

**Chapter 221 - 219: A Concubine?**

Xue Duan snatched at this rope and replied hurriedly, "Beauties? Concubine? What type?" His mind was flashing as he seemed to conceive a possible way out before it devolved. Furthermore, his heart started to pound because Qi Lang had yet to reply, but Wei Wuyin spoke!

"King Xue...your subordinate declared that the entire Xue Country would hunt me down, kill me, and it was you that ordered this." Those words were spoken with a frigid flow, causing even Zuhei's spine to tremble as if he was in a frozen tundra.

"...Is it true?" Wei Wuyin's presence seemed to be quite impressive at this moment as his alchemical aura was replaced by a ferociously vast, momentous pressure that stepped on the hearts and minds of others.

This destabilized Xue Duan's mind a little further as sweat emerged on his forehead. Before he could speak, Zuhei flashed before Wei Wuyin, his scarlet eyes giving Xue Duan a side-eye with a vicious glint. "Is this individual a threat? Shall I eliminate him also?"

Uttering those words were no longer just Slaughter Intent but Battle Intent, intensifying its malicious effects three-fold.

Those words were like a ball thrown at glass, shattering Xue Duan's serene heart or what was left of it. "No! No! Of course not, Heavenly King Wei." He had forgotten about Wei Wuyin's discreet attempts, and this caused Zuhei's slip to be met with a biting response.

"Why don't I believe you?!" Wei Wuyin stepped forward a single step, and Zuhei's aura flared to the sky layer above, causing the weather to change and the atmosphere to grow unbearably tense and chaotic.

Xue Duan was truly not a good individual when under pressure. The rules of the Bloodforge Continent leadership elections was a democratic process that relied on its natives to select a King. This process, while it usually was focused on selecting the strongest, it was mostly geared towards the most talented. After all, the Bloodforge King can ascend to the Third Stage of the Astral Core Realm without restraint from the Myriad Monarch Sect.

However, not a single one did. If they did, conquering the entire continent would be easy due to the restrictions set by the Myriad Monarch Sect. But how difficult was that? Out of tens of trillions, there are only five million Astral Core Realm experts, and amongst them, the vast, vast majority were in the first two stages. It was far too difficult.

Due to this, he wasn't forged in countless battles and fought with his life on the line, obtaining every tooth and nail of others for his own sweat and blood. It was cultivating with abundant resources and ascending from natural talent and then being elected for hoping he'll stabilize their entire continent one day.

"Alchemic King," fixing his earlier mistake he said: "This was nonsense spouted by Zhao Zhitian, and our Xue Country harbors no ill-will towards you. In fact, I didn't come here to investigate this incident, but to find you." He glanced at Qi Lang, who seemed to have 'gotten' the signal and decided to help.

He stepped forward and said, "He's right. I was with him when this occurred, and he was fully intending to meet you. It was only a coincident, an idiotically independent move by that Zhao fellow to attack."

Wei Wuyin revealed a skeptical tilt of his head towards Qi Lang, "Truly?" He seemed to be seeking Qi Lang's certainty.

Xue Duan grasped at this, and when he saw Qi Lang hesitate to confirm, he bombarded him with spiritual messages filled with all sorts of lavish promises. Only after he offered the sun and moon did Qi Lang smile and nodded, "It is."

"..." Wei Wuyin went silent for a moment and said, "What did you want me for?"

Qi Lang felt a chill in his heart. This entire sequence was forcing Xue Duan to a specific action, but he didn't know why. Was it truly all for a beauty? Wouldn't it be easier to reveal who you are, your wealth, ability, and looks? What did you possibly lack? However, he didn't question it and simply felt pity.

Xue Duan said, "I heard you were looking for a concubine and I have quite a few unmarried daughters. I know its sudden, but I hope you can consider them."

"...Who?" Wei Wuyin asked, causing Xue Duan to still.

Who?

If it meant all of them, then have them all! However, he wouldn't dare say that as it'd cheapen their value. Instead, he calculated a few things and was about to say something when Zuhei intervened.

"The most beautiful princess is supposedly Princess Yifei. It is said she's as gorgeous as the moon, as brilliant and bright as all three suns combined, and is the top beauty of the continent. Only she is worthy of you, employer." Zuhei's words caused Xue Duan to freeze up instantly.

*'Not her!'* Xue Duan cried in his heart. That daughter of his was a headache and a half, and she had a very vengeful little reaper beside her that made him feel frustrated to the utmost. To offer her up, he felt that reaper staring at him with a vicious growl. However, if it was his legacy and life versus his daughter's? He would choose to keep his family and himself safe with the sacrifice of one.

That being said, was it really a sacrifice? Heavenly King? Alchemic King? Prince of Everlore? Less than fifty years old? How could marrying his daughter to someone like that be seen as a sacrifice? Was it not the greatest benefit in the starfield?!

"Yifei, is it? Okay." Wei Wuyin said, as if it was Xue Duan who offered. "I'll accept your generous proposal and take her as my concubine. Please make the arrangements for the ceremony. Since she's a princess, it's best I do it like this." After saying this, Wei Wuyin didn't give Xue Duan a chance to react. Qi Lang interfered and informed the Bloodforge King that responding with anything more will definitely cause discontent within Wei Wuyin's heart. Considering the reliance was already established between them, Xue Duan quietly accepted it.

"Then, how about in three months, Alchemic King?" Xue Duan had already settled this matter in his heart. He'll marry her off to an exceptional figure, and this would save his country from Wei Wuyin's wrath. It was a win-win.

...Right?

Wei Wuyin casually agreed, allowing him to make all the arrangements. He even left the words: "You better ensure nothing goes wrong...or else..." With a hint of threatening within.

Qi Lang gave one last glance towards the masked Wei Wuyin and deeply sighed in his heart. However, when he thought of the salivating benefits he received and would likely receive in the future for a job well done, he felt a lot better. He did his last assignment and informed Xue Duan to keep Wei Wuyin's identity anonymous until he revealed it. Considering Duke Zhao's actions and the problematic reactions others might have if it was revealed, he agreed without much thought.

In the end, Wei Wuyin and Chen Xiaowei left on her Shadow-Blight Hawk while Zuhei vanished, leaving Xue Duan and Qi Lang alone. The situation was wrapped up, ending in a ceremony for a concubine. This development was quite unexpected.

Xue Duan was smiling happily like a fool that averted certain disaster, giving Qi Lang heartfelt thanks for the support. He didn't know what would happen if Qi Lang wasn't there. He was going to give his all to properly arrange this union.

In the distance, Wei Wuyin had his eyes closed. *'Next, I'll finally be able to verify if it's possible.'* In truth, he had to thank Long Chen for this idea. Soon, he'll be able to not only grasp the Xue Country but obtain various other benefits. How much?

He was waiting with bated breath to find out.

Of course, he needed to make some preparations first. A few days felt as if it was enough, but three months? More than enough!

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In the distance, about a hundred or so kilometers away, the old man was among the injured and recovering cultivators that he saved. Xue Yifei stood directly beside him. Her hazel eyes were looking in the direction of her father and Wei Wuyin. She couldn't determine what was said, but her expression was a little pale.

While she didn't know what was being said, the old man was verbally transmitting what their exchange was about. In the end, his dull eyes couldn't help but close and he shook his head slightly. "Was this his purpose? It doesn't make much sense to me."

Xue Yifei's delicate, well-endowed, and soft body trembled slightly. Her brows furrowed inwards and she bit her lower lip. She didn't say a word.

The old man glanced at her and said, "Your father is not a match for that beastman of the canine lineage nor the Guardian. This felt like his only chance to reconcile after Duke Zhao's disastrous mistake, but I can't fathom what Wei Wuyin said to him that instigated such violent rage. I also don't think his goal is to have you as a concubine."

He started to make his own assumptions, feeling like the situation was missing far too many pieces to clearly see. With Wei Wuyin's status, wealth, influence, and potential, it would be a simple matter to pursue Xue Yifei directly or simply ask for her hand in marriage. It was incredibly unlikely she would reject him, right? Why the smoke and mirrors?

Xue Yifei paled even more. "He could've killed Xue Duan, and then removed our family lineage justifiably, right?" Her reference towards Xue Duan, her father, was cold and detached. One could see that she didn't have any good feelings towards this man that allowed her to be born in this world.

The old man paused for a moment and then nodded. "If everyone knew who he was, they would even support him and riot on his behalf." Duke Zhao's public declaration of intent was a breach of the Myriad Monarch Sect's rules, regardless if Wei Wuyin's identity was known or not beforehand. Furthermore, there were witnesses to this event. He looked around and his expression changed. Was the point of attracting so many people for this?

"So if something goes wrong with our union, he'll have further justification to act..." She asked again, her mind and eyes starting to clear up.

"..." The old man nodded again. If something went wrong, Wei Wuyin could easily flip the country after removing his mask, but since he could do that now, what's the point in waiting? The more he thought about it, the more confused he became. If he was an outsider who hadn't been told by Xue Yifei of Wei Wuyin's spiritual transmissions sent in secret that threw Duke Zhao into a mad fury, he wouldn't have as many doubts.

He would've...

Wait...

His pupils expanded into near-full moons.

He snapped his old neck towards Xue Yifei. An unexpected variable. If that's the case, this was the goal. Wasn't it?

Xue Yifei's panic and ashen countenance calmed down as well. Her hazel eyes were particularly resplendent as she observed Wei Wuyin's vanishing figure. A glimmer of understanding flashed through her eyes.

If Wei Wuyin knew that Xue Yifei had recognized his plans, his identity, and a hint of his intentions, he would be deeply taken aback. The praise he would have for her extraordinarily keen intelligence and senses would be endless.

And, a little frightening.

### **Chapter 222 - 220: Flowing Gossip & Sins**

A few days had passed since the devastating battle. During these days, wild and exciting gossip started to circulate throughout the continent!

"Did you hear? Xue Duan is giving Princess Yifei to that mysterious alchemist as a wife! Can you believe it?"

"Wife? I heard it was concubine! Also, she had to bear his child within a year at least! That's what my brother said."

"Pfft? Bear his child? Concubine? I heard she must swear a Spirit Oath on the day of the wedding and never see or touch another man again! This is a forced union, plain and simple. But she has to do it because the King is forcing her! How unfair is that?!"

"While that alchemist might be a little skilled, he's only a Lord Alchemist. Is he really worthy of having Princess Yifei as his concubine? I don't think so, especially after hearing what my Aunt said. He's extremely lustful and old, already having at least three thousand concubines so far! She's definitely unwilling to be another number!"

These rumors were like rampaging bulls and kept becoming more colorful, but the terms wife, concubine, unwilling, and forced union was ever-present. It circulated like mad, as if someone was fanning this flame throughout the country. Furthermore, these discussions were even happening outside the country. It was like a contagious infection that could only be talked about to alleviate the symptoms.

This was further exacerbated by the fact no one knew who this mysterious alchemist was. There were a few guesses, believing him to be a reclusive Lord Alchemist with a facial deformity, or a very old Alchemist seeking young flesh, or even Wei Wuyin, the Heavenly King himself! While the last rumor felt laughable to many, it was still a rumor that spread nonetheless.

It was a very controversial time.

Duke Zhao's death became nothing more than a quiet murmur to many as their focus was shifted elsewhere. While an illustrious expert of the ages met his untimely end, and hundreds of kilometers were devastated in the conflict, those unaffected cared very little. They merely offered some prayers and went about their lives. The cold and callousness of intelligent lifeforms were somewhat on display here.

While this was mostly ignored, there was someone fully making use of this time. Numerous independent architects and building materials from the outside started arriving, seeking to rebuild the damaged territory. Those who survived received the appropriate care and compensation, with all sorts of recovery products, and resources provided from an unknown source.

The rebuilding efforts were quite energetic. It even garnered a little attention. However, everyone knew that these were not the actions of the Bloodforge King but some affluent and wealthy individual with the heart of a saint.

An old man was standing in an area that was devastated almost entirely. It was formerly a mid-sized village and its protective formations were obliterated due to its close proximity to the battle. His hunched back and frail eyes swept the strong men who carried building materials on their backs and worked hard to build a foundation for buildings, repairing various irrigation and plumbing networks.

He was standing near a particularly large foundation of a building that seemingly would reach at least ten stories and span at least two kilometers. Those eyes of his revealed a ceaseless quiver, and even a little wetness within.

A masked figure silently flashed beside him. Calmly standing and looking on without speaking.

After several minutes, the old man asked: "Is it really true?" Those words were fueled with raw, heart-gripping emotions. If words could gain human form, these words would be on the brink of crying.

"The Ying Medicinal Sage Institute; It's the first of many that'll be set up with you as the founder across the starfield. It'll teach numerous gifted youths, orphans, and other individuals on how to save lives, learn proper apothecary skills, and even a little bit of alchemy. It'll also double as a free clinic, accepting any and all patients, free of charge. This is especially the case for children and infants."

"..." Ying's wrinkled hand that gripped his cane trembled without end.

"As long as you stay as my shadow, this will only be the beginning. But if you stop acting as my shadow, if you dare die before either satisfying me or finding me a successor to act as my shadow, I'll destroy it all. Know that your existence is the only reason it exists and its continued existence will forever rely on you." A frigid, heartless set of words resounded without a hint of emotion. However, from that tone, one could see the absolute truth within.

In fact, he added: "I swear an oath on my spirit that my words will remain true." A strange, unfathomably mysterious power seemed to link Ying with Wei Wuyin. It was a form of invisible karmic connection.

Then, Wei Wuyin vanished.

Ying stayed there, shrouded in silence. His heart was in chaos for a brief period. It took a while before a renewed and invigorated light seemed to enter those frail eyes of his. Wei Wuyin had stated that he would one-sidedly establish this non-profit institute and clinic that accepted others with the goal of helping others. It was a way for him to make amends, wash away his sins. A way that didn't require a single drop of blood being spilt to save others.

If it was anyone else, he wouldn't, no, couldn't believe it.

The resources and wealth required were extremely high, but after learning who Wei Wuyin was, his history, his potential, he knew that it was all possible. Within his heart, his purpose was solidified for life. Until the day he died or could find someone capable of replacing him, he would act as the most loyal, most exceptional shadow in this world.

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Wei Wuyin returned to the Chen Manor. He was slightly exhausted after organizing all of the specifics in regards to the Ying Medicinal Sage Institute. He had to hire established Medicinal Sages to teach and instruct the young and talented as well as provide adequate materials for cultivation and study.

It was a lot harder than he originally thought. And forming hundred-year long contracts reinforced by Spirit Oaths was a difficult struggle. That didn't even include the true difficulties that laid in the intent and execution. The concept of a free clinic was like an impossible dream in the cultivation world. The sheer selfishness others had, including the requirements to be a success and not devolve into a mess of corruption was beyond the word 'difficult' could describe.

For example, he had to ensure each member swore upon their Spirits an Unavoidable, Unbreakable Oath. It had to contain values such as willingness to treat any and all patients equally without prejudice. He wanted to avoid an issue with selective treatment, hoping to snuff at racism and speciesism before it

could begin. It also included a privacy mention, so information couldn't be sold directly or indirectly for profit or ill-intentions. Furthermore, while within the Institutes or clinic, one can not bring intentional harm to others that don't mean to intentionally bring harm to them.

As for outside? He didn't really care what they did in their free time. He knew there were limitations to devising a seamless oath, and he would never subject them to being unable to protect themselves.

In the future, this Oath would be widely known as the Oath of Saintitude. If it wasn't for the massive benefits in joining, very few would agree. Or the willingness to accept anyone with a desire to become a Medicinal Sage, be it without backing or talent in cultivation.

"Medicinal Sages...those who cultivate Hearts of Life Qi." Medicinal Sages is a very niche occupation. It wasn't very popular due to its similar yet not as direct issues it has with offensive power. While Life Qi was pure vitality-based energy capable of rejuvenating the body, mind, and spirit, it wasn't the best for self-preservation or strength. The only fortunate circumstance it had over Alchemic Hearts was that its elemental energies and Qi can be used to harm others, instead of being entirely useless due to its intrinsic changes.

This still was an issue that needed to be addressed. So, this meant he had to hire others to protect the academy while he developed a sub-division of cultivators that's entire purpose was to ensure the protection of the resident Medicinal Saints, students, its patients while in treatment or observation, and the Institute's building and reputation. All of this while remaining anonymous and detaching the influence and authority of the Myriad Monarch Sect.

"Truly frustrating...and expensive."

In the end, he could only push forward. After all, he had major plans for Ying, and he was a man of his word. While he wasn't a saint, he had no aversion to helping others if it suited his needs.

"But making an orphanage and shelter service is going to be a little bit difficult..."

### **Chapter 223 - 221: Clue To Two**

A full month soon passed and the public clamor and household talks caused by the announcement of Xue Yifei's engagement with the mysterious alchemist did not die down. In fact, it started to escalate as two divisions, against and for, were formed. Many were outraged by the Bloodforge King's reckless actions of forcefully sending off his most beautiful daughter as a concubine. While a few felt it was a good strategic move to attract a talented alchemist.

If this was a normal monarchy, one fashioned purely from strength, corpses, and blood, then this type of civil unrest wouldn't happen in the cultivation world. However, the Bloodforge King was an elected leader—elected by the people themselves. He was expected to act and uphold a certain degree of standard that conformed to the majority.

This was obviously a flaw within the Bloodforge King's executive power. While the few won't actively speak against him in fear of being silenced, when too many heads popped up in defiance, there was no way the king or his established government could handle them all. This gave them power. While it wasn't readily available, it was the power of unified influence. This was further bolstered by the rights granted to them by the Myriad Monarch Sect as native citizens of the continent.

Unfortunately, it was utterly impossible for the Bloodforge King to retract his proposal, even if he had regretted it. This was because the mysterious alchemist was THE Wei Wuyin. To him, doing so was the same as signing his own death warrant, and it was him who offered originally, so that made his situation even more awkward.

He thought that if those leading these vocal individuals knew who the alchemist might be that their actions would die down and influence others, but whenever he tried to quietly leak this information, it was scoffed off. This became even more certain as news from the Myriad Monarch Sect was released saying that Wei Wuyin had recently dual-concocted an eighth-grade product with the Grand Imperial Sage.

If he was in the Myriad Monarch Sect concocting products with the utmost authority, how could he be here? Xue Duan wanted to find someplace to cry but had no tears. Even when he found Qi Lang later to seek an explanation, he received the most obvious answer. It was simply a smoke-screen devised for the public so that Wei Wuyin wouldn't be bothered on his vacation after the recent commotion.

He could only drag his feet away in utter sadness, unable to deal with the civil unrest. His silence only bred further frustration and outrage, and the faction against this union became even more vocal, with even his own daughters and sons seeking answers from him. Dealing with this, he had nothing but a headache and helplessness.

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At the far-edges of the Xue Country eastern borders, there was an abandoned mine that had long since been excavated until exhaustion. It was closed over a thousand years ago and hadn't been explored since.

Wei Wuyin arrived with Su Mei on foot. Su Mei took the lead, arriving at the abandoned mine's entrance. Wei Wuyin peered into it slightly, noting the desolate aura within and gaping darkness that tunneled for who knew how long.

"This mine was originally used for excavating and extracting spatial-type ores that forged Storage Rings and Void Gates. It was called the Crescent Void Mine, and it was owned by a force that vanished abruptly nearly twelve hundred years ago. After their departure, it was used for two hundred years until it became desolate and bare. It has some stability issues, and those that enter often experience illness, and thus no one has ventured into it since." Su Mei explained.

Wei Wuyin's silver eyes inspected it deeply, relying on his Celestial Eyes to see the unseen. While it was completely devoid of any signs of useful materials, it contained a unique desolate aura that permeated through every rock and speck of dirt. This aura was brought about by absence and deprivation.

'*Intent?*' He felt a unique intent-like aura from it. It reminded him of Battle Intent. In the Scarlet Solaris Sect, the arena used by disciples for competitions was said to have been the place of an epic battle with an expert who birthed Battle Intent. It was this aura that invigorated the senses, heightened the focus, and instilled fierce will within the hearts of many. However, it was weak and sparse.

Here, the Desolate Intent was rather potent. In fact, it was purely formed from it. Entering here, one's spirit might be affected, causing the regression of one's innate energies. He walked forward and saw the



dilapidated archway that marked the entrance. With the flat of his palm, he rubbed its wooden and ancient surface.

From his vision, traces of his physical energies were being influenced. These traces entered the wooden surface and vanished, enhancing the desolate aura further and further. It was as if it was transforming energy into its own. However, it wasn't strictly absorption or devouring.

"Peculiar." He commented only this one word. The entire mine was infested with this desolate aura.

Su Mei stepped forward and said, "The illness was a direct result of severe deprivation of vital energies, such as yang and physical energies."

Only then did Wei Wuyin realize only his physical energies were being extracted and refined. As for his yang energies, they were far too condensed to be extracted. Nodding slightly, he removed his palm. "Zuhei tracked her here. The Ancient Void Gate, did you investigate it?"

Su Mei nodded, "Yes. The Ancient Void Gate seemed to be nearly two thousand years old, and it seems to be completely functional yet strange. I've brought over a specialized Architect and he inspected it. His opinion was that it couldn't be used. However, its unique design made it slightly different than normal Void Gates."

"How so?"

"He said the Ancient Void Gate required an additional object besides a Void Disk to activate: a key. Something very specific. This made it useless and unable to be scrapped and reformed." Su Mei was quite interested, and she also came to the same conclusion. While it was seen as useless, it was likely only the case for conventional architects. This key might be able to allow it to start.

Wei Wuyin rubbed his chin slightly. He was just about to enter the mine when Ori started to shake intensely. "Hm? What is it?" He directed a mental message to it.

Ori, his Divine Elemental Astral Soul, was quite animated at the moment. It was trembling in excitement. "That aura! Let me absorb it!" It was asking for permission.

Wei Wuyin frowned lightly, turning to Su Mei. Usually, these Astral Souls of his would act on their desires without permission as long as it wasn't harmful to him or themselves. It seemed it had some reservations about externalizing with Su Mei there. However, Wei Wuyin trusted Su Mei entirely.

Woosh!

Ori left his body, causing Su Mei to start with wide eyes. Ori's body, or what was visually seen, was a spherical world with an external white layer, and contained within this white layer were vibrant and active elements that interacted, fused, clashed, and grew within. It was as if you were staring at a nascent world still in development.

Su Mei, while shocked, didn't ask or question. She simply watched as the three-millimeter white sphere entered the mine. It was exuding phenomenally scintillating white light that caused her eyes to somewhat hurt. The aura that was infected throughout the mine was decreasing by the second.

*'That's an Astral Core? It's so big!'* As a well-read cultivator, she recognized an Astral Core and the unique signature it possessed almost instantly. Furthermore, she didn't expect it to be three millimeters.

She knew the average-sized Astral Core of a newly ascended cultivator was ten-thousandth of a meter. However, Wei Wuyin's Astral Core was nearly three thousand times that size.

How much astral force did it contain?!

If the world knew that he had just broken through into the Astral Core Realm and had an Astral Core of that size, they would be thrown into an absolute riot.

After waiting for two minutes, the light within the tunnel faded alongside all traces of its desolate aura as Ori returned, it quaked slightly as if belching then returned to Wei Wuyin's dantian. Su Mei watched all this and thought: *'Is this the benefits of having two Astral Souls?'*

The ability to allow your Natal Soul or Astral Soul to leave your body was unthinkable to those with one. The soul acted as the brain center for energy flow and without it: BOOM! All the energies contained within the body would become wild and free, bloating the cultivator and then trying to escape!

While Wei Wuyin trusted her, his secret of Kratos and Eden was still his most kept one. It seemed unnecessary to share everything for the sake of it. He wouldn't hide, and if she asked, he would tell, but he wouldn't reveal everything simply because.

He closed his eyes slowly as he observed the changes within Ori.

"What?!" His heart trembled slightly as he inspected each individual element within Ori's World Sea. They were brimming with all sorts of elemental power, but he found out that his Earth Element, one of the base elements, had changed slightly. It was grey and seemed to contain barely any vitality, if any at all.

*'Is this Desolate Earth Energy? Did it absorb the Intent and infused it into the Earth Element?'* This was incredibly shocking. The fundamental basis of his earth energies had changed. His five advanced elements all had unique qualities, and his Heart of Elements Intent was unable to form due to lacking Intents for earth, fire, water, and wind.

He had tried to figure out a way to change this, but it seemed nearly impossible after a bit of experimentation. His elemental energies and their particular essence qualities seemed permanently birthed and solidified. However, this had changed his view on it. Could absorbing pure Intent aura be sufficient to refine his pre-existing elemental energies?

This thought fueled his desire to find the other three Intents capable of doing so. *'Since only earth was changed, then it must be the Intent has to be compatible with the element.'* After concluding this, he set up a goal to find auras rich in Intent aura and ventured into the mine.

Su Mei followed. She inspected the tunnel and realized the desolate aura that caused illness and an uncomfortable atmosphere had all vanished.

They soon arrived in a very dark, far and deep tunnel that was sealed off and hidden from common view. If Zuhei hadn't tracked her scent here, he might've missed it. Especially since the desolate aura made spreading one's spiritual sense very uncomfortable. After all, spiritual energies that fueled it was a byproduct of physical, mental, essence, and soul. If one component was affected, the others would soon destabilize due to imbalance.

It wasn't long before they made their way through and found an opening. A dilapidated Void Gate in the shape of a hexagonal arc, not the normal bent arc common within the starfield. There wasn't a hint of dust on it, clearly having been activated recently.

Wei Wuyin arrived and inspected the dim runes and markings on the surface of the Ancient Void Gate. Then, his eyes were drawn to the very top of the Void Gate. A crescent-shaped notch was located there.

He subconsciously touched his neck, which hung the ever-present crescent moon necklace he obtained from the three-layered ring. It was an exact match!

Su Mei said, "the crescent notch is the keyhole according to the Architect." However, she looked towards Wei Wuyin. It seemed she realized that what he wore on his neck constantly and this notch was a perfect match. However, she didn't know where it came from or why Wei Wuyin kept it wrapped around his neck. It was this reason that she insisted he come down here personally.

"..." Rubbing his necklace, he pondered briefly. While others might feel the need to place the key into the notch to see a response, he didn't. Instead, he said to himself: "There has to be another one of these on the Myriad Yore Continent."

After that, he turned to Su Mei and said, "Find out if the force that originally owned this mine had connections with the Myriad Yore Continent and other continents throughout the starfield. Also, find out everything you can about it. Everything."

Su Mei was taken aback for a moment before she nodded.

Wei Wuyin turned to the Ancient Void Gate, his eyes brimming with curiosity. Could the woman that he tried to recruit be a Blessed? Just like the Commander on the Myriad Yore Continent? She was adept in Spatial Arts, which was why he sought her out. Her unique set of skills was valued very highly by him, especially because she could use Spatial Arts prior to assailing the Fourth Stage of the Astral Core Realm, Spatial Resonance Phase.

After a moment of thought, he decided not to find out what was on the other side yet. This wasn't originally his lucky chance, so he didn't dare take this risk. If the other side could verify that he had stolen the necklace from its rightful owner, then who knew what they'd do? Furthermore, Void Gates sent you to who knows where and were not bridges. What if he couldn't return?

Therefore, he'll have to handle his matters in this starfield first before considering other avenues of exploration.

## **Chapter 224 - 222: The Day Arrives**

The divisive day approached and inevitably arrived. It was the day that caused civil unrest, fierce arguments, and heavy objections: the Ceremony of Acceptance. It was fairly simple, lesser than a wedding, and practiced amongst human societies. It held similar characteristics to a Dao Companion Ceremony, but far more one-sided.

The acceptance of a concubine, man or woman, was done through this method. A gathering, a celebration, an oath, and a kiss. It would all be witnessed by those invited, by the heavens and earth, and by loved ones. During the oath, the concubine in question would swear an oath of loyalty, and this was more traditional and not Spirit of Heaven-based.

In monarchies, it was said that the average Emperor or King underwent three thousand of these in their lifetime. They were typically far less infamous than the one now, where the princess regarded as one of the top beauties of the Country was being married off to an unknown alchemist without any explained reason. Furthermore, the rumors of her unwillingness and forced participation furthered the infamy.

Even now, countless households were looking at their calendars and sighing at the inevitable and pitiful fate of a young princess. Perhaps if she was a Consort, this matter wouldn't be as heavily opposed, but a concubine was negatively viewed. They were mistresses of a household. The upcoming ceremony and title felt like a mockery for someone of her beauty and status. Each citizen felt as if someone had spat on their faces.

In the Xue Country's Capital, Xue Yifei stood before an oval-shaped full body mirror that levitated slightly off the ground. It seemed tethered to her will as she could control its position with a mere wave of her hand. Reflected in this mirror was her exceptional countenance further accentuated by minimalistic yet artistically placed make-up. Her current attire was a phoenix dress with golden embroidery accompanied by bundled hair with gorgeous accessories.

At her side were two petite and youthful looking girls with bright eyes and puffy cheeks. From their appearance, one could tell they were twins. They were ensuring her dress, posture, make-up, and various other points on her body were absolutely perfect. One of them couldn't help but exclaim as she fixed a hairpin, "So beautiful! Any man would have the fortune of fifty thousand lifetimes to marry you."

"..." Xue Yifei.

After a non-response, and a slight admonishing look from her sister, the girl realized her mistake, her bright eyes dimming as she lowered her gaze. That's right. Xue Yifei, this beauty that could make the moon seem pale and the sun lose its light was being sent off as a concubine. A concubine was a woman without status, and this ceremony was merely a means of celebrating and highlighting the other party.

Only kings and emperors would host them to highlight their status, esteem, self-importance, and network with other forces. It was more of an excuse to have a party rather than an official ceremony.

She bit her lips slightly and whispered softly, "I don't like this. It's not right, it's just not right." Her words contained a hint of pity and a depth of emotion that revealed her love towards Xue Yifei. They were her at-birth servant girls, and they had served her since they were born, so to see her given away in this farce truly made her heart feel like it was tearing in two.

"Xiu Yi!" The other twin, named Xiu Fei, verbally called out. She was stricter and more realistic in her views of the world, capable of keeping her emotions in check and recognizing the situation. Xue Yifei did not need to be reminded of what she likely already knew. Her tears and words would only sour the mood.

Xue Yifei seemed unbothered, her hands waving the oval mirror as she regarded her appearance. She truly could outshine the sun and cause the moon to pale. Her looks were breathtaking and exquisite as the most lovely painting. Now that she was dressed up, very few could claim that she wasn't the number one beauty in the continent.

"I'm sorry..." Xiu Yi pitifully apologized, unable to keep her tears from falling. Xiu Fei could only helplessly look on at this sister of hers who wore her heart on a sleeve. She moved her hand to brush away those falling tears and sighed deeply in her heart.

"Maybe we should..." Xue Fei was just about to say something that could be considered treasonous and defiant when Xue Yifei turned her hazel eyes with golden flecks towards Xiu Fei, revealing a calm gaze. She halted her words, and luckily too as one of the hidden auras within this room had fluctuated slightly.

Xue Yifei, having just saved her beloved servant girl from punishment or even death for even thinking of disobeying the king, calmly spoke: "You think it's beneath me to be a concubine of another, right?"

Xiu Fei and Xiu Yi's little faces shook as they looked at Xue Yifei. They softly bit their lower lip in unison, not daring to nod, but their eyes told it all; they truly did not think she should be! In fact, they prayed that that young man who had an unordinary relationship with Xue Yifei would arrive and extricate her from this situation. This was likely the thought of all her supporters and those who were vocal against this union!

Xue Yifei followed up with, "Then I ask you: If the person I'm to be given to was Wei Wuyin, the Prince of Everlore, an Alchemic King before fifty, and a Heavenly King of the Myriad Monarch Sect with the ear of a Grand Imperial Sage, would it be beneath me to be his concubine?"

"...!" Their eyes widened, disbelief, and uncertain flooded without end. However, Xiu Fei was more quick-witted and answered, "No."

Xiu Yi was taken aback. She was slightly biased and wanted to refute that single word answer of her sister, but even with all her emotions, she couldn't formulate a single thought that supported the answer 'yes'. How could Wei Wuyin, this legendary figure that was likely on par with the King of Everlore, a figure that still defined today's era, would be unworthy of her? In fact, perhaps a concubine might be a little much.

While she was a princess, while she was a beauty, their status wasn't just a simple comparison of heaven and earth. Her lack of talent was renowned, and her status was built on another man, and while she was beautiful, did this starfield lack beautiful women? Talented beauties? Beauties with better status, better talent, and cleaner relationships?

Obviously not.

Wei Wuyin might've risen just a few years ago, but his influence, estimated net-worth, status, and potential went beyond most in this starfield. Of course, this excluded strength and cultivation. After all, he was less than fifty

"But how could someone like that be compared to that mysterious alchemist? He's nothing!" Xiu Yi tried to explain the difference. However, Xiu Fei seemed to realize something as her eyes flashed with disbelief. When she saw the calm look on Xue Yifei's face, she couldn't help but be startled. Was it really so?

Xue Yifei turned away, her eyes looking at the mirror. Despite her words, she knew that today was not going to be a peaceful day. While this unexpected event had likely been a massive benefit to her, and

while she wasn't typically one to agree with the lifestyle of 'riding the lap of a dragon', this was her chance.

*'He won't accept this. He's in love with me, and we're bonded. We're fated, right? But are we?'* If this was a year ago when her feelings and belief of her future was cemented, she might've accepted it, but a massive boulder hit the road and forcefully made a forked path.

Should she continue the path of her current destiny and follow him silently, lovingly, and supportingly or take the other path. Whether it was a blessing or a curse, it created another direction of destiny that allowed her to exert her will, one that she could actively have a say in.

In life, one believed in fate and love, and when grasped, it can become one's sole purpose for existence. She was destined to be a support, to stand behind him as he excelled at limits unknown. However, she was never given the option of being the leading character of her own path, choosing her own love. Concubine? That was a fancy word of being a man's woman, and it could easily change with a smart and intelligent mind.

In a year, a decade, a century, she might be able to obtain the title of Consort or even Wife. She believed she could.

When Wei Wuyin entered her life, she saw him as an opportunity to stand on her own platform. No longer relegated to a supporting character, and becoming an elite amongst the world, renowned not for her relationship, but for her name—not his. This required exceptional strength and the Dao of Alchemy was the heaven-defying means to gain it! It could modify talent, it could promote cultivators beyond their means!

Look at the King of Everlore. In his era, he had acted as a supporting role to many leading, era dominating characters. This included the Founders of all the current hegemony, and even the current overlord of the Tri-Vision Starfield, the San Clan, was only where it is because of him. No one considers the King of Everlore an expert, his legacy in alchemy, but countless refer to these experts and founders, they established thousands of years of long histories.

The Divine King Han Xei overthrew dragons that once dominated the starfield! The Grand Monarch Wu Yu ruled the entire starfield at one point! The Demonic Abyss Mountain's Abyss Master created a planet for demons, and it thrived to this very day! It was his actions that allowed demons to safely cultivate, propagate, and become a top-tier species!

They were all kings of their generations who had performed actions that rippled endlessly outwards. But who remembers the women that stood behind them? The strong ones that supported them, bore their children, and loved them silently?

No one!

They faded away and died, hoping their children can match their fathers. Unfortunately, without the King of Everlore's support, that was utterly impossible!

She knew this important truth, and she did not want to settle like those women had. Especially if she had a choice! And now, like a honey pie falling from the sky, Wei Wuyin had arrived and casually desired her.

This was her opportunity!

This was why she never said anything about the ceremony, the forceful means of her father, or anything else because it doesn't matter. After Wei Wuyin ends his incognito vacation, she would be known publicly as his woman, and her status would inevitably rise. Who would think her pitiful then?

If they truly fell in love, wouldn't her life be like a shining star that stretched through the ages? The next Divine King Han Xei? The next Wu Yu? The next Abyss Master? It would be her descendants that would rule this starfield!

She took a deep breath. Her eyes soon regained a serene calm after those thoughts caused her heart to race. With a somewhat flushed face, she smiled brightly in the mirror. Her appearance truly was breathtaking, especially at this moment.

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While her ambitions and dreams were near actualizing, a hooded figure arrived that sought a different outcome. Dressed in a tattered black robe that seemed as if it had seen a thousand battles, he walked forward with exceptional momentum. Beneath his hood were irises of two distinctively different colors, one crimson like blood and the other was black as night.

His fists were clenched tightly while those eyes stared at the Royal Capital's Ceremonial Grounds.

"I'll never let you be used like this, Fei'er. Wait for me."

### **Chapter 225 - 223: Musings Of Wei Wuyin**

Within the Sky Layer, Wei Wuyin laid comfortably atop Xiao Bai's broad and meaty back as he soared in circles. He was dressed in a golden robe that sparkled, and it was lavishly embroidered with heaven silk. It was a material that attracted the essence of heaven and earth and thereby had a very bright and exceptional glow. Embedded on his shoulders, forearms, and boots were astral gens, purified and condensed astral essence placed. He truly seemed like an opulent alchemist with an immense amount of wealth.

It was quite obnoxious with this flex, as if telling everyone they were definitely poorer than him. While it didn't fit his style, it served its purpose.

*'Today's the day, huh?'* It's been a total of three months, and he had been quite busy during this. Most of which were to handle matters both on and outside the continent, a little bit of cultivation, and a whole lot of preparations. At the moment, his Astral Cores were expanded to their limits. They could not grow a micrometer more.

At the moment, each was a full four millimeters, and they contained an exceptional amount of Astral Force. If he merely had a single Astral Soul, he could cover this continent with a thin film of it. It was quite intriguing how Astral Force was stored and contained. Despite it all seemingly fitting in a four-millimeter spherical Astral Core, it was more like a four hundred thousand square meter space.

In fact, it felt like a small world. As someone who had read about the Astral Core Realm, and had many of his questions answered by Wu Yu during their exchange, he knew that the Astral Core Realm was truly like that: developing a world.

The World Sea was its nascent phase. The next phase, Sky Ruler, with it gaining control and connection with ambient mana. As a possessor of a Zenith Mortal State, he knew how important having strong personalized mana or compatibility with ambient mana was. It essentially powered the way of Permanence.

It was like the World Sea gained an atmosphere. Then came Soul Idol Phase, and this nascent world gained a defining spirit. Spiritual energies contained physical, mental, soul, and essence qualities, so this could enable further development of this world to an apex.

The Spatial Resonance Phase allowed it to actively absorb and emit spatial energies, solidifying itself and the area it occupied firmly. As one continued to cultivate, the nascent world became clearer and clearer. At the end of the Astral Core Realm, the Ninth Phase, one even gives birth to a miniaturized Solar Star within the Astral Core!

It was beginnings of a starfield, the beginnings of a myriad of Heavenly Bodies!

Wei Wuyin couldn't help but marvel at the exquisite and refined aspects of cultivation. Since the beginning, whether it was the Foundation Establishment Realm which prepares the body to handle various energies and Metaphysical Qi, or the Qi Condensation Realm that accumulates, refines, and nourishes it, they all stemmed from the world and seemed to push towards a single goal.

*'The Dao of Alchemy is said to be divided into three ranks, Mortal, Mystic, and Immortal. Mortal ends at the peak of the Astral Core Realm. Does this allude to a profound truth? Could it be that the first three realms purpose are to cultivate to the limits of mortal potential?'* This thought, assumption, theory, or what have you, constantly swirled within his mind.

He couldn't help but wonder what the Realm of Sages reached. If it exceeded mortal potential, then how far did it go? Mystic? Immortal? How powerful was that? Could it create starfields with a wave of their hands? Destroy them?

Considering Wu Yu, an existence that should've been dead for thousands of years was still alive and thriving with a chance of revival, it truly was a question he wanted to be answered. Unfortunately, Wu Yu only touched upon the beginnings of the Mystic Ascendant Realm, never exceeding the First Stage. However, it was already so miraculous!

"No wonder cultivation is difficult," he softly spat. In the end, he had to conclude these thoughts of his. The future was simply too far, and while trying to see far was good, trying to see beyond one's limits only leads one to trip over the present. Tunnel visioning towards a specific goal above all else never worked out well. It was best to take leveled and measured steps and hope that there wasn't a cliff somewhere on your path.

Stretching lightly, he lifted his upper-body and peered downwards with his Celestial Eyes. He could see the royal capital filled with individuals all over arriving, likely expecting a grand show from the vocal and powerful majority during the ceremony.

He inspected a little, his eyes sweeping on the incoming individuals. "Has he arrived yet?" A wisp of expectation surged into his heart. This facade of the Masked Mysterious Alchemist, the charade of this so-called ceremony, and all the rumors, dissent, and spreading of information that he himself propagated heavily was about to bear fruit.



Regardless of where he was, he should've heard and known. Unlike in normal circumstances, he didn't want to hope that the Heavenly Daos will guide him here. As a Blessed, he knew that other Blessed's actions were often protected. The Heavenly Daos might give a slight chance to help a Blessed to another Blessed, such as him in Golden Milk City, but it'd never direct them into conflict.

For example, if he factored in the Heavenly Daos intentions at Ash Dragon City, where he robbed the city lord, the Commander should've been safe and completely far away from him. The timing was absolutely perfect, in fact. If it wasn't for his Inheritor of Sin's bloodline, and his usage of free-will, he never would've killed him. He never would've even met him.

What should've happened was a risky, nearly lethal mission of him stealing from the Mortal God-level City Lord. How well he did it and in what way was the defining points of all his Blessed lucky chances, and it determined how much his gains would be, if any at all.

His escape would be hurried and their paths would've never converged, if everything went according to the Heavenly Daos plans. Therefore, he had to orchestrate this entire event, fan the flames, and lure him here of his own free will.

He had pieces, and all he needed to do was place them together. And lo' and behold, he was right.

His silver eyes brightened as he felt a very powerful aura within the crowd. While it was deeply contained, it couldn't hide from his Gaze of the Celestial Eyes. It viewed this unique aura with utmost clarity.

"Oh?" His heart throbbed slightly as he observed this aura. It was his flesh and beating heart that Kratos resided in. His Mark of Mortal Myth, or the foundation of Kratos' Spirit Form, was quivering. It wasn't from excitement, fear, but out of interest.

"He has the same! No, he is the same!" Kratos sent a mental message, clarifying the situation.

Wei Wuyin's eyes widened slightly. He understood what that meant and his interest deepened. Did that azure-scaled lizard leave the Myriad Yore Continent already or was there another one here? Considering his powerful spiritual sense, there's no way he would've missed either.

However, he was most certain of one thing: this man cultivated the True Dragon Transmutation Method! The very same method that allowed him to formulate his Heart of Blood(line) that was the nascent form of Kratos! He had a Mark of Mortal Myth! He had a Heart of Blood(line)!

His silver eyes gleamed endlessly with light. However, while the purity of their bloodline could not be compared, his Mark of Mortal Myth's energy, aura, and power was definitely above his own. His Mark of Mortal Myth was merely at the Third Stage, but the aura from this man's mark was unquestionably higher. Furthermore, his Mark had only advanced because of reaching the Zenith Mortal State.

Not even assailing the Astral Core Realm had enhanced its powers, and its grade was the defining marker of his bloodline potential, purity, quantity, and abilities. While he had a True Dragon Bloodline refined using tens of thousands of years of lifeforce, it was so thin that he couldn't advance further.

He needed more Blood Essence of the same quality. He first thought about capturing Anu, but considering his past strength, a starving camel was still larger than a healthy horse. Furthermore, it had

a limited amount of Blood Essence. He would have to use hundreds of thousands of lifeforce to refine Blood Essence that rivaled his own.

Wei frowned slightly, but then his eyes brightened to their utmost limits. What he just thought about, if it was true...oh boy! The gains would be limitless.

His excitement hadn't faded as he looked below. He saw the ceremony was making preparations to officially start. With a confident and relaxed smile, he walked to the edge of Xiao Bai and just let himself fall.

"I can't miss my own ceremony!"

### **Chapter 226 - 224: Falling Into It**

The ceremony was starting! With the eye witness of the influential and powerful people of the Xue Country to bear witness, it slightly exceeded the standard ceremonies that the Bloodforge King would have. Of course, the reasons for their presence weren't filled with blessings and excitement, but interest and curiosity.

Over the last three months, this ceremony had been the talk of the entire continent. The lofty and elected Bloodforge King was sending off one of his daughters as a concubine! Furthermore, it was to a mysterious, suspicious alchemist who no one knew or heard of.

Since the beginning of the Bloodforge Continent's history, a princess had never had a status lesser than a wife. This brought about all sorts of mixed and conflicting feelings in their hearts, and even their national pride seemed to have taken a hit. How could this Bloodforge King decide such a matter? And, he wasn't explaining anything to anyone!

Such an abuse of authority! Did he believe his status as the Bloodforge King allowed him to determine other's futures without backlash? These were the thoughts of the citizens, from the wealthy and powerful to the poor and weak.

Outside of the Royal Capital, countless citizens marched at the city walls in protest of this type of engagement. They were fierce with their yells and shouts. Perhaps if they were alone, they wouldn't dare do this due to the fear of being killed off in silence, but with so many people around, how could they be silenced?!

It was also beneficial to them that the Bloodforge King might be heralded as the person with the highest cultivation base and the strongest potential, but he wasn't the strongest person. There were others with cultivation bases at the Second Stage of the Astral Core Realm who resonated with their heartfelt wills! And the difference between them wasn't that big!

These experts were currently in the Royal Capital, sitting in their assigned seats with indifferent expressions, but their eyes radiated displeasure. These figures stood at the same level as Duke Zhao and weren't just limited to the Xue Country, but those who engaged in conflict within the contested territory outside.

In fact, several Earthly Elite rank disciples from the Myriad Monarch Sect had arrived. While they could be considered outsiders, not a single one of them was to be underestimated. Many belonged to the

factions of Sky Nobles and Prime Imperial Sages. While these individuals can't set foot on the continent due to their cultivation bases, they could definitely influence things from behind the scene.

The civil unrest was an opportune time for many to make plans to place their hand in the pot that was the Xue Country. Who knows, they might even be able to stage a coup out of this, placing their own selected figurehead as the Bloodforge Continent's representative. This was the same as owning a vast majority of resources in the Bloodforge Continent!

While all this went down, in the Ceremonial Grounds, Xue Yifei was beautifully dressed and her face was expertly touched with exquisite skill. She was gorgeous with her crimson-colored phoenix dress. Accompanying her was her two at-birth maids, Xiu Yi and Xiu Fei. They were also pretty but only served to accentuate the looks of Xue Yifei.

She was the centerpiece of today's event and all focus was on her. Before Xue Yifei were numerous experts or those of high renown both inside and outside the country. If the guests today were any indication of the importance of today's ceremony, it nearly reached levels of a Queen's Wedding with all those of authority and relevancy in the Xue Country being here. Even she was somewhat startled by this.

The Ceremonial Grounds was an open-air venue with various statues depicting past Bloodforge Kings and platforms of worship. One of these platforms was the center stage of the ceremony with Xue Yifei within the middle. A priestess stood behind her, her aura pure and untainted by mortal dust as she was garbed in white. She wore a thin veil with a strange cross hanging around her neck.

The audience was directly before them. They were all seated in delicately arranged locations within the grounds and could be said to be viewing it was every angle.

Xue Duan had a calm look on his face as he regarded all these arrivals. He didn't have an ounce of fear in his heart as he regarded these individuals that obviously were here for a play or sought to instigate trouble. If they knew they were currently trying to interrupt THE Wei Wuyin from accepting a woman, they would definitely regret making such a foolish decision to stick their noses where they shouldn't.

He could only coldly snort in his heart. Regardless of what they do, he didn't have to handle any matters. There's no way a domineering existence like Wei Wuyin wouldn't handle them all with the heaviest of hands. The more he thought about it the better he felt.

He sat in a position of honor amongst the crowd and shrugged off all the ill-glances with an indifferent smile.

The ceremony was all ready to begin, but the character that had created this entire mess was nowhere to be found. Where was this mysterious alchemist? Who was behind the mask? Many wanted to know! They had to know!

Step! Step! Step!

A series of footsteps seemed to quiet the thoughts of everyone as their gazes were subconsciously attracted to a single direction. Coming from this direction was a golden-robed figure with a faceless mask. Even today, he wasn't revealing his identity! This brought about the ire of many!

But as they followed his path to the platform that Xue Yifei stood on, none of them dared to speak a single word. In fact, a very strange set of events happened at this very moment.

Woosh!

Woosh!

Woosh!

Numerous experts within the audience stood up and directly took to the skies, leaving the venue. Their movements were abrupt, and they seemed to act without the slightest hesitation. The shocking thing was...these groups of people were all from the Myriad Monarch Sect! From the Earthly Elites to the Mortal Captains, they departed and left.

In moments, the crowd lost thirty percent of its audience and they vanished into the horizon. Flabbergasted by these events, those of high status and power within the Xue Country was immediately hit with a bout of astounding confusion. A few had connections with these experts and sent spiritual transmissions, but they received no reply.

It was beyond strange!

Before they could react, Wei Wuyin arrived beside the stunned Xue Yifei. Her hazel eyes looked at his faceless mask with all sorts of conflicted emotions. She could say with a hundred percent certainty that this was Wei Wuyin, the Heavenly King and Alchemic King of the Myriad Monarch Sect! Especially after all the members of the sect left.

From the beginning, she felt that she was being used as a tool for an objective, but she couldn't understand...until now. It seems her thoughts were somewhat naive.

The old man who typically stood beside her was also a person with a somewhat clearer grasp of Wei Wuyin's identity and actions, so when he saw the members of the Myriad Monarch Sect depart as if they were paid actors sent off, his heart gripped with fear. Others might not be able to immediately understand what was happening, but he did.

A helplessly sorrowful sigh left his lips and the thought of leaving left his mind. He was old, so it would be best he just accepted his fate. In the end, this world was quite unfair...

Wei Wuyin saw that within her gaze was a moment of understanding, and he smiled behind his mask.

Xue Yifei said suddenly, "Who did you choose?" Her words were soft and delicate but they exuded a unique wisp of refined intelligence often unseen in anyone.

"Chen Xiaowei." A single name left his lips, and this name sent tremors into Xue Yifei's heart. She had to calm herself as she scanned the crowd, witnessing the confused faces of her relatives and high-level members of her country.

"Can you spare these two little ones?" She didn't ask for much, but for Wei Wuyin to spare the lives of Xiu Yi and Xiu Fei. She knew she didn't have the qualifications to do so at the moment.

"Haha. We'll see." Was all he said with a hearty chuckle as his faceless mask turned towards the priestess. Her eyes hidden behind a veil revealed a hint of light and she seemed to have thought of something. With a deep breath, she began the ceremony with a declaration. This brought the attention back to Xue Yifei and the mysterious alchemist.

However, the atmosphere wasn't so good and lively anymore. A lingering air of foreboding started to creep into the hearts of many and many felt like something sinister was lurking behind the scenes.

The Bloodforge King was startled for a moment as well. The abrupt departure of the Myriad Monarch Sect individuals was something he didn't expect. While he knew they might not cause trouble, he didn't think they would leave the moment Wei Wuyin arrived. In that case, why did they come with displeased looks?

Wait...

His heart started to race as he swept the faces of the remaining crowd. All those here were the elite experts of this country, the backbone, and pillar at which he established his candidacy and influence. Their progenies and disciples were also accompanying them. This...

His eyes flicked to Wei Wuyin who hid behind the faceless mask and they donned with a light of realization. While he had walked into the trap without fail, he still realized it directly before it snapped shut. However, it was too late. While he could try to run, try to cause chaos, but perhaps this was also within his calculations.

A chill suffused his heart as his vision began to darken and tremble. He reflected on everything that happened in the last three months and felt as if it lined up perfectly. The only issue left was a patsy was needed. A scapegoat that could be blamed for all of it!

Just as these thoughts were formed, an aura filled with torrential power and mythological force arrived above the skies. A tattered black-robe wearing figure floated within the skies, wearing a hood that gave him a hint of mystery and carrying a black scabbard on his back.

Xue Duan's lips quivered as he whispered in the weakest voice effusing despair, "No..."

### **Chapter 227 - 225: Yuan Longshi & Xue Yifei**

"Here we go," Wei Wuyin's eyes brightened considerably behind his mask. A wisp of tangible excitement suffused his heart and thoughts. However, the crowd below had varying reactions.

"Is that Yuan Longshi?" A young prince shouted in disbelief, his finger pointed towards Yuan Longshi's floating figure with quivering movements. His words induced a collective shift of eyes as they all observed the black-robed figure that floated in the sky with an impressive aura.

This was the legendary figure referred to as the Demonic Dragon. He had turned the entire Xue Country upside down for the last twenty years. His legend was one often marveled by as being filled with twists and turns that allowed him to elevate to a fearsome elite.

Yuan Longshi was only thirty-five years old this year, but when he was fifteen, he had been nothing more than a recently deceased guest elder's son in a noble clan's household called the Jian Clan. They weren't at the top-tier of clans within the country, but they had an expert ready to assail the Astral Core Realm.

According to the reports gathered by witnesses during the event as well as facts that were exposed later, Yuan Longshi was betrayed. Originally, it was said he had poisoned the Young Maiden of the Jian Clan and attempted to do unsavory things to her.

As a result of his incompetence, the event was noticed and interfered by a young master of another clan's household that was truly within the ranks of the top-tier clans. This led to his subsequent crippling and punishment of imprisonment. This clan rivaled the Chen Clan and had an Astral Core Realm elder overseeing matters, its protection, and legacy. It was called the Yuan Clan.

This was how the original story was told, but as time went on and events, conflicts, highlighting events of the country occurred, it was slowly learned that Yuan Longshi's father who had died was a former member of the Yuan Clan. Furthermore, he was that Astral Core Realm expert's son!

And as for that story of his ill-intentions? It was all fabricated by that young master of the Yuan Clan to steal a cultivation treasure left behind by Yuan Longshi's father and the woman that was 'supposedly' nearly taken advantage of and poisoned was a lie.

They were in a long two-year relationship since they were thirteen and he was in love! In a bout of excitement, after his father's death and inheritance were given that included the cultivation treasure, she sold him out to the young master of the Yuan Clan.

How despicable!

Regardless, the Jian Clan attached itself to the Yuan Clan and with their help, they would later earn an Astral Core Realm expert. All her actions were justified if this was considered, but the heavens worked in mysterious ways.

Somehow, Yuan Longshi escaped from imprisonment and recultivated with renewed vigor. With this chance, he obtained the backing of various forces that helped support his climb safely until today. Countless events, chases, and epic battles unfolded amongst the younger generation of the Jian and Yuan Clan and Yuan Longshi.

And he surpassed them all!

In the end, the truth was exposed for all to see and Yuan Longshi decimated the Jian Clan into dust as the Yuan Clan made reconciliation with him, but not before suffering immense losses of youthful talents and elderly experts by his hands.

His story wasn't over just yet. His relationship with Xue Yifei played a heavy part in his survival. Her status as a princess, no matter how neglected, helped pave him a path to success. Their relationship was speculated to be unordinary and even intimate, but no one really knew if that was the case. Regardless, Yuan Longshi helped her constantly and they both rose in status and power.

With his talent for cultivation and overwhelming combat strength, her intelligence, and the Xue Clan behind her, they were a frightful duo.

To see him here didn't surprise many, but they didn't understand why he came with such murderous intentions. Oh right! Xue Yifei was being forced into this. And she was about to be classified as another's. How could he allow someone who helped, supported, and cared for him be snatched away so brazenly? Even if it was Xue Duan, the Bloodforge King and her own father, that arranged it!

Xue Yifei's eyes softly stared at the floating figure that exuded a highly combative aura. Her delicate eyelashes quivered slightly. Considering how things were likely going to turn out, she didn't know how to feel seeing Yuan Longshi arrive with readiness to fight the world and challenge the will of experts.

Should she be emotionally moved? Well, she wasn't.

Should she yearn and pray for his successful rescue attempt? Well, she didn't.

Perhaps if she was truly forced into this, perhaps if the person that stood beside her wasn't THE Wei Wuyin, perhaps she would experience these emotions. Perhaps. However, this only reinforced her belief that her destined role in life would always be secondary and require the existence of another to protect her. Yuan Longshi saw her as a damsel in distress that he needed to save because of his feelings and emotions, because he believed it was right.

How selfish.

She wanted to claim her own strength.

She could make her own decisions.

Wei Wuyin ignored Yuan Longshi who seemed ready to tackle the world, its ghosts, and its gods and he observed Xue Yifei without a hint of fear or happiness in her eyes. When he recalled Lin Ziyang's gaze and expression when Long Chen arrived, she was filled with yearning and hope.

His interest grew. Xue Yifei's beauty was supreme within the continent, and she was most definitely the most gorgeous woman he'd seen to date. He couldn't say he didn't desire her, wanted her as his own, but he thought she would be heavily attached to Yuan Longshi. Due to this, he felt that his desire to accept her as a concubine had to remain an unaccomplished want rather than a possible reality.

However, from her current gaze, he felt slightly unsure and confused for a moment. *'Is it possible?'* His eyes beneath the mask lost its brightness. The various plans he conjured that would inevitably result in the death of this beauty was changing at a rapid pace from this single thought.

From the beginning, the moment he heard of Yuan Longshi with all his understanding of the politics of the Bloodforge Continent, he had devised a meticulously conceived plan to not only take over the Xue Country but swiftly take over the Bloodforge Continent as well.

First, he needed a candidate for Bloodforge King. It needed to be someone absolutely loyal to him and could be trusted, someone of a little renown and intelligence. Chen Xiaowei had sworn a Spirit Oath immediately upon realizing the situation and was his selection.

Second, he needed to gather all the elites, experts, people of status into one big pot to be roasted and removed. It didn't need to be everyone, just those within the country at the Astral Core Realm and above. To do so, he needed a large enough event, hopefully controversial and interesting enough to elicit all of them to arrive.

This included all high-ranking and high-status members of the former royal clan, the Xue Clan.

A King's concubine ceremony was often characterized as a party and there were no limits to those who wished to join as long as they had the qualification to participate. Xue Duan handled this nicely as he invited everyone important. Furthermore, with it being such a hot topic, how could they not arrive for this likely lively festival and possible downfall of the current King due to civil unrest?

It didn't fail the slightest, especially after him using various means to instigate their arrivals. It was fairly easy. With all those present here, as long as they died and Chen Xiaowei remained, she could take over

as Interim Monarch until the next election. He even ensured that Qi Lang would support her decision because of the unexpected 'tragedy' that occurred. Moreover, he'll offer his support from behind the scenes and she'll easily transition into the new Bloodforge Queen.

The last missing piece was someone who could take the blame, a scapegoat for this slaughter with a reason behind it. Yuan Longshi had actually fit perfectly for this role, especially with his bloodthirsty reputation, the unexplained and unclear relationship with Xue Yifei, and his strength.

It all fitted perfectly. It was like orchestrating the most perfect play, and there wasn't a single issue in cast or production. With a mere thought, he would isolate the Ceremonial Grounds in an Astral Concealment and Defensive Array and kill everyone that needed to be killed. With a little bit of smoke and mirrors, countless citizens would 'witness' Yuan Longshi arriving, the Ceremonial Grounds being enclosed, and everyone dying.

He, as the mysterious and faceless alchemist, would vanish from the face of this world as an eternal mystery.

As for Yuan Longshi and Xue Yifei? They would seem to the world as partners in crime that slaughtered their oppressors and ran off in mad love to places unknown. He even planned to place an unreasonably high bounty on them for their 'despicable' actions as Wei Wuyin, further enhancing the illusion of truth.

However, when he saw Xue Yifei's countenance and emotions that seemed to be nearly as attached as he assumed to Yuan Longshi, he couldn't help but wonder: Did she want to become his concubine? His woman? That thought produced wisps and strands of confusion in his eyes and heart that couldn't be dispersed.

"..."

He abruptly said to Xue Yifei, "Did you want this to be real?" These words were spoken with not nearly as much confidence usually contained within his voice. It still lingered with confusion.

Xue Yifei was startled. Her head turned towards Wei Wuyin with more than just a little surprise in her eyes. She had firmly believed that next year today would be the anniversary of her death. She had no desire to fight against it. Furthermore, could she even do so?

Wei Wuyin was the only person that couldn't be resisted in this portion of the starfield, and he had already unfathomably laid out this perfectly intricate trap without a hint of error. He must be prepared to face any and all variables to arise. While this only made her regret that she couldn't truly become his concubine, perhaps his wife later, she didn't have any hope of him changing his plans.

But now he turned to her and asked her this question. This sent her mind into a hyperactive state of disbelief, uncertainty, and hope!

"Yes." She answered firmly. Her gaze reflected her firmness. In that gaze wasn't a will to live, but her most honest feelings.

"You don't know me, you know." Wei Wuyin added, his voice continued to become even more uncertain.



"I'm willing to," Xue Yifei didn't even hesitate half a step to respond. She added, "You similarly don't know me, but would you reject me on that basis?"

Wei Wuyin thought for a moment and shook his head. The concept of accepting someone was to get to know them. If you rejected everyone you didn't know from your heart, how could you ever form any meaningful relationships? How could you trust? Were you even human at that point?

"Then why do you want me?" She asked. While her words were being said, Yuan Longshi was silent alongside everyone else. They expected an epic fight to begin, but the two couples started an exchange. Furthermore, it was verbal and open! It essentially determined that this wasn't false!

Wei Wuyin answered honestly, "You're the most beautiful woman I've laid my eyes on, besides my own mother." While this was inherently a superficial reason, most relationships were built on these reasons.

Xue Yifei felt her heart calm when she heard this. While she could be considered a beauty, was she the most beautiful in the world? Perhaps to some, but not to others. Everyone had their own aesthetic sense of beauty and personal rating, to receive such a rating from the man they wanted to be with without hesitation, and with the utmost honesty was quite rare. She could tell he wasn't lying even a little.

To him, she was the most beautiful woman besides his mother. And she would never contest that latter portion because the first was enough for her!

Wei Wuyin didn't ask her the same question. It was mostly irrelevant. Regardless, she would want him for features he possessed, such as his talent in the Dao of Alchemy, wealth, or perhaps she even suspected who he truly was, then status and potential would factor in. However, that wasn't something he was particularly against. In fact, he wanted women who similarly wanted him for who he was, and wasn't he all those things? Did he not earn them?

He nodded slightly, turned to Yuan Longshi, and said: "Even if you say I agree to take you as my concubine, he still has to die."

"...!" These words caused an uproar as many were confused, uncertain, suspicious, or outright enraged. The rage was from Yuan Longshi! His aura flared without end!

Xue Yifei looked towards Yuan Longshi. All those years they fought together, she had helped him, he had helped her, and the stories that could be told about them; she didn't want to see him die or suffer. However, this wasn't something that was within her power to change. While she didn't know why he needed to die specifically, if Wei Wuyin said this, then it wasn't possible to change.

She calmly said, "Yes. Yuan Longshi...you should run."

Before Yuan Longshi could flip into an outrage, likely even attack.

Wei Wuyin stepped forward, placed his hand on his mask, and started to lift it up!

### **Chapter 228 - 226: Don't Hold Back**

"GASP!" A collective suction of air produced a resounding exclamation that overtook all other sounds. The atmosphere that felt strange, uncertain, and tingled with a premonition of great tragedy was

overturned with a single action! Wei Wuyin lifted his mask, revealing a handsome to the extreme face accompanied by a pair of silver, resplendent and radiant eyes.

To these elites, experts, and masters who were acclaimed and renowned within the Xue Country, how could they not recognize the distinctive facial traits that formed Wei Wuyin! While there might be those ignorant or dismissive of its importance, they definitely were not!

This face, for the last four years, had caused countless news to fly with all sorts of achievements and praise. It was tagged with the potential to be the King of Everlore's successor, and what propagated this news to the utmost was his lack of an Alchemic Soul! To have such ability at this age eluded to a much higher degree of talent than the multi-era defining King of Everlore.

Xue Yifei's heart raced as she laid eyes on Wei Wuyin's face. Like the others, she had seen artistic portraits or written descriptions, but this paled heavily in comparison to the real thing. In fact, it was as if those portraits would never be able to extract his alluring and impeccable features regardless of who was behind the brush.

*'This is how he looks?'* This thought tumbled into the minds of every last one of them. It wasn't just due to his countenance or radiant eyes, but his aura that accentuated everyone of his features. With the added eyes that radiated a hint of dominance, warmth, and intelligence, it was particularly heart-snatching.

Wei Wuyin removed his mask, revealing his identity for all to see. While this would likely produce a chaotic domino effect that he'll have to withstand shortly after, it was the only way to salvage the situation if he decided to alter his original plan.

Those in the audience were so enamoured with his looks that they hadn't realized that their lives were about to be forfeited for the ambitions of the man behind them. It was quite a hilarious thought, really.

"You're Wei Wuyin!" A more energetic and fanatical member of the crowd exclaimed. It belonged to a middle-aged looking man that smelled of herbs. His eyes flashed with a trace of seven-colored light from time to time. He wasn't at the Astral Core Realm, merely at the Ninth Stage of the Qi Condensation Realm.

He was a Lord Alchemist and someone who took the path of an Alchemic Soul. Beside him were male triplets that bore facial scars and radiated a fearsome aura. They were his protectors, and all of the beastman race's ox lineage, but their ferocious looks were heavily diminished as their jaws were dropped in shock and disbelief.

Wei Wuyin turned to him and nodded, "I am." Then, after verifying this, he looked at Yuan Longshi and said, "You interrupt my ceremony with obvious ill-intentions. Prepare to leave your life behind." He tried to sound like an arrogant and unreasonable individual. But when he spoke, it didn't come off as such. In fact, many within the crowd thought it was par for the course considering Yuan Longshi's entrance.

After all, these were the words of Wei Wuyin!

Yuan Longshi was startled for a moment, clearly taken aback by this reveal. He was unsure how to handle this matter, because he was in a lose-lose situation. When he arrived, he didn't plan to become

enemies with the entire Myriad Monarch Sect or his own continent, but attacking Wei Wuyin would most certainly lead to such a result.

And he wasn't stupid to think the Guardian of this world would stand idly by and let Wei Wuyin die or that Wei Wuyin didn't have some supreme expert or experts protecting him in the shadows. This was THE Prince of Everlore. He was a Heavenly King and an Alchemic King.

A single word from him could usher a war or condemn a clan, and the past spoke volumes on the veracity of this. He was now stuck between a rock and a hard place, especially considering his own emotions towards Xue Yifei. If it was any other alchemist, perhaps he would be confident, but it was Wei Wuyin!

His heart and head pounded with frustration.

Wei Wuyin thought for a moment, and for some odd reason, he had this desire to proclaim a bounty on Yuan Longshi. It was a very odd sadistic thought with him scurrying about to fight for his life under the pursuit of many. When this thought emerged in his mind, he frowned. This was because it wasn't the Heavenly Daos influence.

It was like an innate feeling that seemed to be brought about by being near or desiring to kill Yuan Longshi. *'Is this an expression of his karmic luck? Is this Calamity Avoidance? Am I affected or is my awareness of it already a sign that I can't be?'*

He recalled the Black Skeleton's recount that his calamity couldn't be avoided because his Karmic Luck Value was too low. However, in that calamity, Long Chen had beheaded him. A Blessed. From what he understood, Calamity Avoidance was under the influence of the Heavenly Daos, and it consumed karmic luck value and allowed one to have a chance to benefit in some cases.

If that's so, then having less Karmic Luck than another Blessed seeking your life made it impossible to avoid their pursuit, but if you had more, was it a hidden influence between the two that'd divert their interaction? A way to avoid Blessed conflict?

This thought circulated through his thoughts for a moment before his silver eyes became slightly solemn. *'If that's the case...'* He looked at Yuan Longshi, *'He has a higher Karmic Luck Value than I do!'*

He felt this assumption was the absolute correct one. This was a feeling that seemed to originate from his blood.

A trace of greed flashed in his eyes but was hurriedly suppressed. It was best to take this one step at a time. As for issuing a bounty on Yuan Longshi? Absolutely not.

"Qi Lang, KILL HIM!" He shouted loudly without hesitation. He didn't order Zuhei to test Yuan Longshi nor did he do it himself. If he had a strange trump card that could abruptly and miraculously kill him like Long Chen, then where would he go to address that grievance? To King Yama? He'd rather wait to see such a grand figure. It'd be better if it never happened.

The crowd was startled by his declaration.

Yuan Longshi's expression changed as a vast without equal spiritual force within the continent started to seethe above him. It was like a great ocean was about to topple before his head. He lifted his head up and his eyes shrunk considerably.

Qi Lang was the Guardian of the Bloodforge Continent. Normally, he shouldn't interfere with its citizens or issues outside of preventing unnecessary devastation to the continent. But Wei Wuyin was like a judge that held absolute authority in the Astral Territory at the moment, and he could shield him in the case of any backfire. Furthermore, he had long since thrown his lot with Wei Wuyin, and he intended to hug this golden thigh tightly.

Therefore, he descended without any hesitation from his tower. His killing intent was brimming. Before he could deal with Yuan Longshi, he heard Wei Wuyin's voice.

"Do not hold back! Kill him without everything you have! If you don't, I'll make sure you're buried alongside him." Wei Wuyin's shout made everyone realize that he was absolutely determined to kill Yuan Longshi today, and their hearts trembled. How unfortunate was this lad? He just tried to crash a ceremony and hadn't said a single word verbally before being sentenced to death!

It was quite pitiful.

Qi Lang stilled. In truth, he was about to execute a basic attack to handle someone of Yuan Longshi level. After all, while Yuan Longshi's cultivation base seemed to have achieved the Sky Ruler Phase, the difference between the Soul Idol Phase and Sky Ruler Phase was massive. However, Wei Wuyin's words overrode his innate pride and he didn't hold back. He didn't dare to.

Yuan Longshi realized the situation wasn't looking too good for him, but he would never back down from a fight. If Wei Wuyin sought his life, then he'd kill Wei Wuyin regardless of who he is or was. His eyes gained fierce determination and pure ferocity.

Did Wei Wuyin think he was an insignificant insect that could be dealt with at will? He had built his path on a pile of corpses and rivers of blood, so he was not some soft fruit that could be squashed and forgotten.

Wei Wuyin was merely an alchemist. The Dao of Alchemy might be broad and profound, but it was truly nothing before the Martial Dao! The Dao of Combat! What hidden expert? What wealth? What status? Before my saber, before my might, only death was your only result!

He grasped the hilt of his saber, and turned his eyes towards the sea of spiritual force that hung above his head. His heterochromia eyes brightened with two distinctly different glows. One was innately demonic while the other contained an ancient feeling of myths and legends. His aura flared into action and the surroundings were pushed away forcefully.

His Second Stage of the Astral Core Realm cultivation base seemed incomparably solid and potent.

Qi Lang floated within this sea of spiritual force and his robes fluttered without wind. He seemed like a true immortal. With a clench of his fist, the entire sea of spiritual force was sucked into his palm and vibrant green light surged! It was as if he was holding a brightly lit star.

This caused everyone's heart to pound in shock! Was he going to attack? Wasn't Wei Wuyin here? The attack of an Astral Core Realm expert at the third stage could shatter the continent! This was why they were completely outlawed. The exceptional power of their astral force was too much for a continental flat earth to withstand.

If it was a durable planet, he could fight to their heart's content without much environmental, but not here!

Even Yuan Longshi's eyes narrowed suspiciously. Any assault would cause enormous collateral damage, and if this was a full-powered attack, this continent would be undoubtedly changed on a fundamental level. It might totally collapse.

However, Qi Lang didn't launch his attack. Instead, his eyes focused on Yuan Longshi. Just as he was about to say something, Wei Wuyin's eyes flashed. He lifted his leg and stomped.

BOOM!

This stomp didn't create catastrophic destruction, but its sound was incomparably loud. In an instant, the entire continent started to erupt in a thin layer of film that engulfed every expert, lifeform, piece of leaf, and existence on the continent that was below the Astral Core Realm.

*「Continental Multi-Astral Array: Protective Layer of the Guardian」*

The consequence of elites fighting was expected and prepared for by the sect. They established Astral Arrays throughout the continent that could be activated by its guardian to defend against sudden attacks from enemy forces or unexpected clashes against experts. It was activated and deployed at the speed of light and before anyone could blink, all those below the Astral Core Realm were targeted and enshrouded by this thin ward.

Even an expert at the Third Stage of the Astral Core Realm would find it horrendously difficult to pry open these wards without sufficient time, and this affected every single thing on the continent, including the working ants and the continent itself! As for Astral Core Realm experts, the protective layer blinked past them entirely as if it had eyes. The only exception being Wei Wuyin.

Yuan Longshi, Qi Lang, and everyone else was absolutely startled. Quite a few had never seen this array activated before nor even knew it existed!

Qi Lang glanced at Wei Wuyin. Every second this Astral Array was used consumed an absolutely enormous amount of essence stones and resources. Furthermore, only he should have the ability to activate it! But Wei Wuyin had the method to do so?

"You don't have to worry about any fallout from fighting or costs. The former is handled and I'll cover the latter." Wei Wuyin spoke once more to reassure Qi Lang. He knew that Qi Lang didn't want to attack because he could eliminate the continent. Even Zuhei didn't dare to use any Spiritual Spells or Astral Arts while fighting Duke Zhao because he could obliterate this little continent.

With his identity revealed openly, he didn't mind this. Even if the formation stayed active for an entire day, he'd at most have to pay about two hundred billion essence stones—about two hundred astral essence stones or ten Astral Sea Pills. That was such a casual amount that he ate that for breakfast.

Literally.

Xue Yifei's eyes focused on Wei Wuyin. He was going all out to kill Yuan Longshi, but she didn't have much conflict in her heart as she expected. In fact, there was a hint of expectation, desire, and excitement that swirled about endlessly.

Qi Lang nodded with relief. Then, he opened his clenched fist and lightly threw the scintillating light towards Yuan Longshi! This light transformed into a green-colored twister!

「*Wind Astral Spell: Twisting Spirit of the Wind*」

### **Chapter 229 - 227: A Blessed's Trump Cards**

The twister was merely the size of an average human, but its powers could not be estimated by its size! It was composed of condensed wind and spiritual force and every rotation seemed to produce a tearing force that ripped away astral force!

Those in the ceremony experienced a dip in color on their faces, turning as pale as ash. This was especially so for Astral Core Realm experts who weren't protected. They hastily circulated their astral force and shot off like scurrying ants in every direction. This included the old man.

That twister felt like it was pulling out his astral force and spiritual energies! He had never felt so terrified in his long life and the twister wasn't even directed at him. As for its target, Yuan Longshi was very courageous as he stood his ground and circulated his astral force to withstand the twister's tearing powers.

His astral force was tinged with a reddish and black light, and it seemed to rumble with the faint sound of roars. Wei Wuyin looked on and his eyes narrowed.

This was a type of Draconic Force. It was potent, honed, and dangerous.

"Oh?" Qi Lang was mildly shocked when he realized the twister's powers were resisted. However, it was merely mild, so he pressed downwards and the twister shot towards Yuan Longshi without mercy. In a blink, it was directly before him, threatening to engulf him whole.

「*Thunder Astral Spell: Erupting Bloom*」

Yuan Longshi was about to unsheathe his saber when Qi Lang coldly snorted. It was like a thunderous clap to the senses as everyone below the Astral Core Realm felt their vision go briefly black, and that was while protected by the Astral Array.

Again, the main target wasn't them but Yuan Longshi and he stilled and trembled. This momentary lapse allowed the twister to engulf and surround him, capturing him fully! It spun rapidly to the point Yuan Longshi's body could no longer be seen.

Qi Lang wasn't an inexperienced puppy, and he fully executed his superior Spiritual Force with continuous attacks. It was this superiority that made the Sky Ruler Phase and Soul Idol Phase massive. Regardless if it was spiritual strength, aura, energies, or sense, they held absolute supremacy.

In most cases.

Wei Wuyin frowned. Life and death battles between experts were often handled in a few moves, and this held true regardless if you were in the Foundation Establishment, Qi Condensation, or Astral Core Realm. Superiority was determined by cultivation base, arts, armaments, or simply taking the initiative, but it was usually decided very quickly.

However, if there was an obvious exception to this rule, then it had to be Blessed. Even though he had demanded Qi Lang to go all out, and he had made optimal actions, he hadn't summoned his Soul Idol Manifestation! If he did, his combat strength would rise depending on the number of Soul Rings he possessed.

It was typically understood that those with one Soul Ring had no multiplicative effect, but from two onwards, each Soul Ring doubled one's Spiritual Strength when activated, and this bolstered Spiritual Spells!

If someone had three Soul Rings, their strength would increase by three-fold! If someone had nine, it would be a nine-fold increase!!

However, Heavenly Daos influence was hard to fight against. While he was a Blessed, and he wouldn't be affected by it, Qi Lang would definitely be influenced regardless of what he says. This included Zuhei. Even if they didn't notice it immediately, they might never go all-out.

ROAR!

Interrupting all thoughts, Yuan Longshi's captured silhouette started to glow within the twister, forming an outline of his form. He was currently being ripped apart by the astral force, but seemingly held on with an exceptionally powerful physical body. Considering he had a Draconic Astral Soul and his heart acted as his dantian, his physical body was many times stronger than ordinary cultivators at his level.

The roar was vicious and powerful! Its sheer force caused the twister to slow down and then without any other indication, explode apart! Freed, Yuan Longshi's eyes stared at Qi Lang with monstrous killing intent. However, his tattered robe was completely devastated and turned into loose rags.

The robe was a broken Astral Armament that he obtained from an enemy. After killing him, it acted as a protective shielding, but its upper limits had been reached and broken by Qi Lang's twister. If it wasn't for the robe protecting him, he would've been instantly killed.

A lingering trace of fear circulated within his heart even as he seemed ready to murder the world. He hadn't expected his recent breakthrough into the Second Stage of the Astral Core Realm would be followed by a battle with someone at the Third Stage. Perhaps if it was an ordinary expert, he could easily hold his own without any trump cards due to his foundation and strong physical body, but Qi Lang was an elite of the Myriad Monarch Sect!

He had a sublime foundation, exceptional talent, and elite-tier combat strength for his phase. He might be at the very top! Considering he was assigned as the Guardian of an entire continent, he would not be weak. There weren't many of them in the Myriad Monarch Astral Territory.

Qi Lang was taken aback by Yuan Longshi's survival. His attacks were capable of eliminating any Sky Ruler with ease. He frowned slightly. When his gaze subconsciously turned to Wei Wuyin, he saw his

stern and solemn gaze which caused his heart to nearly leap out of his chest. He had to finish this cleanly and swiftly.

Therefore, he no longer held back.

*「Soul Idol Manifestation: Astral Soul of Wind-Lightning」*

Behind Qi Lang's back was a three hundred meter image. It was vague and indistinct, nearly ethereal and transparent, but it held a dominating presence that overtook the senses. The image was of a twister engulfed in lightning, crackling incessantly within and rotating at world-ripping speeds.

This three hundred meter-sized image was truly mind-stirring to the spirits. Everyone felt as if their Spirits, Natal Souls, and Astral Souls descended into a world of twisting winds and electrifying lightning. It stimulated their senses to a point of almost overloading them, and they had to hurriedly retreat their spiritual senses.

Surrounding this twister was a set of three white rings that emitted misty light. These were Soul Rings, and they worshipped the Soul Idol! They also indicated the level of progression of a Soul Idol.

"A three hundred meter Soul Idol!" The old man exclaimed with disbelief. At some point in time, the old man had arrived next to Xue Yifei. Fortunately for him, Wei Wuyin enshrouded him in the protective ward. All other Astral Core Realm experts were already thousands of kilometers away in horror, trying to avoid the devastation released by a Soul Idol Phase expert.

Xue Yifei's eyes glowed slightly. "What's so special about it being three hundred meters?" She asked with a hint of curiosity. She wasn't very well-versed in the basics of cultivation. After all, Soul Idol Phase experts were a rarity within continents. They were a rarity even in the entire Myriad Monarch Astral Territory.

The old man couldn't move his eyes away from the shocking idol and explained with a hint of fervent desire and reverence, "A Soul Idol's size is a direct representation of the quantity of spiritual energies! The solidness of it in the material world is determined by the quality! And the rings indicated how far they completed the Third Astral Tribulation: The Soul Rippling-Creation Tribulation!"

Xue Yifei once more saw the three rings, the transparent form it possessed, and the size. She felt like she now understood a little way to determine the strength of these elite cultivators.

Wei Wuyin didn't add anything to this. It was true that the old man was correct, but he didn't explain that a Soul Idol's rings started from one to nine. The fact Qi Lang had a three meant his spiritual foundation was piss-poor. Before true talents, he would be very insignificant.

However, Qi Lang finally bringing this out meant he was no longer held back by the influence of the Heavenly Daos. Or perhaps, it was too late.

Indeed, just as this thought entered Wei Wuyin's mind, Yuan Longshi didn't simply stand there and die. He lifted his head to the sky. After taking the deepest breath, he released a bellowing sound reminiscent of a dragon's roar!

ROAR!!!



The clouds parted, the thin ward protecting the continent rippled ceaselessly as it was influenced by the sheer force of this roar. Even Qi Lang's eyes shrunk as his Soul Idol was directly shattered. As for him, he was blown away by the pulsating surge of compressed air that exploded towards him. He could barely react before it hit, and his body was sent flying into the Sky Layer. Without even a shout, he was out.

The eyes of everyone trembled as they focused on Yuan Longshi. At the moment, his upper-body was covered in blood-colored runes that gave him a demonic feeling. With his hands, he tore at the rags on his body and revealed his bare chest. His muscular and defined form was impressive without looking grotesque. Its natural curves and bends alluded to an exceptional physical form.

It could barely match Wei Wuyin's own.

"He didn't draconify?" Wei Wuyin quietly murmured to himself. He had expected Yuan Longshi to execute Draconification, instigating the Mark of Mortal Myth's potential and allowing his innate bloodline abilities to match Qi Lang. However, Yuan Longshi did not. Instead, he seemed to have invoked a separate transformation that increased his physical energies ten-fold.

With just the power of his physical body, he blasted an expert like Qi Lang away. This once again allowed Wei Wuyin to realize the trump cards possessed by Blessed. He was still holding back yet could reach this level of strength.

If Long Chen reached his level, would he have a similar situation? Considering who his guardian and master were, it seemed likely. Wei Wuyin's silver eyes brightly lit for a moment as a wisp of excitement surged within.

Yuan Longshi roared once more, causing the air to rumble and quake. He turned his bloodthirsty and murderous gaze towards Wei Wuyin. If looks were hungry, Wei Wuyin likely would've been eaten whole by this gaze. It felt somewhat disgusting to be stared at.

'*Evil Methods?*' He realized this feeling originated from Yuan Longshi's entire body that was now focused within his gaze. Just as he was about to take action to end this...

BOOM!

The above sky layer exploded as a figure sped back like a missile. He was surrounded by green winds and crackling lightning, and his forehead was bloody. Even his clothes were ripped apart, causing him to lose his Immortal bearing. At the moment, only murder remained. Qi Lang clenched his fist and didn't hold back, especially since the Astral Array was activated.

「*Wind-Lightning Astral Art: Thunderous Storm*」

He viciously lanced his fist downwards as he dived into Yuan Longshi. A rumbling storm engulfed his entire body that crackled ceaselessly with lightning. Even the hue of the world changed and the air carried traces of electricity.

Yuan Longshi turned his gaze away from Wei Wuyin and saw this attack. His ferocious aura and presence were quickly suppressed by this strike. Qi Lang held nothing back in this, unleashing everything he had.

ROAR!

This time, Yuan Longshi actually started to release a draconic aura as if he was on the verge of Draconification! From behind him, a faint and incredibly blurry image of an eye was being formed. Wei Wuyin could see faint ripples emerge from the eye.

"Ahhhh!" A delicate and gut-wrenching scream resounded, but it wasn't from Yuan Longshi or Qi Lang, but Xue Yifei! She was on the verge of seizing and her body was emitting a faint draconic aura.

Wei Wuyin's eyes snapped towards her and saw something he hadn't before. From within her sea of consciousness, directly at her Mind's Eye, a silhouette was moving about and resonating like a bell. This bell-like echoing soundwave was not just being emitted by that silhouette, but by Yuan Longshi's manifested image.

Even with his Celestial Eyes, he hadn't noticed this before.

His eyes revealed an unimaginable dense level of interest. "She has an actual Dragon Soul attached to her soul! But it's only the Yin portion." When he deduced this, he realized that Yuan Longshi likely held the other half, the Yang portion.

These two pieces of a completed dragon soul were connected together, and it influenced them. It bonded them. It was likely this very reason that allowed Yuan Longshi to continuously improve his bloodline purity and create a Draconic Heart of Blood(line). It might be why they had an unordinary relationship.

After all, if it wasn't for him using hundreds of thousands of pure lifeforce to refine his True Dragon's essence blood, it was unlikely he could absorb it into his heart safely, but a Dragon's Soul could easily contain and regulate such power.

If that's the case, then Yuan Longshi's cultivation of the True Dragon Transmutation Method was heavily reliant on this Dragon Soul of his.

Before the epic clash of Qi Lang and Yuan Longshi was about to initiate, Wei Wuyin sent out an explosive shout backed by his cultivation base.

"Stop!"

This single word was like the authority of a judge and Qi Lang halted, he held his astral force and redirected his trajectory. In a matter of the briefest of moments, he floated above the Ceremonial Grounds with a solemn gaze.

Yuan Longshi was startled. He turned his heterochromia eyes towards Wei Wuyin. *'Did he realize my strength? Tch, even if he did, I won't bend a knee to you.'* His thoughts were defiant and confident. After all, what alchemist wouldn't want to have a Second Stage of the Astral Core Realm cultivator that can fight across phases? If Wei Wuyin wanted to recruit him, he wouldn't simply agree.

The thought of having the support of an Alchemist like Wei Wuyin supporting him however, that was particularly appealing. That didn't matter who was the cultivator.

However, his thoughts were entirely unnecessary as Wei Wuyin walked forward and left the Astral Array's protective ward. As he did, he waved his hand and a saber was formed. With a clench, he grasped it and it emitted sharp saber light.

"I'll kill him myself."

### **Chapter 230 - 228: Big, Thick, & Filled With Power**

"..." Wei Wuyin's declaration was met with a resounding silence. It was so abrupt and utterly thorough that only his footsteps and faint keening of his saber force could be heard. Even Xue Yifei, who was clenching her teeth in pain from the Yin Dragon Soul within her Mind's Eye throbbing about with rapid activity. Her hazel eyes saw Wei Wuyin's tall, domineering, and strong back and couldn't help but flash with a hint of disbelief.

Fortunately, Yuan Longshi was similarly startled and no longer attempted to interact with his Yang Dragon Soul, so the pain she felt was lessened. Normally, he hated that using his Yang Dragon Soul to harness his bloodline powers brought pain to Xue Yifei. But seeing her wretched in pain at this moment hadn't caused the bleeding heart pain he felt before.

Is this because she abandoned him? She didn't choose him? In the depths of his heart, only he knew that answer.

To understand why everyone present, even Qi Lang, were unfailingly sent into a unified silence, one had to understand the generally accepted belief of alchemists.

In the cultivation world, Alchemists cultivated methods that allowed them to harness, refine, generate, and manipulate alchemical energies. These methods held no offensive, defensive, or even supplementary methods for combat, and focused purely on the Dao of Alchemy.

Furthermore, unlike the Martial Dao, alchemists had to devote their time to mastering the seven traits of alchemy alongside this, each usually having a cultivation method. By default, any alchemist needed to master a minimum of eight cultivation methods and train in manipulating alchemical energies, a type of energy that has no combat ability.

This and their experimentation, repeated practice, legitimate concoction, and standard degree of cultivation consumed far more time than others. It was considered the most time-consuming and difficult Creationist profession because of this difference from others. This didn't include the typical failures, injuries from those failures, long concoction time for successes, studying, revision, and theory-crafting.

An Alchemist cultivated the Dao of Alchemy which was broader than most Daos and had a very, very high requirement on intelligence and time. In the Myriad Monarch Astral Territory, no, the entire Tri-Vision Starfield, there wasn't a single Alchemic King below the age of five hundred, and the average age to officially reach that level neared closer to eight hundred years old.

An Astral Core Realm expert, one who had just ascended, had a little over a thousand years of lifespan. As expected, most Alchemic Kings were in the Astral Core Realm. Because of this difficulty and disparity of time versus achievements, it produced a widely accepted opinion that alchemists, regardless of how talented they were, had the lowest combat potential out of all cultivators.

This included architects and forgers.

Even the King of Everlore wasn't an exception. He was renowned and given such a title because of his ability to create Kings of Lore rather than being one. He was a Kingmaker. And his combat ability, even

with pellets, was essentially useless. He relied on a group of servants, guardians, and opportunists who sought his favor and ability to cultivate.

While he had protective treasures such as talismans, arrays, and whatnot, his combat ability personally was considered quite poor to nearly non-existent. As someone who cultivated an Alchemic Wood Soul, he didn't have any means to kill an opinion with his astral force.

When Wei Wuyin waltzed out of the protective ward and said those domineering words, it was like a bolt of thunder had collectively struck everyone present. They didn't know how he possessed the gull to do so. If he had called forth every Astral Core Realm expert to fight on his behalf, they would be shocked. If he tried to recruit Yuan Longshi, they would be intrigued by the development. But for him to personally announce that he would kill Yuan Longshi, an elite expert with considerable ability and could fight above his phase, this wasn't something their minds could register.

However, Wei Wuyin never once considered their thoughts or beliefs. To him, he was always a fighter first and an alchemist second. While it has been a while since his stint in the Scarlet Solaris Sect, he had always been one who fought fiercely for himself. He killed decisively, slaughtered in droves, and fought with a saber in hand.

From an honorary disciple to an outer disciple to an inner disciple to a core disciple, none of these things were achieved without a pile of corpses and rivers of blood forming beneath his feet. While the Inheritor of Sin and the Black Skeleton had changed his view on life, he had never lost his edge.

Yuan Longshi was the first to break out of his flabbergasted state. His eyes trailed to Qi Lang in the sky who had a solemn and ugly expression. Even now, Qi Lang's astral force was primed to act. It seemed that even he hadn't accepted Wei Wuyin's statement of handling Yuan Longshi alone.

What Yuan Longshi didn't know was that Qi Lang was still more knowledgeable in Wei Wuyin's affairs. When he first was inducted into the sect, he had only been in the Qi Condensation Realm, and the Eighth Stage at that, yet he brutally killed an Earthly Elite disciple with his bare hands. The recorded video of it still sent shivers down his experienced spine. It hadn't circulated very much as the event was swiftly buried in the news of a faction's inevitable demise, but he got his hands on it out of curiosity.

And he knew...

Wei Wuyin was not some soft target.

"Yes, Heavenly King Wei." Qi Lang spoke respectfully and retracted his astral force. Wei Wuyin was not an individual that acted carelessly. This could clearly be seen how the entire Bloodforge Continent was checkmated from day one without ever knowing. Their entire continent was about to fall to the plans of this Heavenly King and they still had no idea. Even he was terrified at the exceptional depth Wei Wuyin showed.

Yuan Longshi's heart shivered slightly as a wisp of foreboding entered his heart. He realized Qi Lang's relaxed stance and expression, and he turned towards Wei Wuyin who walked without a hint of fear or uncertainty. His heterochromia eyes observed and inspected this man before him. He tried to catch a glimpse of Wei Wuyin's cultivation.

However, for some inexplicable reason, it was like he was seeing an empty void. This caused his heart to drop several degrees in temperature. Even with his powerful senses and firm spiritual foundation, he couldn't even perceive a hint of his cultivation base. The only idea he had was the saber that was held in his hands, but it was exceptionally odd.

It wasn't condensed with Qi or Astral Force, and simply refined and exceptionally high-quality energies. He could barely discern what besides elemental and the predominantly evident saber energies.

"Shall we begin?" Wei Wuyin's words were coolly said with a hint of excitement. It had been a while since he could truly let loose. Since the event with the Black Skeleton, his cultivation had grown by leaps and bounds, and his cultivation base was peerless. This led to him not finding a match for so long.

Even the Long Chen before, despite their cultivation base being the same, was absolutely not on equal grounds in the Myriad Monarch Sect. With merely his Elemental Natal Soul's cultivation, he utterly decimated him into near-death. If it wasn't for Xiang Ling's interference, perhaps Wu Yu would've been forced to make an earlier appearance.

"Hm?" Now that the idle thought entered his mind, it seems that that gorgeous and bed-wild woman had likely saved his life and not the other way around at that time. It seems he had to pay her back for that, even if it was unintentional.

"Well, if you won't start, then I will." Wei Wuyin grew tired of Yuan Longshi not taking the initiative. With the condensed form of Element in his grip, he blurred slightly. It was incredibly strange to those who saw him because his form was very blurry as if he was both there and not there.

Shing!

Yuan Longshi's eyes shrunk into needlepoints as he felt the piercing saber slash towards his throat from behind. With a bellowing roar, he twisted his body and unsheathed his saber, instinctively striking towards the sensation of danger.

Clang!

Two sabers met, one made from energy and one forged, but the one that was forged was cut through by half an inch. Yuan Longshi was startled as a tremendous amount of strength surged from his saber into his arm and then his body.

Boosh!

He shot backwards from this strength, his body unable to stabilize as shock suffused his entire mind. Before he could react to what just happened, saber light descended from below and he once more relied on his instincts to block upwards. The two sabers once more clashed and Yuan Longshi felt an extremely domineeringly chaotic force smash his arm.

Before he could stabilize himself, his figure was blown into the ground and crashed into the ward that protected the continent. Layers and layers of ripples flowed through the array and one could tell that an immense amount of astral essence was consumed to defend against it.

"Ha...haaa..." Yuan Longshi's breathing was chaotic as his legs sunk unnaturally into the protective layer and the ground it protected. It seemed even the film wasn't capable of repelling his body. As for his

body that was covered in blood-red symbols and marks, his bare naked chest was sliced into like meat with even bone being seen. From each cutting wound, flickers of saber light existed.

Woosh!

Wei Wuyin arrived a few meters away from him, his silver eyes piercing and calm. He seemed to be an Immortal descending to deal with a pest, utterly carefree and easy.

Yuan Longshi's entire body was screaming at this moment as he hurriedly used his draconic force to push out the saber energies that contaminated his blood, bones, flesh, and meridians. Due to this, random spurts of silvery and crimson liquid shot out like a miniature geyser.

"You!" He had always been the one to shock and awe his opponent, forcing them to say this baffled word, but now he was using it. He understood how it felt. When he engaged with Wei Wuyin, he realized his physical energies were far, far more abundant than his own. It was like his physical body was a planet and clashing with him felt being smashed by one. Furthermore, he noticed his cultivation base!

He didn't have the unnatural ambient influence that Sky Rulers contained or heightened spiritual aura that Soul Idol experts had, and it was fundamentally basic. He was merely at the World Sea Phase, the First Stage of the Astral Core Realm! Yet his movements were like a ghost and his attacks were like world-splitters.

"Two strikes. My next one will be lethal, you shouldn't hold back lest you lose your life because of it." Wei Wuyin 'kindly' offered. He seemed willing to even give Yuan Longshi a breather. Yuan Longshi's pride as a genius was decisively crushed at this moment.

Wei Wuyin was a little bit older than he was, yet he was an Alchemic King and stronger than he was at the World Sea Phase.

The spectating crowd could barely see the two interactions. It was like Wei Wuyin had said a few words and Yuan Longshi was severely injured. If it wasn't for the previous battle between Qi Lang and Yuan Longshi, and the obvious stakes on the line, they would suspect that Yuan Longshi was a paid actor.

And knowing this left their jaws dropped and mouths agape in utter disbelief!

Xue Yifei's eyes were wide. Her heart raced like a thousand horses, unable to believe or accept what she had just seen. She had never believed for a moment that Wei Wuyin was actually an expert!

The old man said with a trace of astonished wonder, "I've never seen such depths before."

"What?" Xue Yifei mindlessly questioned. Her eyes never left Yuan Longshi and Wei Wuyin's body, but her head tilted in the old man's direction.

"For a brief moment, I saw his astral core." The old man had a unique spiritual method that could gauge the size of a person's astral core, and it surprisingly was capable of grasping just a peek whenever Wei Wuyin attacked. "It was big, thick, and filled with unimaginable power!"

If someone didn't know what he was talking about, they might make certain...assumptions. Regardless, Xue Yifei understood and her heart sped up even more. Just as she was about to ask for clarification, her sea of consciousness started to rumble ceaselessly. Her Mind's Eye felt as if it was being stabbed as the Yin Dragon Soul sleeping beside it was waking up.

She screamed in horrific pain, clutching her head.

On Yuan Longshi's side, his eyes glowed slightly as the pupils of his eyes sharpened until it became draconic. He was instigating his Yang Dragon Soul to interface with his bloodline powers!

Boom!

The surroundings were pushed apart even with the astral array's protection as the faint, indistinct image of a dragon's silhouette was forming behind him. He seemed primed to draconify at the slightest moment.

Wei Wuyin's eyes brightened.