.

"He's basically a member of Heaven's Elysium already, so of course he doesn't have to participate. Honestly, the chance of you having your revenge is quite low, since he'll be leaving any time now," Jiang Qingluan said.

Li Tianming frowned. There was no way he would let Lin Xiaoting just leave like this.

"Who else will be attending the event?" Li Tianming asked. He knew both Torch Dragon and Aquamarine had their own institutes, all of them competing with each other.

"Me, Mo Lin, Xing Que, Chen Yao, Wei Guohao, and Mu Qingqing," Jiang Qingluan counted.

"Mu Qingqing's going too?"

"Definitely, it's her only chance of pursuing Lin Xiaoting. Why else do you think they are not married yet? She probably values this competition more than anyone else, since whether she would stay here for who knows how long or leave with him depends on it," Jiang Qingluan explained.

Li Tianming understood now. By gifting the Saintbeast War-Soul to Lin Xiaoting, she had landed herself into a sticky situation instead. Was it karma? But if not for the Saintbeast War-Soul, Lin Xiaoting would

not be chosen by Heaven's Elysium, and he wouldn't be pursuing a greater path without her, meaning that she wouldn't have faced the risk of being abandoned in the first place.

How ironic.

He always knew that Mu Qingqing was a hardworking person, and this time, she would probably do just about anything for the opportunity for a greater future.

"Sounds like there's nothing I can do now?" Li Tianming felt his head ache. He was unrelated to the Abyssal Trials, and could only sit back at home and watch. He had to stay for his mother, and to overtake Wei Guohao as soon as possible.

Wait, Wei Guohao?

"Have the positions been confirmed yet?" Li Tianming asked.

"Not yet. It's too dangerous and the parents are still considering it. For example, my father doesn't want me to participate."

"What about Wei Guohao?"

"He's definitely going. He's representing Wei Manor, there's no way the Potentate will let him not go," Jiang Qingluan replied.

"Say, if I defeat him, can I replace him for the event?" Li Tianming asked.

"Huh?"

"You heard me."

"If you keep dreaming, maybe. But in reality, it's all but impossible. First, his strength is miles beyond yours. Second, even if you defeat him, he is needed to represent the Wei Manor. The positions are decided by the Potentate, Vice-Potentate, the four guardians and the chancellors, and there's nothing you can do to change that."

Jiang Qingluan spoke the truth, but Li Tianming knew that this was his only chance. Nothing would change if he didn't act. Right now, all he cared about was that he needed to go to the Abyssal Battlefield, and whether he made it into Heaven's Elysium had no meaning to him.

Before they made it into Heaven's Elysium, Lin Xiaoting and Mu Qingqing must die!

Chapter 98 - Come At Me All Together

Heaven's Sanctum had a Heavenly Leaderboard with only seven slots available on it, and the seven were known as the 'Heavenly Septuplets'. These seven were the cream of the crop of the entire sanctum, and all of them would end up as the future pillars of Vermilion Bird.

According to the leaderboard right now, the seven were, from top to bottom: Lin Xiaoting of Lightning Manor.

Mo Lin of Occult Athenaeum.

Jiang Qingluan of Vermilion Bird clan.

Xing Que of Xing & Chen's Merchantry.

Wei Guohao of Wei Manor.

Chen Hao of Xing & Chen's Merchantry.

Mu Qingqing of Lightning Manor.

There were a total of six positions available for the Abyssal Beast Trials, so other than Lin Xiaoting who already had a place confirmed for him, the rest of the Heavenly Septuplets would fill in those positions.

Out of the seven, Mu Qingqing had only recently taken over the seventh place, and she had been cultivating without rest just for a chance to go to the Battlefield. She used to have about the same talent as Li Tianming did, and it was thanks to Lin Xiaoting that she evolved her beast to seven-stars. Mu Qingqing was not a woman who would let anyone stop her ambitions.

.....

Li Tianming still did manage to bring Jiang Feiling with him when he finally left the Nebulous Pavilion. Jiang Qingluan may have a sharp tongue, but she was soft at heart, and eventually agreed after a bit of pleading from Jiang Feiling.

"Why does she feel like a mother-in-law?" Li Tianming laughed.

Jiang Feiling pouted. "Big brother, I'm here to help you cultivate, not for you to find ways to tease me."

"Don't get me wrong, if I want to tease you, I don't have to find ways to do it. Come on, smile, you pretty."

"Nope."

Meanwhile, the little chick nested itself in Li Tianming's hair, its face emotionless as it watched the couple joke around.

"Couples should explode!" It hissed under its breath.

Moments later, they arrived at the Flameyellow Pagoda. Li Tianming was prepared to spend quite some time there. The pagoda was always crowded with disciples. Most of them would cultivate in around the Flameyellow Rock, making use of the spiritual energy storm around it. Only a rare few could step foot on the second floor to cultivate, while the top floor was reserved only for the Heavenly Septuplets.

Just as Li Tianming entered the pagoda, he saw two people walking down the stairs, one of them muscular while the other slim. They were no strangers to him, but it had been some time since he last saw them. They were Xing Que and Chen Hao from the Xing & Chen Merchantry.

They descended the stairs just in time to see Li Tianming and Jiang Feiling walking into the pagoda, their eyes meeting his.

"Li Tianming, have you collected your free coffin yet?" Xing Que snickered.

But this time, the way they looked at Li Tianming was totally different. While the joke at the Hall of Ancestry was within expectations, stories of the boy with perfect synchronization had already shook the

entire Ignispolis a few days back. Madam Xue Lan even broke a few of her most precious potteries when she heard that news.

“Your family has more people, save it for yourself.” Li Tianming considered the conflict between them to be over. He had already humiliated Xue Lan for looking down on him and Wei Jing, and he saw no meaning in arguing with the two. Li Tianming had other foes to take care of, and he took Jiang Feiling’s hands as they walked towards the rock.

When Li Tianming held the hand of the number one beauty of Vermilion Bird, Xing Que and Chen Hao’s expressions twitched visibly. They weren’t just envious, but also puzzled. Why would Princess Ling associate herself with such a rat?

“Princess Ling, do you know mixing with losers will affect your reputation? We have heard quite some rumors going on already,” Chen Hao snorted.

“Mind your own damn business.” Jiang Feiling had had enough of these insults too, even letting out a curse that stunned Chen Hao.

Li Tianming walked past them and was about to step into the rings when Xing Que spoke.

“Li Tianming, did you know that the previous time you fought Wei Lingxuan, she accidentally let slip of you and your mother’s relationship with the Wei Manor? Now the whole sanctum knows about it already.”

That was news to Li Tianming. He took a look around, and then noted that all the disciples were staring at him curiously. So, they all knew that he was Wei Tiancang’s grandson, and Wei Lingxuan was actually his cousin?

Well, at least he was no longer just a peasant from the countryside now. Wei Tiancang had forbidden him to reveal his own identity, but Mu Yang did encourage him to be more high-profile about it. Since Wei Lingxuan was the one who leaked it, he did not need to take responsibility.

“So?” Li Tianming stared at Xing Que.

“Well, nothing much. Except that we all know your shameless mother had left the family for twenty years, and only returned when she was about to die,” Xing Que replied.

“Well, news like these spread fast, especially since both mother and son are birds of the same feather,” Chen Hao continued.

As they spoke, the disciples around didn’t have strong reactions. It appeared that they have all heard of the news already.

“From what I heard, your mother has been imprisoned already. What a joke, abandoning the clan for twenty years and still having the face to come back and seek help,” Xing Que added.

“Xing Que, Chen Hao.” Li Tianming stared at the two of them. “There is no strife between us, and I do not intend to make more enemies than I need to. But, if you insist, then the two of you can wait for the day I tear your faces off and make you two bow before me.”

Li Tianming would not let anyone insult his mother like this.

“Haha!” The two snickered.

“Give me a break, look at your levels now, at twenty years old.”

“Did you really think that you are invincible just because of your perfect synchronization? Then you should better get your brain checked.”

“Challenge me anytime you want, I only need to use one hand.”

“Don’t forget, we have yet to pay you back for beating up our little brother.” The twins jeered, one line after another.

“Save the trash talk, when it’s time, the two of you can come at me together.” Li Tianming’s lips curved, before he walked into the rings towards the Flameyellow Rock.

As for Chen Hao and Xing Que, they would never know where Li Tianming got his confidence from.

.....

Li Tianming arrived in the fifth ring, a place reserved for him and him only, out of bounds to anyone else. He sat down, cross-legged, his back facing the rest of the disciples.

Jiang Feiling was immensely helpful for his cultivation, and allowed him to have an easier time in the spiritual energy storm. With her attached to him, Li Tianming was enjoying cultivation more and more.

“Ling’er, how long can you stay in my body?” Li Tianming asked.

“As long as I want. In fact, I can stay inside forever,” Jiang Feiling said cheerfully.

“For real? On anyone?” Li Tianming asked.

“No, the best was Qing’er who had sixth-grade attachment, and I could only attach to her for three-fifths of a day.”

“So that means it’s only one-fifth for someone with second-grade attachment?”

“Yes, perhaps even shorter.”

Li Tianming felt like Ling’er was really a boon granted by the heavens. While she didn’t have beast ki, nor any power to protect herself, she could benefit him tremendously. Her powers were maximised when used on him, and all of her skills would come in handy. In addition, she had seven more abilities sealed in her fingernails that had yet to be discovered.

“If big brother can attend the Abyssal Trials, then I can hide inside of you. This is the first time that Qing’er will be leaving me for so long and for a place so dangerous. I’m really concerned about her safety.” Jiang Feiling’s were moody. Jiang Qingluan was even closer than a real sister to her.

“You want me to bring you in?” Li Tianming asked.

“Sadly, that’s not possible.” Jiang Feiling sighed. The positions had been decided, and they were all members of the Heavenly Leaderboard, all of them worlds apart from Li Tianming.

Li Tianming said nothing more. He continued to absorb and refine the energy from the spiritual energy storm together with the little chick. Words or promises were meaningless when he could be further empowering himself, to better his odds of defeating Wei Guohao.

Despite his perfect synchronization, it was still quite a daunting task to cultivate inside the storm. It was as if Li Tianming was standing beneath a waterfall, with the weight of endless water crashing down onto him every second.

Both he and Ying Huo's infernal sources were like bottomless pits, crazily absorbing spiritual energy with the aid of their Aeternal Infernal Codex. Their bodies started burning yet again, the heat even felt by Xing Que and Chen Hao who were cultivating in the fourth ring. As much as they despised Li Tianming, perfect synchronization was something to be envious about.

Chen Hao frowned. "What a waste of talent for someone like him to have perfect synchronization. If we had it, Heaven's Elysium would be within reach."

"I know. That's the only way for us to leave Vermilion Bird, and explore the world outside. We'll then get to see the rest of Flameyellow Continent with our own eyes," Xing Que said with a hint of wistfulness.

"Father has said that this is the most important chance we will ever get in our life. Even they did not get such a chance back in their time."

"Then we can't back down!"

One of the reasons why Heaven's Sanctum was the best place to cultivate was because of the environment here. Not only were disciples here talented, the effort they put in were also unimaginable by ordinary folk.

The most diligent of all was perhaps Li Tianming. For a dozen days, he kept on cultivating without leaving the innermost ring, even though the disciples behind his back had changed many times already.

He wanted to put in all his efforts for this. Even when he got bored, he had Jiang Feiling to accompany him, and Ying Huo to talk with. With them by his sides, cultivation was as enjoyable as it could get.

He could anticipate it coming. He was about to breakthrough once more.

Chapter 99 - Two Levels At Once!

The more Li Tianming converted spiritual energy into Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki, the more acclimatised he was with the spiritual energy storm raging around him. It had even gotten to the point where he could practice his new battle arts, and cultivate the illusion veins on his third eye on the side. For the past few days, Li Tianming had shifted his focus from converting beast ki to training his Flaming Shadow Flash and Three-Spring Heavy Strikes. Paced around the inner ring, he continued to practice his moves.

Obviously, that had caused quite the commotion, and Li Tianming was soon the center of attention for many disciples cultivating in the pagoda. The discussions about him and his mother Wei Jing never ceased, but Li Tianming had long blotted them out, focusing only on his battle arts. After a while, the sight of a fiery figure circling the fifth rings and punching out regularly had become a fixed attraction in the pagoda. It was obvious with every punch that Li Tianming's postures were getting better, and his boxing art was integrating well with his movement art.

“Damn, not just perfect synchronization, but training battle arts beside the rock?”

“I’m level two synchronization level, but it’s not like I can practice my moves in the second ring.”

“He really is a monster when it comes to cultivation. It’s just too bad that he passed the prime age for cultivation already.”

Li Tianming didn’t hear any of these, his mind fixated on punching out his fist towards the Flameyellow Rock. It was as if he used the rock as an imaginary enemy.

Pow!

Li Tianming used the first stance of his Three-Spring Heavy Strikes and punched the rock. While he did not touch the rock, the impact of the punch was met with the reacting force from the spiritual energy storm, giving him an accurate feedback on how his punch was.

“Once more.”

Li Tianming craved for power. He needed it, he was running out of time!

Pow! Pow!

Li Tianming’s strikes got more and more powerful, as the impacts clashed with the storm from the rock. That was even more shocking to the disciples of the sanctum. How could someone punch the treasure and show it such disrespect?

But that was exactly what Li Tianming did. For days, he made use of the feedback from the spiritual energy storm to learn his advanced source-ranked arts until he could execute them successfully. Even his strikes were increasing in power as well. On the fifth day since he started practicing his boxing arts, Li Tianming noticed that when the impact of his punch landed on the Flameyellow Rock, the black heavenly patterns on it seemed to move. With each punch, the patterns continued to wiggle, causing the formation to change. Li Tianming could almost feel that the Flameyellow Rock was a living thing that was interacting with him! Jiang Feiling did mention to him before that throughout the course of time, the rock even developed its own self conscious. If then, was that the rock’s consciousness playing games with him?

Li Tianming was amused.

“Take that!” He increased the speed of his punches, his fist getting closer and closer to the rock. That being said, as long as he didn’t make direct contact with the rock, he would be fine.

Pow! Pow! Pow!

The stronger and faster his attacks were, the greater the changes to the heavenly patterns on the rock.

“Why do I feel like the patterns are congregating?” Jiang Feiling suddenly pointed out.

“I think you are right.” Li Tianming saw it too. Initially, the patterns were spread across the surface of the rock like a formation, but whenever he punched towards the rock, the patterns seemed to wriggle towards him.

The quicker he punched it, the faster the patterns moved. Like uncountable black tadpoles, the patterns were concentrated in Li Tianming's area.

"What if I group them all together?"

Heavenly patterns were said to be the most mysterious thing in this world. For a beastmaster to cultivate beyond Unity, he would have to first understand the mystery behind the heavenly patterns.

In the world of cultivation, Beast Vein, Spiritsource, and Unity were stages that focused on the usage of the lifebound beast's bloodlines. But once a cultivator reached Heavenly Will and above, the beastmaster's intelligence would play a more important role, as he guided his beast in their cultivation. Simply put, in the early stages the lifebound beast's bloodline and spiritsource abilities would decide the tide of battle, while in the later stages the beastmaster will use his intelligence to guide them in understanding the mysteries of heaven and earth.

Li Tianming was only at Spiritsource, so he knew nothing of the knowledge concealed within the heavenly patterns. He could, however, feel that something peculiar was happening.

"More!"

He continued throwing his fist out, one strike after another. The patterns gradually gathered around the area of impact.

"Nearly there!"

A large patch of black was directly in front of him. At this rate, the patterns would all congregate and form a black circle right in front of him in another fifteen minutes.

"What is Li Tianming doing?"

"The heavenly patterns are changing!"

"They are all gathering together."

It was a change never seen before on the Flameyellow Rock.

"Quick, get the supernal mentors!"

"Hurry!"

The disciples of the sanctum had no idea what was happening, but the changes to the Flameyellow Rock was making them nervous. It didn't take long for some of them to scuttle off.

Despite the commotion outside, Li Tianming remained concealed by the storm, his mind focused on punching towards the rock. He had nearly achieved his goal, and naturally, whatever happening outside wasn't of interest to him. Unknown to him, the disciples had brought Vice-Potentate Mu Yang over. Beside him was another middle-aged man, his eyes resembling stars. If Li Tianming turned around, he would immediately recognise that man — he was Sage Chen.

"What's he doing?" Sage Chen noticed Li Tianming the moment he walked in.

"I don't know, I have never seen the rock behave like this." Equally puzzled, Mu Yang himself was on the verge of walking up to check out the situation.

At that moment, Li Tianming punched out one last time, a punch that made all the patterns gather into a black circle. For a moment, time seemed to come to a standstill, the black circle painfully perfect.

But at the very next second, a terrifying suction pulled at Li Tianming ! It was a force that he could not defend against, as if the Flameyellow Rock was throwing a fit at him. The rock sucked Li Tianming towards it, and his whole body rammed into the rock!

If someone tried to just touch the rock, the spiritual energy storm was enough to rip the aggressor into pieces. But now, Li Tianming's entire body was stuck onto the rock, every inch of his skin in contact with the heavenly patterns! He wasn't the only one, as the little chick was sucked to the rock too, with its wings spread wide as if it just had a fall.

"Oh, shit."

Both Mu Yang and Sage Chen realised that Li Tianming might have enraged the Flameyellow Rock. Things didn't look good, and Li Tianming might be ripped into pieces any second now. The two of them dashed towards the rock simultaneously.

"Get out of the way!" Mu Yang roared. It was a situation they had never experienced before, and even he couldn't be sure what would happen next.

The disciples scattered from the rings, some of them still cursing at Li Tianming. Just what was he up to again.

"He's better off dead," Chen Hao spat as he backed off from the rock.

"Don't you know curiosity kills the cat?" Xing Que smirked.

By then, Mu Yang and Sage Chen had both appeared in front of Li Tianming.

"Get him out?" Sage Chen asked.

"Wait, no. He's still cultivating!" The disciples had never seen the Vice-Potentate so shocked before. They looked towards Li Tianming and realised that instead of a corpse, the fires on the boy was even stronger now.

Li Tianming and the little chick were like vortexes, sucking in all the spiritual energy they could from the Flameyellow Rock.

"The spiritual energy storm is gone... It's gathering spiritual energy and channeling it to Li Tianming? That's like cultivating with the best ores and herbs." Sage Chen frowned.

In fact, this was the tamest the Flameyellow Rock had been since anyone could remember. The two of them were standing in what was supposed to be the fifth ring, but they could not feel the storm at all. That was because the spiritual energy was being channeled to Li Tianming in a far milder manner. But that didn't change the fact that it was even more effective than what perfect synchronization could offer him!

Li Tianming could feel the speed of his cultivation multiplying.

“It’s overflowing, overflowing!” The power surging into him was like a feast, as he watched his infernalsource rapidly expand. The Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki flowed through his body like magma, empowering his every cell.

Third level of Spiritsource!

But no, it wasn’t over.

Two hours later.

“Two levels at once! Fourth level now!”

Li Tianming and Ying Huo made a breakthrough again, and the pair reached fourth level at an unimaginable speed. Credit had to go to Jiang Feiling too, since she had been helping to guide the spiritual energy in Li Tianming’s body too.

Even though he was just fourth level, with the nature of his Aeternal Infernal Beast Ki, his strength was probably even stronger than what he imagined!

With an explosion, the rock blasted Li Tianming away. Seconds later, the heavenly patterns dispersed from the place where he was previously stuck to. It didn’t take long before the spiritual energy storm reappeared — the Flameyellow Rock had returned to normal.

When Li Tianming crawled back up from the floor, he could clearly feel newfound power running through his body.

“Just what did the Flameyellow Rock bless me with?”

Li Tianming even wanted to practice his boxing art once more, so that he could get more spiritual energy from the rock. But clearly that wasn’t possible, since the rock had already rejected him. If it could, there was no reason to send him out. The Flameyellow Rock probably had its own limits, and it had reached that limit by helping Li Tianming attain fourth level Spiritsource.

“Well, that’s fine. I can always try again next time.” Li Tianming was happy enough with what he had obtained today. Even he himself didn’t have a clear idea of how strong he was.

But he did know one thing: he’d shocked everyone in the Flameyellow Pagoda yet again.

Chapter 100 - I Wouldn’t Dream of I

Li Tianming could sense a faint communication between him and the Flameyellow Rock’s consciousness when he was punching away. As weird as it sounded, he felt that the rock had approved of him, which was why it had blessed him with the opportunity to gain two levels at once. But now, it was tired. Such a blessing had to be draining, even for a rock.

But if the rock was willing to give him such an opportunity again, Li Tianming believed he could sense its call. For him, the Flameyellow Rock was like a close friend. A disciple gaining the recognition of the Flameyellow Rock...it was an indescribable feeling.

Li Tianming stood up, everyone’s eyes glued to him, Mu Yang and Sage Chen included.

Just how is he not dead yet? What kind of a miracle is needed to pull this off?

“Good afternoon, everyone.”

Li Tianming tidied his attire. At the same time, Jiang Feiling had reverted to her physical form and materialized beside him, tired from the days of helping his cultivation.

As for the little chick, it was still spewing sparks of fire energetically at one side.

Mu Yang beckoned. “Come here.”

“Greetings, Vice-Potentate, Sage Chen.” Li Tianming looked at the two in front of him. Both were legends of Ignispolis, prodigies of their generation, and pillars of the Vermilion Bird Nation.

Oh, and they were both Wei Jing’s wooers, far stronger and more handsome than Li Yanfeng.

“Li Tianming, I have heard so many stories about you recently,” Sage Chen said with a smile, one side of his eyebrow raised.

Li Tianming hurriedly replied, “Sage Chen, please don’t worry about your loan. I promise to—”

“No hurry. In fact, just tell me if you want more, I can continue lending as long as you can return ten times the amount.”

“Thank you, I guess, but that’s not needed after all.” Li Tianming shook his head

Mu Yang had heard about the debt between them from Sage Chen.

“Tianming, what happened?” Mu Yang asked.

“I don’t know much either, other than what you have already seen,” Li Tianming said.

“Are you injured? The Flameyellow Rock has never reacted like this before.”

“No. In fact, my strength improved,” Li Tianming replied.

“Next time, don’t mess about without my permission. The Flameyellow Rock is not something you can understand at your current level, and I’m scared that something might happen to you,” Mu Yang said. If anything did happen to Li Tianming, then how was he supposed to answer to Wei Jing?

“I don’t see much of a problem. In fact, it seems like the rock approved of him,” Sage Chen interrupted.

“Keep spewing rubbish. It’s not like you’ll be blamed if anything happens to him.” Mu Yang rolled his eyes.

“Tsk.”

Well, at least all was well now.

“Vice-Potentate, I know what I’m doing, and I will make sure nothing bad happens,” Li Tianming assured him.

“Fine then, just remember to take a break when you need to. Same goes to the rest of you.” Mu Yang scanned the rest of the disciples. They were still amazed that Li Tianming survived this, Xing Que and Chen Hao included.

Sage Chen saw the twins. “The two of you, come here.”

They walked up, not forgetting to throw an unfriendly glare at Li Tianming.

“Don’t bear any grudges. You all shouldn’t be fighting amongst yourselves, so just shake your hands and make peace,” said Sage Chen.

He didn’t want his own son to look for trouble with Li Tianming. Likewise, Li Tianming did not intend to fight with the twins, given their relationship with Sage Chen, who had helped him greatly.

“I will accept your apologies.” Li Tianming held out his hand. He was willing to make peace, provided that they apologised for insulting Wei Jing.

“Father, he beat up Chen Yao, I have to take revenge for my little brother.” However, Chen Hao was not willing to cooperate.

“Take what?” Surprisingly, Sage Chen slapped Chen Hao without any hesitation, and sent the boy flying back into the air.

People said that Sage Chen had a good temper, but this hardly looked like it. Still, it was surprising to see how he educated his own son without any mercy. The crowd could only pity Chen Hao, who was kneeling on the floor, his face swollen and tears about to fall off from his eyes.

Why would Sage Chen educate his own son just for Li Tianming’s sake? Well, it was simply because Li Tianming was generous enough to end their conflict under a senior’s suggestion, but Chen Hao had refused it.

“Xing Que, do you think the same way?” After slapping Chen Hao, Sage Chen turned to Xing Que.

“Uncle, I despise that person.” Xing Que gritted his teeth.

“Be my guest then. But I have one word of advice for you,” Sage Chen said.

“Yes, uncle.”

“Both your father and I simply cannot believe that our sons have such low standards. With your current mentality and achievements, you are nothing compared to the two of us when we were your age,” Sage Chen said calmly.

Xing Que lowered his head when he heard that, his fists tightly clenched.

“Enough, leave the kids some face.” Mu Yang interrupted, and requested Xing Que and Chen Hao to leave first.

“Chen Hao.” Before they left, Sage Chen called out.

“Yes, father?” Chen Hao hung his head.

“If you are victorious in the Abyssal Trials, I will apologise for slapping you in front of everyone.”

"I will remember that, father." With that, the duo left the Flameyellow Pagoda.

Li Tianming must say that the slap looked painful.

"Uncle Chen, I'm in your debt. Even if they refuse to apologise to me, if anything happens in the future, I'll give them a chance."

"Don't bother, just beat them up if they are in the wrong. Just keep them alive. Without trials and tribulations, how would they improve?" Sage Chen curled his lips.

"Tianming, stop boasting. You are still miles away from catching up with them. Brother Chen, let the kids deal with their own problems. Shall we?" Mu Yang gestured.

"Let's go." Clearly, they had other matters to attend to, and it would seem that they had to leave soon.

"Oh and Tianming, your mother misses you. Drop by and visit her when you are free." Mu Yang turned and said before they left. He had been the one taking care of Wei Jing for the past few days.

"Sure."

"Oh and if you could bring Princess Ling with you and let her see her daughter-in-law, that would be even better," Mu Yang teased. He definitely didn't look like someone who would make such a joke.

"Not yet." Jiang Feiling was stunned for a moment, her face blushing bright red immediately afterwards.

"No problem, Vice-Potentate." Li Tianming answered. In fact, he wanted to return to the Wei Manor now, and let mother take a look at Jiang Feiling too.

"Dear, shall we?"

"Dear your head. Don't spout nonsense, lest my father hears it." Jiang Feiling rubbed her forehead.

"Okay."

After all, she was the Vermilion Bird Emperor's daughter, and her identity was that of a princess. She couldn't decide her own future without the Emperor's acknowledgement.

"I'm sorry, Ling'er," Li Tianming said.

"It's ok, big brother, don't take it to heart. Only time will tell if we are destined to be together," Jiang Feiling said gently.

"You are right."

"But I do want to visit Aunt Jing too, do you think I need to bring some gifts along?" Jiang Feiling played with the tip of her dress, her face blushing a faint pink.

"It's fine, you will be the best gift she can ever receive," Li Tianming said.

"HEY! What about ME?" The little chick chipped in.

"You? Maybe the best dinner for tonight." Li Tianming rolled his eyes.

"Hoes before bros? What a bastard," Ying Huo retaliated.

Those two were at it again. Jiang Feiling smiled, as she felt the warmth and happiness in her heart. She imagined the day when she would walk down the wedding hall with her pretty bridal dress, with this man by her side. But would it be possible? Would their hearts survive the test of time? She couldn't tell, and neither did she want to think about that.

"Big brother, let's go." She held onto Li Tianming's arms and made her choice.

She was never afraid of rumours and slander, and neither would she fear looks of contempt and disappointment. The arm she held was warm and strong, as if it would shelter her from anything in this world.

When she was attached to Li Tianming, she could feel what he felt, and look into his heart. It used to be scarred, but it was now vigorous once again, healed by her own efforts. Thinking of that had brought a smile to her face, yet there were tears flowing from the corner of her eyes.

"Is holding a handsome man's hand so touching that you cried?" Li Tianming was looking ahead, but a smile crept up his lips too.

"No, I was thinking about how you will be beaten to a pulp by Wei Lingxuan the moment you stepped back into Wei Manor. Thinking of the sad state you would be in made me cry." Jiang Feiling wiped away her tears.

She looked up and glanced at the side of his face. The contour of his face, the curve of his lips, it all looked just like the face from her dreams.

"Ling'er, don't worry." Li Tianming gently squeezed her palms, "Today is the first day I bring you to my mother, and I will make sure Wei Lingxuan can't even touch my hair. Do you believe me?"

"Nope."

"Ha, then be prepared to get smacked in the face for looking down on me when I get my glorious victory later." Li Tianming smiled.

"But would you really smack my face?" She tilted her head and smiled.

Li Tianming was taken aback. Her face was just too pretty, prettier than any sculpture or painting he could ever imagine. It wasn't just the appearance, but more of the clarity in her eyes.

"I would never dream of it," he said without hesitation.

Li Tianming didn't know what made him do it, but he found his lips on her cheeks a moment later.

"Big brother..." Even if the contact was just for a split second, her heart trembled. She had never gotten struck by lightning before, but surely that was how it felt.

"My bad."

"No worries."

Their eyes met, and Li Tianming finally understood how beautiful love could be. It was a feeling like never before, and the two of them were in a world of their own.

Or it would be, if not for the fact that there was an angsty, single little chick accompanying them.

“Look at y’all. That was just a peck on the cheek. Gotta wonder how it’ll be like when the two of you start plowing furrows in the bedsheets...”

And with that, the wonderful ambience that they had just up and vanished.

“You little twat...” If he could burn something with his sight, the little chick would have been a golden brown by now.