

Chapter 261 - 258: Grand Spirit Trials Established

"..." Qingye Yun's calm, playful, and intrigued smile hadn't faded despite the full minute of silence, but the edge of his lips and right eyebrow was twitching erratically. What the hell was this?! A hundred Astral Sea Pills? At least high-quality?! High-quality your ass!

An Astral Sea Pill was a peak-tier, seventh-grade pill that was usually consumed the moment it was successfully concocted. Furthermore, very few Alchemic Kings would dare attempt to concoct an Astral Sea Pill, and even fewer could succeed in a century. It simply wasn't worth unless one specialized on pills and had the utmost confidence. As for Alchemic Emperors, they were the only ones that can reliably concoct them without wasting massive resources and time.

Even he required six months to successfully concoct one. A hundred? At least high quality? Again, high-quality your ass!

This didn't even consider the Sky World Pill. While it was merely high-tier, it was almost the equivalent of a Sky Ruler. The sect had given a low-quality one to Wu Jiao, and despite his nearly thousand years of being in the First Stage, he ascended with that support. It could not be underestimated, so a hundred was gaining a small army of Sky Rulers.

As for ten thousand Astral Dipper Fountain Pills? While they were low-tier pills that can help develop Qi Essence or cultivate various methods in cultivation, it wasn't an inexpensive pill either. A single one, at the lowest tier, was worth an Astral Stone. A single Astral Stone was equivalent to ten million essence stones. How outrageous was that?

Ten thousand? That was the same as a hundred billion essence stones or ten thousand astral stones! If there was a wealth that could break a force directly, this was it.

Lin Ruyan started after the words finally caught up to her, and she immediately exclaimed in disbelief. "You dare joke?"

These words brought a strange sense of relief in the hearts of everyone, as they finally realized that Wei Wuyin was simply making a joke. But Tuo Bihan had a different expression. If it was anyone else, he would dismiss it as a joke too, but Wei Wuyin had concocted an Everlore Ascension Pill in a little over a week.

Since he's been in the sect, he had provided numerous pills and bribed countless others in the shadows. In truth, he wouldn't be shocked if a Grand Imperial Sage was in his pockets.

If he knew they were all bribed before, he would probably be uncertain whether to laugh or cry.

Regardless of that, this wager was not a small one and even the Alchemist Association had to tread carefully to accept this. That was because most wagers of this level were established with Spirit Oaths as the foundation. If there was a time limit to this request and they couldn't pay up, their Astral Soul would detonate. With their cultivation bases, likely only Realmlords could hinder the process temporarily. As for stopping it entirely?

He had only heard of Timelords, those who've comprehended the energy of time and cultivated their Temporal Eye, to be able to do so. Since no one of that caliber exists in the starfield, a failure-to-uphold oath to Astral Core Realm experts was an irreversible death sentence.

Wei Wuyin shook his head, his silver eyes suffusing a trace of pity. "Is this too much for you? And here I thought the Alchemist Association was affluent and possessed immense resources at their fingertips. Don't tell me it was all lies?" He held nothing back as he insulted the Alchemist Association. Since he had made the decision to avoid receiving their judgment and approval towards his status as an Alchemist, he had long since set himself against them.

Furthermore, he knew this was merely a segway to their true intentions. He wanted to disrupt their plans and machinations they set to grant themselves a favorable position. And this was done beautifully.

While the elders behind him had odd expressions, a few with a hint of uncertain panic, Qingye Yun and his entourage were incensed by Wei Wuyin's words. He was merely a junior and yet he thinks he can gamble such wealth? A hundred high-quality Astral Sea Pills? Can you even bring that out?

Even if you were to transfer it to astral stones, it would likely equate to ten thousand astral stones. This was essentially the same amount as the ten thousand Astral Dipper Fountain Pill.

Qingye Yun felt that Wei Wuyin was bluffing, and so did the others. That or he had absolute confidence in winning any wager, but as he swept his senses downwards towards the young geniuses of the Myriad Monarch Sect, he sneered in his heart. They were certainly not capable of rivaling their heavily nurtured disciples.

"Your seniors held nothing back in educating you, even informing you of my Alchemist Association ability. But it seemed you underestimate us, and that's not something we can accept. You wish to take this wager, but you know wagers of this level must be upheld with Spirit Oaths?" Qingye Yun remained calm and started to speak. While he spoke, Wei Wuyin could feel that the true purpose of their visit was revealing itself.

It wasn't just him. Tuo Bihan, Ji Changkong, and Qin Rui felt it too. It seemed their target was a Spirit Oath, and this Spirit Oath likely included Wei Wuyin. His absence would make it difficult for them to enact their plans, especially if he didn't agree.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," Wei Wuyin replied.

Qingye Yun nodded. "Then let's do this: We bet this much, but if you're unable to produce the wager in a single year, then we'll have to substitute the wager for a request."

Request?

Here it was.

Wei Wuyin had always felt that they would make a move, and their original justification that this was about mediating the Gateway conflict was merely a front for this. Did they calculate Wei Wuyin's established personality as arrogant? Spoiled? Reckless? Was it enough for him to jump into their trap despite the advice of his seniors? Regardless of what caused them to conceive such a plan, he had zero fear.

Because...he was going to absolutely win any challenge.

Therefore, why not fully go all out?

"In that case, how about we increase the wager? Let's include ten eighth-grade Spatial Spirit Pills, ten Soul-Spirit Pills, and an Astral Ocean Pill?" An Astral Ocean Pill was an eighth-grade, high-tier pill that was the enhanced version of an Astral Sea Pill. It was about a hundred times more effective with the equivalent amount of time to refine. Furthermore, it was said that only Soul Idols can safely consume the pill.

In a way, a single Astral Ocean Pill was equivalent to a full planet in terms of value. It was outrageously difficult and hadn't been seen in three hundred years, the last person to concoct it was Qingye Yun, the Grand Association Master of the Alchemist Association. He had used it to solidify his reputation as one of the top three Alchemic Emperors of this generation.

Even Tuo Bihan wasn't at the very top, likely within the top five.

"What?! T-ten?!" Lin Ruyan, the Pavilion Master of the Elemental Heaven Pavilion abruptly realized this wager was out of her depth. A single eighth-grade pill was far too much. How many did they have in storage? None! Even the Alchemist Association could only have three at most. These pills were likely saved for their utmost talents with the full hopes of becoming Realmlords.

"Hisss!" The entire gallery took a deep inhale of cold air, their hearts shivering. In their eyes, minds, and hearts, whoever lost would be forced to abide by the request. There was no logical way for them to pay up.

Wei Wuyin was incredibly ruthless, adding: "Furthermore, let's make all the upper-echelon members of our respective forces swear the Spirit Oath. That way, our wager is certain to be upheld."

Qingye Yun's eyes bulged out uncontrollably, his heart trembling without end. He sent his spiritual sense downwards, trying to see if any of those geniuses had talent beyond his intelligence report. But when it came back the same, he wasn't certain if Wei Wuyin was trying to humiliate him with scare tactics or if it was a legitimate trap. He held in his desire to audibly gulp before the crowd, his mouth quite dry. Such a debt was unable to be paid for in a year.

It was unable to be paid for in a century.

He couldn't help but rethink his plans.

"Do you need time to think? How about this, since this is a sudden trial, we'll let you guys have a few months to prepare your talents. We can make it rather inclusive, allowing you to bring forth all your geniuses to participate." Wei Wuyin seemed to be giving them a lifeline to grasp, but his calm smile and his handsome-to-zenith face made it seem like charity.

But charity? Qingye Yun's eyes brightened. Clearly, he seemed to grasp some things, and he felt more confident. A few months? In a few months, it was absolutely certain that they could produce a certain winner! They merely had to pick one promising talent to nurture with all they had.

If they did so, it would be impossible for them to lose! His eyes grew even brighter as confidence once more was regained in his heart. He completely believed that Wei Wuyin's arrogance had led to his certain defeat.

"Haha, a few months? You're right, such a large bet should be prepared for fully by both parties. How about we use the same rules, up the difficulty slightly, and hold the trial in six months? We'll bring every last one of our talents to participate." Qingye Yun spoke, causing the elders behind him to start. But after a brief moment, they completely understood his intentions.

With six months, they could forcefully produce an expert at the Fourth Stage of the Astral Core Realm beneath three hundred years old! Even if they couldn't, their foundation and strength would be thoroughly enhanced to their utmost limits. They would, temporarily, be invincible within their age group. Their victory would be inevitable.

Already seeing victory in their grasp, their eyes shone, but they hurriedly hid it from others. If they wanted these morons to fall for their trap, then they needed to play the role!

Wei Wuyin's expression changed by a minute amount, his handsome face twisted slightly. This only lasted for a moment, concealing it swiftly, but it was noticed by all these elite experts. Lin Ruyan was also interested, her eyes brightened as confidence once more suffused her aura and blue eyes.

Wei Wuyin said, "Six Months?" He turned to Tuo Bihan and the other Grand Imperial Sages, his eyes flashing with uncertainty. Qin Rui and Ji Changkong had quickly grasped the Alchemist Association's intentions and wanted to hurriedly advise him to reduce the time or decline outright.

But Tuo Bihan spoke abruptly to Wei Wuhin, "Did you figure out a solution to your problem?"

Wei Wuyin faintly smiled and nodded. This old man truly understood his heart.

Tuo Bihan calmly said, "We agree. In six months, the Monarch, no, Grand Spirit Trials will take place. Are you ready to swear to the Spirit Oath or will you decline?" Seeing Tuo Bihan's expression, the others didn't think he had confidence but merely was making a last-ditch effort to have them refuse. Qingye Yun's confidence was built on a thousand years of experience and certainty in his Association's strength, how could he possibly decline?

Even if they bet a thousand times the amount, he wouldn't refuse!

"We'll leave the request to be unknown until the victor was known. Of course, no request that would force one to hurt or kill themselves or others would be made." While this was a small thing, it was what most people were scared of. If they were forced to kill themselves, they would have no recourse. It was either death or death.

Wei Wuyin nodded, "Then, let's swear this oath."

At that very moment, the Alchemist Association hadn't realized it yet, but they were no longer capable of escaping from Wei Wuyin's palm.

Chapter 262 - 259: Earn A Spot

The oath and details were hammered out by both groups before things were properly settled. The Alchemist Association's elders were quietly keeping their smiles concealed, while the Myriad Monarch

Sect's elders had uncertain yet confident expressions. To both sides, their young elites were of the top-shelf, highest quality with no equal when contesting against those of the same generation. These emotions fueled their respective outlooks on this wager.

As for the Elemental Heaven Pavilion, they were temporarily relegated to being spectators and witnesses of this bet. They didn't have the financial qualifications to throw their hats in nor the certainty of their victory if given six months of preparations. Furthermore, they felt that the Alchemist Association's chances of victory with this ample time to prep were absolute. They would win.

They did not need to muddy the bet with their participation. Instead, they quietly brought up the allocation slots, but Qingye Yun responded with a carefree attitude. To him, his main purpose was to claim victory against the Myriad Monarch Sect and Wei Wuyin for their own purposes. As for the allocation of slots, it was secondary. Regardless, now that they knew about it, there was no way they wouldn't receive their share.

The Elemental Heaven Pavilion's dispute over their slot allocation was minor to irrelevant to him in their hearts. They were always just a segway to reach this point. Now that their original goal had been reached, what of the Elemental Heaven Pavilion?

Lin Ruyan could only be disgruntled in her heart. The Alchemist Association revealed their attitudes with clear indifference. Fortunately for her, Tuo Bihan wasn't neglectful and brought up the subject.

The raised subject brought the lights of excitement to the Elemental Heaven Pavilion's elders' eyes. Tuo Bihan laid down a few simple starter conditions to decide the overall allocation of slots, and it would be thoroughly restricted to the Elemental Heaven Pavilion and themselves. If other forces wanted to squeeze in, they would have to receive slots from these two forces.

This suggestion left the Alchemist Association with bloated cheeks as they were obviously unwilling, but even if they didn't originally obtain any slots, which force wouldn't concede a few to them? They had their own pride. In the end, they would definitely have a slice of this pie.

Lin Ruyan agreed to this, but when Tuo Bihan finally explained how the slots would be decided, her heart quietly trembled. Just as they expected, intended, and wanted when arriving, it would be decided by the former Monarch Spirit Trials, not Grand Spirit Trials, but this would be individual-based.

There were a limited number of slots available and there was an age limit to enter the Gateway. This age limit was similarly three hundred years, so he suggested that each genius would compete to earn their own spot. Since this new Grand Spirit Trials will likely include nearly all the eligible geniuses available from both forces, it was the best method to decide.

This also gave the Myriad Monarch Sect a definitive advantage, as it should. Lin Ruyan didn't have any legitimate reason to argue against this, her eyes were calm as she looked towards the Alchemist Association. Her only concern and attempt to invalidate this method was the Alchemist Association's participation. The fact it only included the Myriad Monarch Sect and Elemental Heaven Pavilion meant the Alchemist Association's involvement made things difficult and a chaotic variable to both sides.

Tuo Bihan was swift to come to an answer, as if expecting it. "We will have two sets of rankings. As the trials focus on the accumulation of points to decide placement and victory, one ranking will include all forces, and the second ranking will only include our two forces." The number of slots was a thousand, so

the top thousand in the second list would earn their spot. As for if they'll keep their spot or give it up to others, that was their choice.

The final loophole was if the Elemental Heaven Pavilion won first, claiming victory. If this were to occur, the oath between the two forces would be rendered null and void with neither side claiming victory. Since they didn't owe each other anything, the Spirit Oath would also crumble. However, neither the Myriad Monarch Sect nor the Alchemist Association felt like they would lose, and even if they did, it definitely wouldn't be to the Elemental Heaven Pavilion.

Lin Ruyan snorted coldly, her calm eyes radiating an intention to flip the table and subvert expectations, proving the Elemental Heaven Pavilion's superiority.

After all the details were hashed out, the two forces left Junia with their elites in tow. Soon, only the Myriad Monarch Sect's young elite, elders, and leaders remained.

Qin Rui stepped forward, directly asking Wei Wuyin: "Are you two certain about this?" She didn't want to question Wei Wuyin and Tuo Bihan directly while in the presence of the other two forces. Now they were alone, she didn't hold back. This question was also on the minds of everyone else.

Tuo Bihan's aged shoulders shrugged, "Don't ask me. I'm just following this kid's lead." He completely and unhesitantly pushed the responsibility onto Wei Wuyin. To him, Wei Wuyin was a Mortal Sovereign Alchemist, a talented genius, and frighteningly intelligent. Even if he lost, he would probably be able to pay the wager with ease. In his heart, a tenth of the wager wasn't worth a single Everlore Ascension Pill.

After all, if looked at from a value perspective, the Everlore Ascension Pill was roughly equivalent to fifty thousand Astral Core Realm experts. And this was a guarantee. If the Alchemist Association knew this fact, who knew what they would do?

Wei Wuyin's eyebrow twitched. He sighed audibly and looked at the sky. His cultivation base was insignificant, but his skill in Alchemy was unsurpassed in the starfield. Did the King of Everlore feel this way?

During his era, he forged experts and led the cultivation civilization to its utmost limits. Wei Wuyin couldn't help but question whether the King of Everlore had died or simply left elsewhere. The more he thought about it, the more he felt the latter was the truth. While this little game was exciting, it was mostly an insignificant matter to the current him. If, no when, he survived the Second Calamity, he would eventually have to leave this place and scour for the possibility to enter the Realm of Sages.

He turned towards Tuo Bihan. This aged figure with a casual expression was the stable idol of the Myriad Monarch Sect. He was the strongest human of his cultivation level and one of the few Alchemic Emperors of the starfield. The only reason why the Myriad Monarch Sect recovered after the war was due to his actions, cultivating Qin Rui and Yao Zhen into their current states. He was worthy of respect and held the strongest feelings towards the sect.

When he thought about Wu Yu and Long Chen, how Long Chen obtained the Grand Monarch Lineage and tutelage of the founder of the sect, he felt a little frustrated. The only reason he hadn't fully focused on secretly developing the Myriad Monarch Sect to reclaim the starfield was this.

All his efforts would inevitably and rightfully belong to Long Chen by sect rules. That was because the Myriad Monarch Sect fully devoted to following and pious worship of the ancient experts and traditions. This old man definitely would not throw away tradition nor would he ask him to.

In truth, he personally loved how the Myriad Monarch Sect functioned as a whole. While strict and somewhat exploitative, it was far better than those nepotistic forces that relied on bloodline and birth to decide your limits. As someone who lost everything and rose into his current heights off his own efforts, he earnestly believed and respected this system.

But if he made the Myriad Monarch Sect the ruler, eventually...Long Chen's existence would inevitably allow him to reap benefits without having to exert a single bit of effort. Who would not be frustrated?

If it wasn't for that shadow, wouldn't he have long since picked an expert or two and supported their ascension to the Realm World Phase, becoming renowned Realmlords of the starfield. In a few years, this starfield would be theirs once more.

"We'll win," was all Wei Wuyin said. His unshakeable confidence caused those elders' hearts to race. Infected by this confidence, their questioning heart simmered down. They would have to wait and bear witness to how Wei Wuyin would ensure their victory.

Wei Wuyin glanced at Tuo Bihan, his eyes flickering. He flew off the platform, and Tuo Bihan stretched his back before following. Seeing them both taking off, the elders realized they wanted a private conversation. They decided to prepare to return.

Qin Rui and Ji Changkong waited on the platform. They still had more inquiries regarding this matter, and they were the only ones with qualifications to do so.

When Wei Wuyin and Tuo Bihan flew off, they went off to the second Sky Layer and hovered near each other. Wei Wuyin waved his hand slightly, a spherical barrier of spiritual force encapsulated them. This spiritual barrier was exceptionally solid.

Tuo Bihan was somewhat startled as he felt the inherent spiritual force within. It might have the aura of a Sky Ruler, but its power was incredible. There was likely not a single Soul Idol Phase cultivator that could rival Wei Wuyin in spiritual strength.

Tuo Bihan chortled, "If you participated in the trials, I'd imagine there's no one who could defeat you." He shook his head. Wei Wuyin's cultivation base had reached an astounding extreme. While in the Astral Core Realm's World Sea Phase, he could rival Qi Lang, and likely defeat him. This wasn't just abnormal, it was heaven-defying. Furthermore, he reached the Sky Ruler Phase in a short period of time, and his spiritual force was already so impressive.

"I don't have time for that." The Grand Spirit Trials was a year-long trial. He wouldn't waste an entire year doing something so tiresome.

Tuo Bihan didn't feel this to be out of place. Wei Wuyin was already capable of concocting ninth-grade products before the age of fifty, every year for him was a thousand times more precious than others. If he wasn't cultivating, he should be concocting, and if he wasn't concocting, he should be enjoying his life as he pleased, not involving himself in minor matters like this.

If the Alchemist Association and Elemental Heaven Pavilion knew that Tuo Bihan considered this competition a 'minor' matter, they might rage into a deathmatch.

"So little fellow, what is it?" Tuo Bihan asked.

"You should know what I intend to do," Wei Wuyin calmly responded. Tuo Bihan nodded. Wei Wuyin was going to select a talented group of individuals and develop them. This was the same method the Alchemist Association intended to do. Unfortunately for them, they paled vastly when compared to Wei Wuyin.

They likely had no more than three eighth-grade products, but Wei Wuyin might have dozens or more. There was no way they could cultivate an elite capable of sweeping the competition when facing him. They even got baited and allowed him the time of six months. If they didn't, perhaps Wei Wuyin would've simply participated himself and dominated the trials. Regardless, they had absolutely zero chance of winning in his eyes.

"I do. But why the need for privacy? Want me to pick some good seeds?" He smiled, causing the wrinkles on his face to lift. But he knew Wei Wuyin wouldn't care. Since arriving on the Myriad Monarch Sect, he had always been mostly deciding his own matters. As for who to develop, as an Alchemist, he knew that other people's recommendations were irrelevant.

Shaking his head, "No. I'll use this as a platform to develop Ascendants, my faction." Wei Wuyin stated before continuing, "I need to talk to you about two matters: How confident are you in becoming a Realmlord?"

"..." Tuo Bihan's smiling expression faded as his eyes flashed with an endlessly circulating wisp of solemnness.

Chapter 263 - 260: You Should Leave

The Seventh Astral Tribulation was a tribulation of success or death. There was no other option. In his thousand years of cultivation, how many individuals have attempted this trial? How many have succeeded?

There were only two. They both belonged to the San Clan. Furthermore, their successful ascension wasn't based on their talents, but the King of Everlore's remnant shine and their Ancestor's foresight. Those who've attempted it with their own efforts had all failed without a doubt. While he might be the current strongest human expert, there have been humans, elves, demons, and beastmen who've exceeded his current strength yet still failed at the critical moment.

Tuo Bihan couldn't respond.

Wei Wuyin knew that Tuo Bihan was the oldest expert in the Myriad Monarch Sect. He didn't have much lifeforce left. As a purist and an alchemist, he was the slowest to reach his cultivation level, and it created an exceptional foundation in this era, but it wasn't enough.

"What do you think is the bare minimum to be able to achieve the Realmlord level?" Wei Wuyin asked. This was a question countless experts wanted to know. The Seventh Astral Tribulation was static, unlike the Mortal Star Formation Tribulation. Regardless of your talents, foundation, potential, or age, it would remain the same and so would the benefits.

This was the same for every tribulation outside of the first.

Therefore, there must be a minimum required to overcome the tribulation.

Tuo Bihan was silent for a long while. In the end, he sighed with the most crestfallen sound and expression imaginable. "I took the purist route while practicing Alchemy all for this question. With my every breath, I've cultivated with the utmost diligence and accumulated as much as possible within my utmost limits. Yet...I've reached six-ring Soul Idol, six-ripple Spatial Resonance, with astral force a few times greater than others my level, be it quantity or quality.

"I have no idea what is required, but I've not reached that level. There was once an expert purist five hundred years ago with a foundation at the seven-ring and seven-ripple yet failed that step. He was publicly acknowledged as the number one expert of that generation at the Sixth Stage of the Astral Core Realm." Tuo Bihan's disheartened voice didn't lift, and it merely felt as if the belief of futility had instilled itself within his thoughts.

Wei Wuyin had also heard of this expert. He was someone from the Sacred Light Palace, an elf with pure-blood. He cultivated according to the purist method and had endless resources and exceptional natural talent. Everyone and their mothers were confident that he would become the third Realmlord of the starfield. There were even those who felt that the San Clan might eliminate him due to fear of his inevitable ascension.

Unfortunately, the San Clan didn't need to do anything as he challenged the Seventh Astral Tribulation, the World Genesis Star Tribulation, and was incinerated in body and spirit. Countless watched and gawked at his end.

It was a sad day.

Wei Wuyin nodded. "I can't say for certain, but I have a belief that one needs a 9th Mortal State, an Intent, a seven-ring Soul Idol, and seven-ripple Spatial Resonance at the minimum. Without the King of Everlore, being a non-purist limit the time a cultivator had has to develop their foundational qualities. That or they need the ninth-grade pill that can temporarily increase their strength in exchange for lifeforce."

When Wei Wuyin made his thoughts known, Tuo Bihan stilled. The last bit truly struck a chord in his heart. As for the foundational requirement? He had a 9th Mortal State, no Intent, and his Soul Idol and Spatial Resonance only went up to six. If it was anyone else who threw out these requirements, he might scoff and tell them to get. But he felt that Wei Wuyin, even with his lack of cultivation experience, would have some understanding towards this.

"The pill?" Tuo Bihan asked.

Wei Wuyin softly smiled. He understood Tuo Bihan's thoughts. This was because the two San Clan Realmlords had used this method to reach their current level. One's lifeforce was a person's own power, so it was fully within one's right to use it to strengthen themselves against the tribulations. While normal arts might be able to do something like this, only a pill would be able to truly and effectively maximize one's potential strength.

Wei Wuyin had researched lifeforce igniting arts, and he knew they paled considerably in comparison to pills. In fact, for a hundred years of life, you still might not be able to fight above your cultivation level. It was quite pathetic. This had to do with how personalized lifeforce interacts with Qi or Astral Force.

If it wasn't like this, then Evil Methods would reign supreme.

Only pure lifeforce was far, far more effective, but the difficulty in obtaining lifeforce in its purest state was incomparably difficult. After all, pure lifeforce could be absorbed with ease. With a limitless amount of pure lifeforce, a person had a limitless life.

But even if an Evil Cultivator extracted a hundred years of personalized lifeforce that belonged to another cultivator, refined and absorbed it, they would barely gain an additional year. Furthermore, their bodies would experience all sorts of mutational responses. It would be like integrating another person's organs or blood in your own, even rejection was possible.

"You don't have enough lifeforce to ignite for that method," Wei Wuyin said. Tuo Bihan knew this, so he wasn't disheartened in the slightest. Instead, he said: "Little Qin or Tiny Yao do."

Wei Wuyin shook his head, "If you breakthrough like that, your cultivation path is essentially over without the continuous support of a Mortal Sovereign Alchemist. And you'll be amongst the weakest Realmlords possible, incapable of ascending on your own efforts."

Tuo Bihan went silent. He realized that Wei Wuyin had other thoughts. He didn't seem willing to raise a Realmlord with the same circumstances as the San Clan. This made sense because it was true, the tricks used meant their cultivation path was essentially cut off. If they can't overcome the World Genesis Star Tribulation with their own efforts, how could they possibly ascend further?

Even the weakest expert with the lowest qualifications ascending on their own efforts would be vastly superior in comparison to those who used a pill. It was a last-ditch effort that only those without a choice should use. But if Wei Wuyin's assumption on the minimum to ascend, then they obviously didn't meet it. Tuo Bihan was indecisive.

Just as he was about to speak, Wei Wuyin raised his hand and shook his head. "I'm not allowing them to make that choice." His words shut down Tuo Bihan's thoughts. They both knew that if given the choice, they would do so. Who wouldn't?

Tuo Bihan sighed before his eyes brightened. "You have a method to raise their cultivation base?" Since Wei Wuyin had decided to discuss this situation with him, there was definitely an alternative means to do so.

Wei Wuyin stared at Tuo Bihan for a while. A silence formed that made the atmosphere slightly uncomfortable. Tuo Bihan soon realized that Wei Wuyin's wording and words since the beginning had been very odd, as if there was an invisible restriction over his actions.

If he thought about the possibility that his abilities might provoke a calamity on his head, then that was understandable. The sect had three enemies, the neutral Alchemist Association, and the dominating and looming San Clan. But clearly, he had exceptional talents. Such as the ability to make seventh-grade pills with ease, yet besides the bare minimum for appearances and his own goals, he had never taken the initiative to support the sect.

This thought allowed Tuo Bihan to realize some things, but it was vague like an object in dense mist. He didn't know why Wei Wuyin would distance himself from the sect he was cultivating himself within. There was likely no one within the sect that displayed any ill-intentions to him nor would they. After all, he was a treasure that no one would want to offend.

"My second question: Long Chen." Wei Wuyin didn't actually ask a question, but those two words spoke volumes. His silver eyes never left Tuo Bihan's, the light within reflecting the clear meaning: "I know."

Tuo Bihan stilled. He looked at Wei Wuyin with shock. That awkward silence was transformed into a solemn silence. It was only at this moment that Tuo Bihan's questions were answered. Long Chen cultivated the Grand Monarch Lineage's Imperial Heaven Qi Method. When he matured, he would become the rightful Grand Imperial Monarch of the sect.

Furthermore, he was an exceptional talent. He comprehended two Intents, Sword and Slaughter, achieved a feat only accomplished by the Sacred Elven Queen and merging two Natal Souls, and had an impeccably impressive foundation with a Zenith Mortal State Astral Soul. With such pure and potent innate energies, rich combat experience, and the support of the Imperial Heaven Qi Method, he was destined to claim the Myriad Monarch Sect.

At this moment, it was nearly his birthright. As for how he obtained the Imperial Heaven Qi Method, the Grand Imperial Sages in the know had never tried uncovering this because it was irrelevant. That was because of how the Method is designed. Only those who've cultivated the Imperial Heaven Qi Method can pass the quintessential energy required to cultivate it.

This meant that the fact he was cultivating it meant he had received the blessing of a former Grand Imperial Sage. Each Grand Imperial Sage was at least at the Timelord level, so they had mystifying means beyond their understanding. Regardless of how that Grand Imperial Monarch passed it on, Long Chen was its current legacy holder. Even if they wanted to claim the technique, it would do them no good. If Long Chen died prematurely, the lineage would fade once more.

They wouldn't give him explicit protection, but they would ensure that he wasn't neglected or killed by their enemies. That was the best they would or could offer due to the Myriad Monarch Sect's indiscriminate rules.

Tuo Bihan had long since learned of the incident on the Myriad Monarch Sect. In fact, all the Grand Imperial Sages did. It was well-documented in Xiang Ling's report, and it detailed how Long Chen was nearly killed but due to Xiang Ling's interference, he survived. At the time, she had only acted because of her future disciple, Long Tingyu, but the fact remained: Wei Wuyin nearly killed Long Chen.

There was no way someone who would one day become the Grand Monarch, an existence that had always been notoriously arrogant, lofty, and too proud to allow their enemies to exist beneath the same sky. There was a possibility that Long Chen harbored intentions to kill Wei Wuyin to this day.

"There's nothing I can do. But I understand now." Tuo Bihan wasn't an inexperienced youngster or lacked intelligence, while Wei Wuyin hadn't asked a question, the very existence of Long Chen was a question. But there was an issue that he was confused about.

"Why don't you kill him yourself?" His words lacked subtlety. If Wei Wuyin wanted to kill Long Chen while he was still maturing, it was entirely possible. Not only would he eliminate a possible enemy, but

he could easily dispel the act with ease. As a matter of fact, he didn't even need to do it by his own hands.

"..." Wei Wuyin realized Tuo Bihan was ignorant of Wu Yu's existence. If he was aware of it, there was no way he would say such a silly question. Wei Wuyin would've long since rid himself of Long Chen at the first possible moment if possible. Then he would shape the Myriad Monarch entirely in his own image.

"The founder, Wu Yu, is currently with him." He didn't hesitate to explain, revealing Wu Yu's existence to Tuo Bihan. While Wu Yu might want to keep his identity a secret, Wei Wuyin had no obligation to him.

"Hahaha..." Tuo Bihan laughed, clearly feeling as if he just heard a joke. His wrinkled face was smiling and shaking his head. After all, Wu Yu was ancient. He was literally ancient. The King of Everlore's Era wasn't yesterday. It was over eight thousand years ago. Even the strongest Astral Core Realm expert could only live a little over fifteen hundred years without external support. How could he be alive? How could he possibly be alive?!

"Old man, stop laughing. He's alive. He's within that ring on Long Chen, guiding him since the Myriad Yore Continent. They've been together for at least two decades. I've talked to him personally." Wei Wuyin said with the flattest tone.

"..." Tuo Bihan froze mid-laughter. He reeled, "how?!"

Wei Wuyin shrugged, "He's currently in some strange Spiritual Form. His current body consists of the essential energies, such as mental energies with a sea of consciousness, spiritual energies derived from cultivation, and essence power. I don't know how he can do this, but he lacks a physical form. It's as if he transformed into an Astral Soul. It's beyond odd." His explanation caused Tuo Bihan to gawk, his head and eyes flicked down as he tried to find Long Chen below.

He knew that Long Chen obtained the Grand Monarch Legacy from someone, but to think it was the Founding Monarch?

"He's reached the realm beyond the Astral Core Realm in his life, the Mystic Ascendant Realm. That realm might have a far longer lifespan and other life-securing methods than the Astral Core Realm. If my assumption is correct, the Astral Core Realm is the only realm where mortal limits exist." Wei Wuyin didn't want to outright say he could be an Immortal, but he surely wasn't off from being one.

"He doesn't have a physical body?" Tuo Bihan paused, his shining gaze halting.

"That's what I think. That or his physical body is sealed within an independent realm with the Gateway being the unassuming ring." Wei Wuyin guessed. If Wu Yu heard what he had just said, he would reel in utter shock and horror. Wei Wuyin's guess was completely right.

A Gateway Door was necessarily an immobile existence nor was it restricted. A common storage ring with a hint of spatial energy could be considered a minor Gateway. After all, they were perpetually linked to a separate space. The only difference was the development and compositional nature of both spaces. One is artificial and exists within a separate layer of space, the other isn't and exists on this layer.

"Are you certain?" Tuo Bihan sought confirmation once more. Wei Wuyin nodded. They stayed silent for a long while, and then he looked at Wei Wuyin and said with the utmost seriousness: "It's best if you leave the sect."

"?!"

Chapter 264 - 261: Tuo Bihan's Choice

Wei Wuyin was startled. He had never expected Tuo Bihan to say those words. "What do you mean?"

Tuo Bihan calmly took several breaths and looked towards Wei Wuyin, "All the Elder level figures have sworn a Spirit Oath of absolute loyalty to the Grand Monarch and all Inheritors of the lineage. Most wouldn't put much importance onto this=this Spirit Oath, after all the last Grand Monarch existed nearly eight hundred years ago. No one is expecting a Grand Monarch to ascend, but the Spirit Oath is still absolute."

"What?!" Wei Wuyin was taken aback. A Spirit Oath?

"It's not just that. All of us, myself included, have sworn on this same oath to continue that tradition. If, no, when Long Chen reveals his identity, we'll all be his most loyal subordinates. While we have some freedom, such as us not having to support an Inheritor, provide him with resources, or kneel before his ascension, there's very little wiggle room." Tuo Bihan's lips were twitching, not from anger, but helplessness in this matter.

The moment Long Chen announces his identity, they would all have this Spirit Oath in effect. This was because Long Chen wasn't an 'Inheritor'.

"Long Chen will automatically take the mantle as the Grand Monarch because he's the only living member of that Lineage. This is the rule set forth by the Founder himself. You should leave." Considering Long Chen's relationship with Wei Wuyin, it was best that he left before a conflict erupts. Tuo Bihan finally realized the actual truth of Wei Wuyin's hesitancy stemmed from. It was completely and utterly warranted.

"...You're not going to kill me?" Wei Wuyin's subsequent reaction sent Tuo Bihan into a stupor. He hadn't expected such a calm aura, and then such a direct question.

"Why would...I...?" Tuo Bihan was struck with realization in the midst of his words. If Long Chen was destined to be the Grand Monarch, and they had enmity that would force only one of them to stand on the same sky, it would be cataclysmic. It would be a battle between the King of Everlore and Grand Monarch Wu Yu. It would not be an exaggeration to say only one would survive.

Furthermore, it was unlikely to be Grand Monarch Wu Yu.

Killing Wei Wuyin should be his next thought. If only to preserve the Myriad Monarch Sect's future.

Tuo Bihan hadn't thought about it, and his first instinct was to have Wei Wuyin segregate himself from the sect. "No. Do you see these weary bones? I'm too old to kill anyone." He bitterly smiled, but no one on the starfield would believe him.

Wei Wuyin gently smiled, "You think that I'm staying with the Myriad Monarch Sect because of coincidence? I'm doing so freely. I could've long since left, struck out on my own, and cultivated in

silence as I reached a strength unrivaled by all. I won't be pushed out of wherever I call home by anyone, ever again."

Tuo Bihan's heart shook. A trace of warmth surged in his heart. Wei Wuyin had merely been in the sect for five years, but he already considered this location home. He was brought back to his younger days when he first entered the sect and proclaimed it as his home. His emotions nearly got the better of him, his eyes slightly wet from nostalgia.

"Then, what do you intend to do?"

"I'll first remove your Spirit Oath." Wei Wuyin declared with the utmost casualness, "When I do, old man...will you be my ally and join the Ascendants?"

"What? My Spirit Oath?" Tuo Bihan was confused. Wei Wuyin didn't respond and waited. This was a critical moment that Tuo Bihan would have to decide for himself.

One of the issues Wei Wuyin had with his faction was time. None of his current subordinates, Zuhei, Su Mei, or Ying could cultivate at his speed. Even with the support of pills, elixirs, and pastes, they required time to refine these products and turn them into their own strength. While his Astral Souls could refine three thousand Astral Sea Pills in a month or two, they would require decades or a century to do the same. Moreover, they still had to comprehend the next stage.

This wasn't a difference in talent. His Astral Souls cultivated themselves, refining everything with the utmost swiftness and carelessness. He didn't have to take the normal route of digesting, channeling, refining, directing, and extrapolating the most effects from each product. It was almost instant.

He realized that the pace that he walks will never be rivaled by his subordinates, but he was similarly restricted himself. While his Astral Souls cultivate themselves, he had to personally comprehend the mysteries of the next phase and then assail the next tribulation. For example, even after ten months, he hadn't comprehended the full essence of the Soul Idol. Because of this, his Astral Souls couldn't assail the next stage.

While they wouldn't even try without establishing the best possible foundation, it still made him realize his cultivation base still relied on himself.

As for how long it'll take him to ascend to the Realmlord level, he had no idea. He might be peerlessly strong, but he wasn't naive to think that pellets that contained raw power were an adequate substitute for the mysteries and benefits of cultivation. The best example of this: Wu Jiao had used his recently acquired Sky Pressure to restrict his pellets from activating back in the Myriad Yore Continent.

If a legitimate Realmlord was before him, besides suiciding via pellet detonation in hopes of killing his enemy, he likely wouldn't even be able to stop them from restricting his action, snatching his pellets, or directly killing him.

As for the Ascendants, while he officially registered the organization in the Myriad Monarch Sect, he intended to have two separate units. The first would be his private subordinates such as Zuhei, Su Mei, and Ying, and the second will include his faction within the Myriad Monarch Sect to handle external and casual matters. Tuo Bihan will definitely be the leader of the second unit.

Tuo Bihan wasn't ignorant and he realized Wei Wuyin's intentions. "If you're asking me to set myself against the Myriad Monarch Sect, I won't. I'm too old for such things." He was unwilling to side with Wei Wuyin and then go against others in the sect.

Wei Wuyin shook his head, saying: "After I remove your Spirit Oath, I don't want you to fight against the Myriad Monarch Sect. I need a Realmlord. I need someone who could ensure my safety and the safety of others. As for entering into conflict with him, that might happen one day, and if it does, that'll be personally handled by myself and him. I'm certain with his pride, he wouldn't involve the sect."

Wei Wuyin didn't believe that he would fail the Second Calamity, but since his deadline had inevitably moved forward, he had a lot less time to establish a foundation. If he still had over thirty years, what would he need a Realmlord for?

But, by some ungodly design, if he died, his soul perishing in Hell, he needed someone to take care of those who he cared for. He needed to ensure that the Myriad Monarch Sect would remain standing for a thousand or two thousand years.

"What do you say?"

Tuo Bihan didn't know what to say. He was old, lacked lifeforce, and his potential was essentially exhausted. He hoped that Wei Wuyin would reveal exceptional ability and concoct a path for him to take that sought life and prosperity. But this was followed by an offer.

"Okay, little boss." He was too old to be indecisive. As long as he believed that Wei Wuyin understood his intentions to never betray or fight against the Myriad Monarch Sect, then he was willing.

"Good." Wei Wuyin casually flipped his palm, causing a jade box the size of his palm to appear. "In here is a vial of Spirit Cleansing Elixir, an eight-grade, high-tier elixir. As long as you're below the Realmlord level, this will clean your Spirit of all oaths. Furthermore, it'll purify your spiritual energies."

"..." Tuo Bihan froze. He had forgotten about this elixir! Because of how Spirit Oaths were, even if he took this, no one would know that he wasn't compelled to follow his oaths under the threat of death. He would be a truly free man without any restrictions.

"From now on, you're a member of the Ascendants." Wei Wuyin announced causing Tuo Bihan to experience a moment of surrealism. He didn't understand why, but he felt as if he was engulfed in some heavenly force at this moment. It was as if he was tied to Wei Wuyin at this moment.

"Don't worry, I don't need you to swear an oath. As for your Astral Tribulation...have you heard of the Spiritual World Ascension Elixir and the Spatial World Ascension Elixir?" Wei Wuyin's eyes brightened. They were eighth-grade products, high-tier, and peak-tier respectively, that can post-increase the number of Soul Idol rings and level of Spatial Resonance. They could be taken a limited amount of times, up to three, but they could increase rings and ripples to the ninth level.

Tuo Bihan's eyes widened. These were elixirs with a certain failure rate to all those below a certain cultivation level. This was because they required an absurdly high level of mana control that only Realmlords and those above could have. They hadn't shown up since the King of Everlore era, having collected endless dust since.

He knew of these elixirs, but it shouldn't be possible for Wei Wuyin to concoct them...right?

Chapter 265 - 262: Your Choice

Wei Wuyin removed the spiritual barrier, revealing to the world himself and Tuo Bihan who remained in an odd daze. It felt astonishingly strange as he recalled the conversation, questions, and his final answer. Was this how others felt when they inevitably decided to follow the King of Everlore?

As Wei Wuyin slowly descended towards the gathering of young elites and elders, Tuo Bihan could see the clear outline of his tall, imposing back that seemed capable of holding the world and accomplishing the nigh impossible. Such a youth, not even fifty years old yet, is laying down the foundation for his own era.

Will he be the first notable figure that ignites the history of Wei Wuyin?

He glanced at the jade box in his hand that contained the vial of Spirit Cleansing Elixir. "The Dao of Alchemy is limitless."

The King of Everlore had created numerous recipes of a variety of concoction, and this was further delved into by other Alchemic Emperors. The Spirit Cleansing Elixir was not a product made by the King of Everlore, but an ancient Evil Cultivator and Alchemic Emperor, the Dread-Birth Emperor. It was an eccentric derivative of the Soul Restoration Elixir, a ninth-grade product devised by the King of Everlore.

Tuo Bihan hadn't imagined that Wei Wuyin would or even could concoct this. In truth, he felt his specialty lied in pills, as did the King of Everlore. His other concoctions started being conceived a hundred or so years after his official recognition as a Mortal Sovereign Alchemist. According to the records, this was a period of experimentation for him.

If he could ascend to the Realmlord level by his own efforts, not igniting his lifeforce and potential, then he felt confident in being able to reign supreme throughout the starfield in this current time. The San Clan's Realmlords were superficial Realmlords, and their foundation was unlikely to be greater than his current one.

"...Perhaps that's his intentions." His eyes kept themselves focused on that soaring figure brightened. Keeping the box, he slowly followed Wei Wuyin downwards.

Below, during their conversation, the young elites were informed of the changes to the Monarch Spirit Trials, including the addition of participants and the final prize. They didn't inform them of Wei Wuyin's wager with the Alchemist Association; it was an unnecessary detail.

Just this much was sufficient enough to ignite their desire for competition, many revving up and feeling pumped to face against talents beyond their sect. This was an absolute rarity considering the tense relationship the Myriad Monarch Sect had with the other forces. Any sign of fierce competition prior to this would've been considered an act of war.

Those in the cultivation world did not simply allow their disciples to be injured or killed by foreign forces without swift, ruthless, and full-blown retaliation. If it was against each other, in a proper setting, they wouldn't mind. If it was during a competition for resources or in an area where fighting is allowed, they wouldn't investigate. Even if they did, they wouldn't punish. This was to ensure that each disciple treasured their lives and didn't think they had an umbrella against all harm.

It was this very setting that allowed the Myriad Monarch Sect to dominate even after the King of Everlore's era, establishing an era where they ruled the entire starfield. After all, this starfield was once named the Imperial Heaven Starfield for a reason.

With this opportunity, many of these geniuses were ready to show off their mettle and grit. They would test themselves to their absolute limits and face cultivators who practiced Cultivation Methods, Arts, and Spells they weren't familiar with. It was quite invigorating to think about.

Qin Rui and Ji Changkong had remained on the platform, and when they saw Tuo Bihan and Wei Wuyin remove their spiritual barrier and descend, they flashed beside them. Wei Wuyin glanced at Qin Rui, his eyes calm but an imperceptible glint flitted within.

This woman was gorgeous to an extreme for a member of the elven race, and she only loses to Qing Qiumu by a few points due to youth and larger...assets. As for her pure yin aura, it was astonishingly alluring for any male and exceeded even Qing Qiumu. If he told others he lacked any desire to court her, it would be a complete and utter lie.

However, in the end, he held himself back. While cultivating with her would improve his cultivation base, and even improve his comprehension of other states due to the immersive properties of Yin and Yang merging, he knew she was an untouched virgin for a reason. He just didn't know what it was.

While they were floating down, he was direct. "Grand Imperial Sage Qin, may I ask you a rather intrusive and likely inappropriate question?"

Qin Rui was taken aback alongside Ji Changkong, but Tuo Bihan felt as if he could read Wei Wuyin's intention clearly for some reason, and he wearily smiled.

While taken aback, Qin Rui knew what he wanted to ask instantly. It was the question that Tuo Bihan constantly inquired to her. "If it's regarding my reasons for remaining chaste, not finding a partner despite my time in this world, then I'll answer it if you want." Beneath her concealing mist that hid her face and expression to others, she bitterly smiled.

"It is."

"The short answer is...I promised myself to a certain someone when I was younger. He died prematurely in the war. Since then, I've remained faithful to my oath to him." Qin Rui answered, her words would likely dissatisfy countless men, and likely curse that man for his idiocy for dying too early.

"A Spirit Oath?" Wei Wuyin further inquired.

Qin Rui shook her head, her mist moving to resemble such actions. "No. I was merely a young woman at that time, barely at the Yin Form Phase. We promised to tie the knot, becoming Dao Companions, when we both ascend to the Astral Core Realm, but alas...fate wasn't kind to us." While others couldn't see her expressions at this moment, Wei Wuyin's Celestial Eyes were clear and unobstructed. She was crying.

Her tears glistened like liquid crystal. It seemed to contain a lifetime of pain, grief, and loneliness. While he didn't ask, he knew they were likely together for a long time after the Oath, merely failing by a small margin. He also understood her a little in terms of waiting, even when one was in love.

Cultivation was difficult, but it was also cruel. Those at the Ninth Stage of the Qi Condensation Realm can survive for five hundred years, but those at the Astral Core Realm can survive for a thousand, all the way to fifteen hundred. And this was merely the average, it went up and down based on one's foundation, race, illness, accidents, and bodily condition.

If two people weren't of proportionate cultivation, then one would grow old and die while the other was at the prime of their life. There were five million Astral Core Realm experts, but tens of trillions of cultivators in the starfield. This was a horrific ratio. This was why Dao Companions existed.

Despite their pledge, they were still separated.

How cruel.

Wei Wuyin's thoughts of intruding into this woman's heart with all sorts of plans and schemes had calmed and dissipated into smoke. He would respect her decision. But, "I understand. If you ever decide to allow your heart to be open to another, I hope you'll give me a chance." Was all he needed to say. It was respecting her right to remain chaste, and allowing his original intentions to be made known. It would be her choice to do so.

Qin Rui was startled, but she swiftly regained herself. Wei Wuyin was direct, and she liked that. Despite his potential, current status, and current ability, he didn't flaunt it around to impress or force, and merely made a gentleman's request that if, or when, she decided to live in the present, that she allowed him to court her in an above-board manner.

"I will." Her words were softly spoken, but it caused Ji Changkong's heart to fiercely throb in response. Even Tuo Bihan was shocked by her response. He didn't feel that Wei Wuyin had charisma to attract the birds, bees, gods, and ghosts, but his manner of doing things was very impressive. He nodded, clearly approving of Wei Wuyin's way.

He recalled when Ji Changkong had first heard this story. He had essentially sworn up and down that he would let her love again, and that he, as a man, would be able to bring her happiness beyond what the dead could. He essentially tugged at her in hopes of obtaining her, trying to even force her with contrast arguments. It did him little, and he became a pest.

Only after a beating did he slowly and quietly change his approach. Fortunately, he developed his Saber and Sword Intent, becoming sharper and prouder. He hadn't attempted to court Qin Rui for a long time.

This conversation was handled quickly. Wei Wuyin and the others landed, the gazes of everyone turning towards them. The three Grand Imperial Sages, famous figures that represented the peak strength of their sect! Even amongst the entire starfield, they were highly regarded. They also ran the three most active Extreme Mountains, and most of the disciples here belonged to the Extreme Origin Mountain or Extreme War Mountain.

They all had ties with the Extreme Creation Mountain.

Wei Wuyin stepped forward and swept his silver eyes over the group, noticing Qing Qiumu there. His eyes lingered slightly as he smiled, and she reciprocated with an enchanting smile of her own. It had been over a year since they last saw each other. Since she ascended to the ranks of experts, becoming an Astral Core Realm elite, Qing Qiumu had grown endlessly more beautiful.

When he saw her, while he hadn't revealed it outwardly, in his heart he was startled. His past comparison of Qin Rui and Qing Qiumu was unjust. Qing Qiumu blazed Qin Rui by a thousand miles, and even her aura wasn't that lacking. Her trifecta of innate wood-attributed gifts was truly bearing godly fruit. She had to be insanely popular in the sect, her sect-destroying looks were too intense.

In truth, Qing Qiumu had just come out of seclusion, so she hadn't had enough time to cause a commotion with the pressing event of the Monarch Spirit Trials, but there were already Sky Nobles and Heavenly Kings eyeing her. In the future, a storm of trouble would definitely follow beside her steps.

Beauty was a very powerful incendiary to the hearts of proud geniuses.

His eyes soon met Long Chen's for a moment and were met with a calm, cool, and sharp gaze in reply. It wasn't filled with provocation, but one couldn't help but feel as if it contained a thousand words while simultaneously looking down on you. If it was anyone else, they might find Long Chen's gaze annoying. And wished to snuff it. But Wei Wuyin had long since found Long Chen's entire existence annoying, so he remained unaffected.

Normally, these elites might be exchanging words or comments amongst each other, but with the Grand Imperial Sages present, they were silent as ghosts in the morning.

"My name's Wei Wuyin. I'm a Heavenly King of the Extreme Creation Mountain and founder of the faction Ascendants." Wei Wuyin introduced himself, which brought all these young elites to a focus. Quite a few of them have had disconnected contact with Wei Wuyin, this revered and exceptional Prince of Everlore, so they were familiar with him.

A few had merely heard of his name and his looks. They knew he was a talent and in five years of studying at the sect, he concocted an eighth-grade pill that they were supposed to fight for today. While he hadn't received an official rank, everyone knew he was the youngest Alchemic King in recorded history. If it wasn't for the King of Everlore's curious past, which had not been well-documented, this might not be the case.

Furthermore, he was regarded as the Prince of Everlore without an Alchemic Astral Soul. This meant he had combat prowess. According to rumors, he could already rival Soul Idols at the First Stage of the Astral Core Realm. Now, he had reached the Second Stage and he wasn't even fifty years old.

While he's not the youngest recorded Sky Ruler, he was fairly close. His talent, looks, and abilities were peak-tier for any era.

Wei Wuyin realized no one was confused or shocked, so he continued. "Many of you are Mortal Commons, Earthly Elites, and some are Sky Nobles and even Heavenly Kings, like me. You either belong to a faction or have established one for yourself. I know each one of you is proud, as you should be, and exceptionally powerful to have the confidence to participate. So I'll be direct.

"My faction, Ascendants, is open recruiting. Regardless if you don't belong to a faction, you do, or you are its leader, I'm willing to accept you," Wei Wuyin spoke with a calm yet powerful voice. A clamor immediately started as the expressions of various individuals changed, a hint of uncertainty and confusion within.

Tuo Bihan finally recalled Wei Wuyin's words. He would use this as a platform to grow his own faction!

"If you are a leader of your own faction, I will not only accept you but any member beneath you that's willing to join." Wei Wuyin elaborated.

"You're asking us to disband our factions and follow yours?" A Sky Noble asked, his voice contained clear dissatisfaction. To these young geniuses that worked their asses off to establish themselves, using years to handpick and recruit talented individuals, fighting for resources on continents and planets, it was unrealistic to think they wouldn't see this as outrageous.

"Yes, I am." Wei Wuyin answered.

"Why would we do anything like that?!" A Heavenly King, a beautiful elven woman of Qin Rui's family line, asked with a hint of arrogance. To her, she had the overall backing of a Grand Imperial Sage. Furthermore, she fully intended to reach that level herself. While Wei Wuyin might be called the 'Prince of Everlore' he wasn't actually the King of Everlore's descendant.

He only concocted an eighth-grade pill using the planet's energies to supplement himself!

Her words were echoed in the words and eyes of the others. Before they were silent, but now they were active.

However, Wei Wuyin didn't explain. He didn't need to give them a speech or lure them with promises and bribes. Instead, he merely said: "You don't have to. It's entirely your choice. But there won't be another open recruitment like this. Your 'decline' today will forever remain the same."

Long Chen was in the back watching, and when he heard Wei Wuyin essentially say that the others would have to live with their choices, regret and all, he sneered in his heart. How could these proud geniuses with endless ambition surrender their factions to you?

As he expected, many felt this was outrageous and ridiculous. While they wouldn't openly ridicule Wei Wuyin, they wouldn't cater to his every whim either.

"I, and my faction, accept!" A delicate yet sharp voice resounded! Someone had spoken!

Chapter 266 - 263: Free & Relaxed

A young woman walked forward. She had an elegant figure with a slim waist, mid-length hair tied into a ponytail, and energetic eyes. These features were accentuated by the Myriad Monarch Sect's robes, colored crimson signifying the Extreme War Mountain, her supple yet firm red lips, and jet-black hair. She was human.

When her words resounded, the eyes of the young elites turned to her. A few at her level and above were clearly caught off guard by her announcement. A male elf with light pink hair exclaimed, his robes as crimson as hers, "Hong Chunhua? What are you saying?! You can't decide this!"

The young elf bore the symbol of a Sky Noble, the same as Hong Chunhua. This seemed to have sparked an internal debate as the rest decided to act as spectators, a hint of amusement in their eyes. Most of these young elites were familiar with their counterparts.

Hong Chunhua maintained a cool expression, her eyes swept the young elf. "Wong Yu, I've made my decision." Her tone brooked no discussion, she walked forward towards Wei Wuyin and arrived a few feet away from him.

Wei Wuyin's silver eyes analyzed this young woman. Her innate energies were light, not as robust as the others. From her body, he could feel a trace of Sword Intent with a fragrant smell. At her hips were a lanyard that carried a long sword with a crimson hilt. At the base of this hilt was the depiction of a rose in bloom.

"The Three Flowers of the Sword?" Wei Wuyin quietly realized their identity. This was an organization formed by three Sky Nobles, an alliance that turned a full faction with three leaders. From what he understood, this was Hong Chunhua and she held the least amount of reputation within the faction. Wong Yu was the leader, his strength superior and at the top of Sky Nobles in the Extreme War Mountain. The second member was beyond three hundred years of age, nearing Elder-compulsory age, so he was unable to participate in the trials.

Hong Chunhua looked at Wei Wuyin in the eyes, her gaze unflinching and resolute. Within those black eyes of her was the elegantly wave light of Sword Intent. In a moment, she unsheathed her sword and revealed its shine. Then, unexpected by all present, she knelt on one knee and offered her sword with both hands.

"I, Hong Chunhua, pledge my sword to you. I and my sword are yours to command." With her head bowed, she spoke these words which instigated a wave of silence. The others who felt an instinctive urge to refuse Wei Wuyin's offer were dumbfounded.

Wong Yu was one of them, but his stupor was brief as he raged with a red face. "We won't agree! If you want to leave, do so yourself. You will not take our efforts nor make one-sided decisions." In his heart, she lacked the qualifications. Furthermore, the thought of kneeling before another in such a manner was repulsive to him. While she might have long since gotten used to it, he wasn't!

Wei Wuyin glanced at Wong Yu. He kept his thoughts to himself, "Hong Chunhua, I'll accept you. Any of those within your faction willing to follow, I'll accept as well." After saying that, he swept his silver eyes over the others. The next set of events were quite anticlimactic. A few Earthly Elites and Mortal Commons decided to make the switch, seeking Wei Wuyin's approval. Besides Hong Chunhua, no other Sky Noble accepted. As for Heavenly Kings? Absolutely not.

If Wei Wuyin was a true King of Everlore or a Prince of Everlore, they might throw their pride and effort at his lap, but he wasn't. In their hearts, this was a title forged by others, and while he was catered to by the upper elites, it wasn't sufficient enough for them to relegate themselves into a lower commanding position. Perhaps this was the flaw of the Myriad Monarch Sect's modus operandi and belief of hard work equates to a limitless future.

They all remained silent. While they didn't dare insult Wei Wuyin to his face, their eyes reflected a hint of prideful disdain. They were all talented geniuses that carved their own path and developed their own forces with blood, sweat, and tears. How could they be willing to simply allow another to swoop in and claim it all?

But this was fine.

"How many people will likely be included with you?" He asked this of the Earthly Elites, Mortal Commons, and Hong Chunhua. He didn't care about talent for his second unit. As an Alchemist, he can

redefine someone's cultivation talent to a certain extent and supplement their speed with alchemical products. What was important was essentially their numbers and willingness.

He needed to forge a second unit that could handle less important matters for him, and what came with these Earthly Elites and Mortal Commons disciples were clans and families. He could field more members from these connections. He didn't want to be picky with this unit as their importance wasn't too great.

After tallying their presumed numbers, he nodded. He turned towards Hong Chunhua, who was now standing with a calm expression and bright eyes. She seemed to not regret her decision in the slightest. He calmly smiled, then he said to the others: "Is there no one else?"

"..." Met with silence, he wasn't bothered at all.

"Hong Chunhua, from henceforth you'll be the First Commander of the Ascendants. In six months, you'll exceed every Heavenly King present." His bold declaration induced an uproar amongst these young talents, and even Long Chen and Qing Qiumu were stunned. There were only four Heavenly Kings present, two from the Extreme War Mountain and two from the Extreme Origin Mountain. They were Soul Idol Phase cultivators with at least five-rings, their foundation was impeccable in this current era.

They had combat strength at the peak of their cultivation level, and a few might even be able to hold their own against the current era's Spatial Resonance experts.

Hong Chunhua's eyes reflected her astonishment. She didn't dare to believe this declaration nor question it, merely nodding her head in acceptance of her position. She was his First Commander? That had to be impressive. A faint smile tugged at her lips.

If she knew how important her decision had been, deciding to throw away everything, who knew how she would react.

Afterwards, Wei Wuyin ignored the others.

Pa!

Tuo Bihan clapped his hands, the world quaking as a result which caused the clamor to instantly cease. "We're returning to the sect. You have six months of preparations, be thorough." After those words, he urged everyone to the Void Gate.

Wei Wuyin sent Hong Chunhua off, his eyes turned towards Qing Qiumu. He walked over and said with a smile, "How about we stay back for a little bit?" His ask caught Qing Qiumu off-guard, her emerald eyes radiating a hint of shock. She didn't know why Wei Wuyin would want to stay back, and the others were already being brought away. They were urgent to cultivate and improve, gathering trump cards for the trials.

As for Wei Wuyin's offer and declaration, they placed it at the back of their minds as they focused on the future.

In the end, she nodded. Her actions were caught by Long Chen, who stopped his steps and turned back. He asked Qing Qiumu, not even bothering to glance at Wei Wuyin, "You're coming, Qing'er?" His question was odd, clearly his powerful physical sense of hearing should've heard Wei Wuyin.

Wei Wuyin remembered the first time he met Long Chen. It was after he had met Qing Qiumu. They spent half a day in conversation, losing track of time, and he walked her back to her Inn. He was there, his eyes sharp and calm, but within was a storm of murderous intent. If it wasn't for his desire to hide in the capital for the wedding while his forces gathered, unwilling to cause a commotion, he might've attacked to kill Wei Wuyin.

Thinking of Qing Qiumu's growing beauty and talent, he couldn't help but knowingly smile.

Qing Qiumu saw Long Chen's face. She knew that he wanted to pull her away from Wei Wuyin. He was giving her a way out, publicly attracting the attention of others to prevent Wei Wuyin from forcibly keeping her. But she knew that Wei Wuyin didn't have any ill-intentions.

So she reassured, "Not yet. I'll catch up with you later." Her words caused Long Chen to frown, and he stayed. He seemed unwilling to leave her alone with Wei Wuyin.

Wei Wuyin was quietly laughing in his heart. *'Your insecurity is showing.'* But he wasn't willing to deal with the jealousy of this little man. "If you want to stay, I'll have your qualifications to participate in the trials stripped. Then you can stay for as long as you want."

Long Chen started, so did Qing Qiumu. The aggressiveness in his words was clear, and so was the threat. Long Chen clenched his teeth, his jawline becoming prominent, and his eyes lowering a few degrees in temperature. "You want to use your status to force Qing Qiumu by your side?!"

Wei Wuyin AND Qing Qiumu were taken aback. His words were a huge leap, and it was clear that they both hadn't expected that accusation. "No. I want you to leave. Isn't that clear?" Shaking his head, he clarified.

Long Chen clenched his fists, Slaughter Sword Intent flickered within his normally dark eyes. He seemed ready to fight at a moment's notice like a threatened animal. Qing Qiumu panicked slightly in her heart, unsure as to why Long Chen's temper was shorter now. She had been in seclusion, so she didn't know that Na Xinyi had refused to sleep with him and damaged her innate foundation instead.

The effect on his mentality had not been small nor was the pressure for helping her return to normal. This was further exacerbated by Wu Yu's revealing Wei Wuyin's talents. He was the next King of Everlore.

"Long Chen, I'm fine. Trust me." Qing Qiumu had to reassure him, stepping forward before Long Chen calmed down.

Long Chen stared at Qing Qiumu's gorgeous face for a long moment, his heart racing as her beauty was truly growing to untold limits. He nodded, giving Wei Wuyin one last look before turning around and meeting up with the others.

Before long, they left. Wei Wuyin couldn't help but feel pity for Long Chen. In his alternate future, Long Chen had killed Wei Wuyin and closed off any future connections. In this present, Wei Wuyin had

undetermined connections with two of his female companions which ate at his heart. Now, both wanted the other dead but for vastly different reasons.

In the end, Long Chen was living on borrowed time. The moment Wu Yu was no longer an adequate protective charm was the day...

"Wei Wuyin?" Qing Qiumu seemed slightly hesitant. Her relationship with Long Chen was longer, thorough, and they fought against several crises of life and death in the Myriad Yore Continent. She cared about his opinions, thoughts, and well-being.

But Wei Wuyin was her savior. Without him, she would likely be dead. It wasn't just once, but twice. At the Myriad Yore Continent and the Execution Platform on the Myriad Monarch Planet. She literally owed him her life, twice. Moreover, she felt incomparably comfortable around him like kindred spirits, as if her innermost worries faded into the wind.

She wasn't like Na Xinyi, because her feelings for both hadn't developed to the level of deciding between them nor was she ready to decide. In truth, her thoughts towards Wei Wuyin were unprecedentedly pure. She wasn't cultivating for power, but to see how far she could go on this road.

Wei Wuyin casually stretched his arms, "It's been a while since we talked. I have more stories, wanna hear them?" He grinned, while lifting his eyebrows up and down, his eyes brightly lit as his heart relaxed. The time of the past at that restaurant was sublime.

Qing Qiumu was briefly stunned, and then a gentle smile formed on her face. Even her limpid eyes were suffused with a relaxed light. In minutes, they were already walking through the vast Junia forest landscapes, the sounds of chatter, laughter, and gasps resounded wherever they went. The vivid tellings of various tales that could enthrall the heart was exchanged.

From dusk to dawn to dusk, time flowed without notice.

There wasn't a single gorgeous landscape on the planet that went unvisited.

Chapter 267 - 264: Preparations

In Tuo Bihan's Sky Palace on the eighth-level of the Extreme Creation Mountain, Wei Wuyin was currently there. He stood in a large hall with several figures present. Since his 'incident' with his Sky Palace, he had to wait while it was being rebuilt entirely, so he decided to set-up shop at Tuo Bihan's residence.

It was largely unused as the old man often spent his days lounging down at the Martial King's Dao Palace or idling about elsewhere. Due to his old age and high cultivation base, he simply acted however he wanted and slept where he felt he should. This was how Wei Wuyin met him first.

He even lacked attendants for his Sky Palace, just like Wei Wuyin had. It was very rare for those of his or Tuo Bihan's level to avoid procuring workers to maintain the Sky Palace. But they both seemed to lack others constantly in their space.

In truth, this remained true even in the Scarlet Solaris Sect. Perhaps it was the tense atmosphere he grew up which caused assassinations to be at the forefront of his mind, but he didn't allow anyone but his lovers, trusted subordinates, family, and allies to enter his Sky Palace.

At the moment, Su Mei, Zuhei, and Hong Chunhua were standing before him. Su Mei and Zuhei had just returned from their missions, returning on his order. Due to the Grand Spirit Trials, he had recalled them.

As for Hong Chunhua, she was here for cultivation. The ambient environment of the eighth-level of the Sky Layer was highly conducive for cultivation. The thick astral essence and the various gathering, concentration, and purification formations could easily accelerate an individual's cultivation and foundation. He had declared that she would exceed all the Heavenly Kings in six months, he was not one to go against his word.

He fully intended to give her premium pills, elixirs, and paste for the full six months. Her talent and innate foundation would be entirely redefined. The fortunate thing was that, unlike Zuhei and Su Mei who needed the firmest foundation imaginable, Hong Chunhua simply needed a foundation that exceeded the others.

Wei Wuyin handled her matter first. "I've devised a regiment for you to cultivate during these six months, and I'll be providing all the resources. You simply need to be diligent and cultivate to your fullest."

Hong Chunhua nodded, her red lips moved slightly as if she wanted to speak up. But in the end, she stifled her words. Wei Wuyin noticed this and added, "The others are being taken care of separately, including those who decided to follow you. A total of seventy-three." He waved his hand, a storage ring appeared above his open palm. He sent it to her.

"There's a list in there. You'll find eighth-grade pills, elixirs, and paste within, all suitable for your cultivation. Don't be hasty, take your time absorbing each product to their utmost limits." Wei Wuyin was somewhat saddened that she had only reached the three-ring Soul Idol. While this was above average for this era, it meant her limit with the eighth-grade products was a Six-ring Soul Idol.

This meant that in terms of Soul Idol foundation, she wouldn't be beyond the strongest Heavenly King. He had to truly improve every aspect of her foundation to change her future. Even her Mortal State was merely at the 7th level.

She was stunned. '*...Eighth-Grade?!*' Before she could voice her confusion, Wei Wuyin dismissed her and sent her out towards the cultivation room. He didn't want to deal with her questions or confusion.

Zuhei and Su Mei were relatively calm. The former had received Astral Sea Pills by the bucketful to cultivate and Su Mei was always provided with the best resources Wei Wuyin had to offer. Despite that, she was still only at the Ninth Stage of the Qi Condensation Realm, the Qi Essence Phase. She had long since cultivated her Mana Essence, merging it with her Natal Soul for a Zenith Mortal State. However, she hadn't assailed the Astral Core Realm.

Why?

She had a gut-feeling of an ominous premonition whenever she thought about it. It was indistinct, but even Wei Wuyin said it was best to trust her instincts. She should wait until she was absolutely certain, the feeling vanishing. Therefore, she had, for the last few years, cultivated her Darklight Energies and Saber Intent to the limits.

She learned spells, arts, studied mana perception methods and arrays, advancing her knowledge in all aspects of cultivation. She wanted to fortify her cultivation foundation to the limit, then ascend. Unfortunately, her current body and Natal Soul was at its absolute limit. Her innate energies couldn't be reinforced, purified, or condensed further, and her cultivation was at its peak.

She had even comprehended an Intent of Light and Darkness. They were both high-level rare essences, the Solar Yang Light and Lunar Yin Darkness. They stemmed from the sun and the rare darkness that planetary satellites birthed in conjunction with each other, and they were very compatible. Her Divine Heart of Darklight Qi had thoroughly solidified.

Zuhei had been developing his foundation as well, his Astral Core was already two millimeters in size. This was absolutely monstrous, and while he was a Sky Ruler, it vastly surpassed any on his level. Furthermore, he had perceived the profundities of the Soul Idol, ready to assail it at any moment.

If it wasn't for Wei Wuyin's orders, he would've ascended and reached new heights.

"I've called both of you back because of the Grand Spirit Trials," Wei Wuyin said. He explained the details, wagers, and challenges within the sect. From the beginning, Wei Wuyin never was going to rely on the disciples of the sect to secure victory. He was fully intending to have Zuhei claim victory in the contest, his claws and fangs.

While he could improve their cultivation bases, he had no reason to. Those young elites were given a chance and refused, and picking one of them out and wasting his resources on them was an unappealing option to him.

Zuhei's eyes brightened considerably. He was a cultivator that birthed Slaughter and Battle Intent, his species were said to have descended from the mythological Silver Wolf, Fenrir. The hunt, the fight, and the kill was in his blood. He had been cultivating quietly since he claimed his revenge, and Duke Zhao wasn't even enough to whet his appetite.

A bloodlust effused from his scarlet eyes.

"You'll take victory. As for you Su Mei, I think it's time for you to ascend. You've reached an absolute limit at your realm, and your comprehension of mana is sufficient to call forth the Sky-World Lightning Tribulation." Wei Wuyin found her comprehension to be terrifying. She was a frightening talent, far beyond him naturally in regards to cultivation. If it wasn't for his Celestial Eyes that can see the variations and aspects of mana, he didn't believe he could ascend so easily.

While his talent with alchemy was exceptional to the extreme, and his intelligence and comprehension were not low, he knew in his heart that he was a notch or two weaker than Su Mei. He had a sneaky suspicion that her cultivation base wouldn't be below his if she wasn't feeling apprehensive.

He didn't have anything solid for this assumption to stand on, but his heart felt it was the truth. The strange thing was that she didn't have any unique bloodline or physique, even her sea of consciousness and meridians were normal. To set a comparison, Qing Qiumu had a trifecta of talent that stemmed from her meridians(Essence), sea of consciousness(Mind), and physique(Physical). They were all wood-attributed and high-grade, allowing her to cultivate an unprecedented path as a Wood Cultivator.

Despite that, Su Mei seemed to not lose to her in any facet of natural talent. She gave birth to Darklight Energies, comprehended Light and Darkness Intents, both high-level, and Saber Intent. These were all cultivation achievements, and she was at Wei Wuyin's age. In fact, it didn't lose out to Long Chen, a Blessed. To add to this, she didn't rely on his Karmic Luck Value.

It was bizarre. It was incredibly bizarre.

Su Mei didn't question Wei Wuyin's orders. "Yes, Lord Wei." Her pure black eyes were radiant. Just staring at them could cause one to be lost in their light, a benefit of her cultivation method.

Wei Wuyin nodded, "Zuhei. Your aura has traces of a Soul Idol forming, you can ascend. I'll give you cultivation resources to ensure a nine-ring Soul Idol. You'll also cultivate the Bloodforging Mystic Method, it's a Bloodline cultivation method that can improve the physical constitution, improve one's bloodline, and bring about unique changes. It'll be beneficial to you in the long run."

This was the method he obtained from Yuan Longshi's memories, the complete version of the Bloodforging Mystic Method. It was the method used by the Bloodforge Emperor, a subordinate of Wu Yu, and likely revered Mystic Ascendant Realm cultivator. He had created the Bloodforge Continent and left his legacy within.

Wei Wuyin had taken nearly a year to excavate the method and using his comprehension of alchemy and the True Dragon Transmutation Method, he had to remove the inconsistencies within. Originally, this technique had a hidden trap within that caused it to only work on those who've been branded with a bloodline seal.

This seal was very minute, nearly impossible to notice, and was there at birth. It was left by the Bloodforge Emperor onto his descendants and relatives. If it wasn't for him thoroughly sweeping Yuan Longshi's memories, Wei Wuyun would have remained completely ignorant of this flaw. But having known about it, removing this limitation was simple.

With it removed, not only could he finally cultivate the method but so could Zuhei, someone who relied on his physical body and bloodline energies to cultivate and fight. As a beastman, his bloodline powers were thoroughly affected by his cultivation base and vice versa.

It was this very reason why Yuan Longshi advanced so swiftly and had such power at his age.

Wei Wuyin sent a strand of Alchemic Eden Force into Zuhei's glabella, the contents of the Bloodforging Mystic Method was branded in his mind. This startled Zuhei at first, not expecting Wei Wuyin to send a strand of astral force towards him, but he didn't react or resist. This was because the move was done by Wei Wuyin!

But what shocked Zuhei even more was the information that entered his mind, his scarlet eyes widened in disbelief and uncertainty. He had never heard of someone mentally branding a technique into another's mind before.

"Cultivate it well." Wei Wuyin passed a storage ring to Zuhei. He was his trump card for the Grand Spirit Trials. With his cultivation base, he should be unrivaled after his ascension. Even if he lost this challenge, he wouldn't fall prey to the Alchemist Association's scheme. They clearly wanted to give him a request, one he couldn't refuse. He didn't know what it was, but he felt it wasn't appropriate.

Regardless, he'll pay off the bet and move on.

When it was just him and Su Mei, he looked at her. Her body was slim yet fierce, her defined and toned musculature outlined accentuating her light armor. With hair and eyes as black as night but as radiant as the sun, she was becoming more exquisite. While she had always been pretty, she was reaching another level of alluring with a unique charm of her own.

When those clear black eyes met his silver eyes, he could feel her impassioned desire to improve and stand by his side. He gently smiled, a trace of warmth circulating endlessly in his heart. This girl...

"You ready?" He asked.

"Yes!" She replied.

Chapter 268 - 265: A Change In The World

"Lord Wei," Su Mei called out. They were both currently standing within a training field, facing each other.

"Hm?"

"Regarding the mission from before, the Ancient Void Gates." Within her heart, mind, and soul, she was quietly trembling. Su Mei felt that this tribulation attempt would be catastrophic for her. For some odd reason, she felt as if tomorrow wasn't promised. This caused her to recall that specific assignment.

The Ancient Void Gates were a strange existence that seemed to have originated from long ago, and there was a scent of mystery surrounding them. While Wei Wuyin kept a 'key' to these Ancient Void Gates around his neck, he hadn't wanted to venture within and explore. The question of what was on the other side kept tapping within her thoughts.

Another continent? Planet? Starfield? Would it lead to another world entirely? Will there be new races, species, or cultivators out there? Perhaps it was a world of desolation, destroyed and lost. Her curiosity was stroked, but till this day it remained an unknown.

"You were right. Zuhei found an Ancient Void Gate on another continent, the Dark Mist Continent. I also found one on the Myriad Yore Continent. They had different conditions, with the Myriad Yore Continent's being destroyed and the Dark Mist Continent's was infected by the demonic energies within." Su Mei explained it all.

"I know," Wei Wuyin said. He could feel the nervous aura from within Su Mei. While she hadn't noticed it, her hands were trembling and her eyes were suffusing an exhausted and terrified light. She maintained a straight-face, but her body was responding.

In fact, she was detailing information that he had already known. "Take a breath," he walked forward and pressed his hand against her shoulder. Her hands stopped, and her eyes stared into his own. For several moments, they were simply looking into the other's eyes.

"Huuuu! Haaaaa..." Su Mei inhaled deeply, closing her eyes, and exhaled out all her turbid emotions. Her turbulent aura steadied. When she reopened her eyes, they reflected a determined will.

"That's it," Wei Wuyin smilingly praised. *'She's scared.'* This was the first time he had ever seen Su Mei like this, and even his Celestial Eyes revealed nothing. But if there was an issue, she was tied to him via karma, and his Karmic Luck Value should be able to ensure she survived any unfortunate incidents.

...right?

He frowned.

"I'll be fine, Lord Wei." Su Mei regained herself, leaving Wei Wuyin's range and distancing herself. When she stood alone, she gazed at the stars and felt her Natal Soul's sensation. It was this unique sensation that all 4th Mortal State and higher Natal Souls at the Qi Essence Phase felt. It was termed the Call of the Astral Tribulation.

For a moment, to her, it felt like time-stopped. The clouds movements slowed, the suns' rays were flickering about, and the air stilled. *'I'll stay by your side, as your light. Wherever you go.'* Her thoughts were clear and uttered from the depths of her soul. Her hands slowly clenched as she interacted with that sensation, invoking the Astral Tribulation!

Wei Wuyin quietly watched. *'She has a Divine Heart of Darklight Qi. Her foundation is at the peak possible. She even comprehended two high-level Intents of Light and Darkness alongside Saber Intent. More, she has a Zenith Mortal State Natal Soul. There shouldn't be any issue. After all, she's unlike me with the Void, Eden, or Alchemic Dao. It should be ordinary and normal. It should.'*

The more he thought about Su Mei, the more nervous he felt. Even his very thoughts were as if he was consoling and reassuring himself, but he didn't believe it. He opened his silver eyes, pushing his Celestial Eyes of Spiritual Divinity to its utmost limits to grasp every little change within her and the world.

According to the normal Astral Tribulation, her Mortal Star will appear, fused with Light, Darkness, and Darklight Intent. It should follow the same set of events like his Divine Heart of Elemental Qi. Darklight was merely the merging of Light and Darkness, and Su Mei had comprehended the core basics of its Intent, capable of merging both light and darkness together.

There should be no irregularities.

"..."

"..."

"..."

A silence was evoked, by the sky, earth, and suns. It felt as if the entire world had descended to an utmost quiet that was eerie and uncertain. There were no changes. "Did she not call forth her Astral Tribulation?" Wei Wuyin was confused, observing Su Mei who remained still as if within a picture. His entire focus was on her.

"FATHER!!!" Kratos's roar was violent, causing Wei Wuyin's entire heart to shake. Abruptly, he coughed grey blood, enough to fill several buckets as his robes were drenched. He staggered, his expression pale as he felt a wave of exhaustion. But his eyes never left Su Mei.

"Something's strange!" Eden called out, sending chaotic waves into his sea of consciousness that induced a splitting headache. These surging waves were intense, causing the current world to start to

fracture. He had never felt like the world was made of glass, even his vision felt as if it was splitting. From where Su Mei stood, his entire sense of perception had become fractured and surreal.

Kratos had never called Wei Wuyin 'father' before. In fact, none of his Astral Souls referred to him by any title, but from the urgency within its voice and how it rumbled his entire body, he knew it was calling out to him. He felt the urgent and palpable fear within its tone.

He shouldn't focus on that right now. At the moment, he regained a semblance of physical strength and mental clarity. "What's happened?!" He asked, his eyes never leaving Su Mei.

"...The world! It's changed!" Kratos exclaimed, each word of it pumped his heart violently and he spewed out another gush of blood. However, he stayed steady. Wei Wuyin used his Celestial Eyes to perceive the world's mana, and his eyes narrowed. He realized the ambient mana had all vanished. There wasn't any present, at all.

This shouldn't be possible. Mana was present everywhere and he had never experienced an absence of it. In fact, he felt that mana was a central aspect of cultivation and life that even the Heavenly Daos relied on. How could it be absent, and so thoroughly? It was like instantly siphoning the oxygen out of a planet.

It just shouldn't be possible.

He tried to spread his spiritual sense, but his spiritual sense couldn't escape his Astral Souls. He felt his Astral Souls, but he couldn't feel a connection with them and his sea of consciousness. Without this connection with his mind, his spiritual sense was absolutely useless.

Eden kept radiating waves that caused an endless mind-splitting headache. "She's dying!" Those words caused Wei Wuyin's eyes to widen, trying to view Su Mei's body. But regardless of what, she was stagnate. He couldn't see anything. It was as if she was frozen in time, fractured in his view like a broken picture frame.

"Your eyes! Use your other eyes!" Eden called out. It seemed it was struggling to shout each word, its voice uncharacteristically deep. Wei Wuyin struggled to stand. He kept coughing blood, his mind felt as if it was a wardrum in full play, and this entire situation was confusing him.

Other eyes?

He had his Gaze of the Celestial Eyes. With it, he could even see the world trend? What other eyes did he have?

This!

As if struck by lightning, he realized what Eden meant. Without hesitation, he no longer suppressed his Alchemic Stars of Mortal Spirituality, a benefit gained from his successful concoction of a ninth-grade product. Within both his eyes were stars, seven in each, and they were brilliant. In a single glance, his view changed.

The glass shattering sight morphed, distorting and revealing the truth.

"SU MEI!"

Chapter 269 - 266: Not Again

His Alchemic Stars of Mortal Spirituality were a set of optical abilities obtained naturally from his comprehension of the Alchemic Dao. It was proof of his status as a Mortal Sovereign Alchemist, and was akin to Intent. It linked deeply with the Alchemic Dao and Mortal Dao, initially allowing him to perceive the Alchemic Spirit Remnants within others bodies.

He didn't know all of its abilities, but now he did. He could see what Eden always saw, and how he observed the world. This couldn't be reflected by spiritual sense. So when the world started to morph, he finally saw the truth.

The mana of this world had been siphoned away, and all of this mana had entered Su Mei's body. He tried to move, but every step was like trudging through dense mud. All the powers within his body were either halted or focused elsewhere. Kratos seemed to be allowing his body to move, focusing purely on preventing a strange force from infecting him.

He didn't know what this force was, but every time he spat out blood, it was the force that had contaminated his blood and body rejected with forceful means. Eden was doing the same, refining out this force from his mind without end. It wasn't like the Heavenly Daos. This force was malicious and simply intended to bring harm to him directly. Furthermore, he was the only one targeted.

It seemed to only be affecting him, as with his Celestial Eyes, he noted that Zuhei and Hong Chunhua were simply there. They were breathing, cultivating, and blissfully unaware of what was happening. This meant time hadn't legitimately stopped. The complete extraction of the world's mana merely created a sense of time stopping.

But he noticed King and Ori was silent and contained. They hadn't spoken nor could he interact with them. He didn't have time to delve into this, his heart was quaking ceaselessly as he observed Su Mei's body. Her skin was cracked like glass, fractured thoroughly and these cracks were growing.

Her eyes were closed and her arms were spread out. Within her body, the Alchemic Spirit Remnant within her body was gone. This contained all her latent alchemical efficacy of every pill, elixir, and paste she used but was unable to refine entirely. Furthermore, her body was filled to the brim with mana.

It was this mana that was siphoned from the world that seemingly infused within her body and was causing her body to shatter. He shouted, his fleshy body mustering every last of its strength to push his way towards her. There were only a few ten steps or so, but it felt like they were worlds apart. At the rate of the spread, and Eden's own estimation, he wouldn't make it.

His heart was gripped with terror. This terror wasn't unknown. It was the horrific fear brought about by watching someone he cared for die. He had experienced this once before, and it was still as vigorous and painful as before. "No! No! NO! NOT AGAIN!!!" He didn't know what was happening or why, but Su Mei was definitely about to die.

"Eden!" He cried in his mind.

"I..." Eden was at a loss.

"Kratos!" He cried in his heart.

"ROAR!!!" Kratos roar shook his body, blood spewing once more from his mouth, but the helplessness within was clear. They both were creations from Wei Wuyin's soul, so they could feel his raging emotions at this moment but had to handle their own issues. If they relented for a second, Wei Wuyin's sea of consciousness might be snuffed out or his fleshy body could explode.

Wei Wuyin shouted with strength, trying to take another step. He grasped his heart and interfaced with the Mark of Eden. Lifeforce! He brought out numerous strands that covered the sky above them. It formed a mist of endlessness that seemed to cover the horizon. If measured by strands, this might be hundreds of thousands.

Even still, this lifeforce seemed to not be a percent of the lifeforce within the Mark of Eden. The inherent lifeforce within the Mark of Eden seemed endless, as if it embodied the truths of Immortality. Regardless of how much he brought out, it never ceased. Before long, millions of strands of lifeforce emerged.

"Go!" He controlled all this lifeforce and they entered Su Mei. As they did, the cracks on her body stopped spreading but remained there. Wei Wuyin's eyes brightened. He kept pushing his body forward, the mysterious force that seemed to be targeting him was truly restrictive. He kept infusing lifeforce into Su Mei, the cracks ceasing their attack and her situation stabilized.

In seconds, thousands of years were consumed. In a minute, nearly a hundred thousand years of lifeforce was consumed. It was only then did Wei Wuyin finally reach her, his hand coming to touch her body. He wanted to see if Eden and Kratos could use their powers to support Su Mei, reversing this situation. Alas, the moment he touched her, her entire body responded with a scintillating surge of light that burned his eyes.

His eyes felt as if it was placed on the surface of the sun. Instantly, he felt blinded and a force pushed him several meters back. "No!" He yelled. He was further than he was before. With gritted teeth, he kept sending lifeforce into her body, his eyes slowly repairing themselves.

He was startled by their recovery, as he was certain the light had scorched his eyes into nothingness. Despite that, he could still feel them. He could feel them returning. Fortunately, he wasn't the type to submit into a bout of insanity at a desperate situation. His originally intense emotions calmed down, his body upright and his thoughts circulated. He had never been one to lose his intelligence at critical moments.

'When I underwent my Mortal Star Formation Tribulation, the Mortal Star utilized the ambient mana. She initiated her tribulation and this strange event occurred. While I don't understand it, she must be undergoing her Astral Tribulation. If I were to think of it with the clues I have, Kratos and Eden's tribulations were different from Ori and King's. Eden happened in my sea of consciousness, while Kratos literally took me to the past where I relived events that defined me as an individual, my firsts in life.' His thoughts grew clearer and clearer.

When he reached the end of this thought, his silver eyes had returned. They were fixated on Su Mei who was surrounded by strands of lifeforce continuously being absorbed inside her body. *'The Mortal Star Formation Tribulation is different from the others, each unique and derived from the unique circumstances surrounding one's cultivation base. Regardless, I have a solution if this is the case.'*

If he wasn't a Mortal Sovereign Alchemist with the King of Everlore's legacy, he could only watch as Su Mei was sent to her death.

However, he was!

With a thought, he brought out a jade box. He didn't hesitate to open it. A black sun-like pill levitated within. This was the Everlore Ascension Pill!

'If her predicament is caused by her Mortal Star Formation Tribulation, then this should work!' If it didn't, then he'll think of something else. For now, he had to do this. Before, he didn't expect Su Mei to undergo these changes and expected a simple tribulation easily conquered. After all, she definitely had the strongest foundation of a Ninth Stage Qi Condensation Realm cultivator.

The Everlore Ascension Pill seemed unaffected by the force, and with a push of his hand, the pill became a comet that blitzed its way to her. It merged with the strands of lifeforce and soon entered her body like they did, and when it did, the response was instant!

Wei Wuyin saw the cracks recede, as if they were being absorbed by her. In a split second, she returned to normal.

"Gah!" He spat out one last wad of blood, his head in immense pain. Despite his calm, despite his analysis, he started to slip into unconsciousness. He couldn't hold on, be it in body or mind, he was at his absolute limit. Just as he was about to faint, his second mind emerged and took over. Immediately, he regained himself.

His body was still too exhausted, having lost too much blood, but the clarity and strength of his mind and thoughts were firm and connected. He saw the strands of lifeforce that remained be recalled, re-entering the Mark of Eden. As for Su Mei, she stood just like before.

The world they existed in once more flooded with ambient mana, like a temporary gap produced by a cannonball hitting water, the mana surged its way back in and completely brought the world back to normal.

Su Mei opened her eyes. She felt different. When she looked at her hands, she felt an unknown power flow through her body. "Did I succeed in my tribulation?" She was shocked at the abrupt success. She expected it to follow the events depicted by various cultivators, but it seemed to have occurred instantly.

"Hm?" She looked at her sleeve and saw a splash of grey blood. "Blood?" Confused, she looked for Wei Wuyun. Those radiant pupils of hers became needlepoints as she saw his fallen and bloody figure. There were pools of blood from here to where Wei Wuyin was. There were literally gallons everywhere.

Her heart shook with fear. With a mad dash, she arrived before Wei Wuyin. "Wei Wuyin!" This was the first time she called Wei Wuyin by his name since she decided to follow him on that fateful day. She wanted to hold him but she didn't want to exacerbate his condition.

Wei Wuyin smiled with relief. Seeing her healthy and vibrant meant she succeeded, and she would live. "I...fine." Struggling to say those words, he closed his eyes and rested. Even if his mind was clear, his physical energies were thoroughly exhausted and his blood loss was immense. He just wanted to sleep.

On his right arm, his Inheritor of Sin tattoo flickered with dark red light endlessly, as if trying to block the events from prying eyes.

He hadn't realized this event that occurred would startle not just the heavens but the Gods, Devils, and Immortals of this world. Fortunately, Su Mei was a part of his life.

Chapter 270 - 267: A Step At A Time

After the event of Su Mei's tribulation, Wei Wuyin spent the next coming days recovering from his immense blood loss. Bedridden for so long, he was left feeling abnormally helpless. The only fortunate benefit was being taken care of by Su Mei. He was left stunned by her gentle and caring methods, and it was like being taken care of as a sick child. To some, this might be humiliating, but Wei Wuyin felt comforted beyond imagination.

She took up this task with the utmost diligence after learning that she had been somewhat to blame. Furthermore, she hadn't realized it. According to her, she had an uncomfortable feeling regarding the tribulation and initiated it, then a few seconds later, she succeeded. There was no Mortal Star Formation Tribulation, and her Natal Soul was currently undergoing its advancement to an Astral Soul.

Her Astral Core and World Sea were present and accounted for, slowly solidifying inside her dantian. She didn't feel any different nor did she comprehend any Intent or obtain the designs for greater Intent. It was as if she had just ascended without issue or warning, simply a success. If this was heard by all those who died assailing this tribulation, she might be drowned in ghosts for her entire life.

Wei Wuyin couldn't help but bitterly smile. He had used an Everlore Ascension Pill! This pill was worth planets, literally. Yet she didn't recall it or anything for that matter. He felt more bitter about this despite his immense loss in quintessential blood, physical, and mental energies.

Well, as long as she was okay, then everything was fine and his little sacrifice was nothing in comparison to her life. When he said those words mindlessly, Su Mei froze for a moment and left the room immediately after. When she returned, she was even more fervent and thorough.

In truth, he suffered greatly from this. His entire body was numb, his thoughts were a jumbled mess and he felt like a mortal, filled with turbidity and inconsistent memory, and he looked like a ghoul with an ashen complexion. This felt fundamentally mortifying to someone who had reached his level of cultivation, becoming close to what mortals would term as a god-like existence, yet reduced to the lowest level. It was close to being crippled.

After eating some meat soup made by Su Mei, he laid in his bed staring at the ceiling. While his thoughts were a mess, he could recall every matter that had happened with incredibly outstanding clarity. It was surreal. "My eyes nor the Celestial Eyes of Spiritual Divinity were capable of noticing anything. In fact, the Celestial Eyes seemed to have caused the fracturing effect of the world. It was as if it was telling me that what I was seeing was false, an illusion created by unfathomable means."

His Celestial Eyes were said to be able to see the trend of the world, an effect that he could utilize today, the laws of the world and unseen deities. This was merely the three most essential aspects of the strength of his Eye of Truth, but what he saw today seemed to be beyond that level. It was only when he unleashed the Alchemic Stars of Mortal Spirituality, that contained the intricate qualities of the Alchemic Dao and Mortal Dao, did he observe the truth before him.

Su Mei had evoked an event that siphoned the world of its mana and absorbed it, then she looked as if she was breaking apart at the seams. Even the Alchemic Spirit Remnant disappeared.

Despite this, her Astral Core was normal. She had a Divine Darklight Astral Soul. There were no irregularities. What happened to the mana she absorbed? The Alchemic Spirit Remnant? Why did this event happen? Was it because of him? Was it because of her? Was it something else entirely?!

He clutched softly at his hair. While he put on an outward appearance of calm and relaxation before Su Mei, his brain felt as if it was throbbing endlessly with unanswered questions. The cultivation world was so vast and expansive. He felt as if he had merely touched on its corners, and a very small corner of it at that. How weak was he?

"Hahaha, I'm acting like an idiot." He found it funny that his thoughts were diverging to such basic thoughts. He had never been someone who dwelled on being weak at the present, and always pressed forward for the future. The only time his thoughts had slipped was due to the Calamities pressing upon his heart.

Having not even found any clue to the Realm of Sages, how could he be strong? From the moment he was born, he's been weak; an ant. As an ant, he was cultivating to see how big he can be. He had long since lost his family, claimed his bloody revenge, and fought ferociously to do so. Now, he was on his own journey.

"One step at a time." At the end of his road, wherever it may be, either the answers will have been discovered or he'll fade away after living his life to his fullest. Despite his mind being filled with a turbid quality, his Heart of Cultivation remained as strong as ever. For now, it was fine that Su Mei was okay.

If she experienced this again during her next breakthrough, he'll see if another Everlore Ascension Pill will be sufficient to deal with it once again.

"King, Ori, are you okay?" Wei Wuyin asked these two Astral Souls who were sealed within his dantian. Since he had regained some strength, they've remained entirely silent. He could feel a heavy emotion of sulking within them, and it caused him to feel anxious and curious.

They were acting against their personalities. Well, at least Ori was. It was the most talkative out of the four.

"We...we...we couldn't help! We wanted to help! We wanted to!!" Ori cried, its voice filled with the sound of crying. Wei Wuyin was startled by this. They can cry? While it was merely the sound tainting its voice, it felt genuine.

"Tch!" King released his signature sound, but it was similarly filled with sadness. This normally arrogant and domineering Astral Soul was feeling distressed.

Wei Wuyin's eyelids lowered, a wisp of helplessness within. He hadn't known how the four felt about him until Kratos slipped during the event. He had referred to him as 'father' and roared it with the utmost urgency. He couldn't sense or see the mysterious force that was invading his body and mind, but they could, so they knew of its dangers.

From Eden, he learned that Kratos and Eden shielded them both from the mysterious force. While they were shielded, they were also sealed within their Astral Cores. This prevented them from being invaded

by the mysterious force. According to it, the mysterious force had infected them by a small iota and it nearly caused them to be snuffed out of existence.

If it wasn't for their immediate response, the two would've been annihilated entirely. They didn't know why the force was attracted to them, but Eden had said it was likely due to his and Kratos's unique bodies and composition. They consistently shared energies and connected, so they were attacked as well.

"I'm fine as long as you're both perfectly okay. Sometimes you have to let your siblings handle certain matters that they can. You'll have your turn." Wei Wuyin comforted the two, unbeknownst to him when he referred to them as 'siblings'. He could feel a little discontent from King, but Ori was pacified by his words. Its fluctuations became considerably calmer and he could feel a sense of determination within it.

In truth, these two were the majority of his offensive strength. Whenever he entered a conflict, they were at the forefront of supporting him in fighting or healing, so it was quite interesting to see that they felt useless from this single matter. Just thinking this made him uncertain if he should laugh or cry.

"First my Bloodline Source is exhausted then my bloodline energies are exhausted too. With my mind like this, I can't even concoct the products to help me recover. If only wood energies would work," Wei Wuyin shook his head. The Mark of Eden was quite mysterious. It had enough wood energies to match its lifeforce. Furthermore, he had no idea how much lifeforce was within.

He only knew that the Mark of Eden that was condensed by the unique lifeform that was the Tree of Eden could refine lifeforce. He had a sneaky suspicion that it could convert wood energies into lifeforce. This was only a guess. It was still uncertain how much lifeforce it had, but he knew it wasn't small. There's a high possibility it had hundreds of millions of years of lifeforce within, perhaps even more.

It might even be infinite.

This only reinforced his belief in tackling the Second Calamity of Hell.

Karmic Luck Value: 1,432.3.

First Calamity: Survived - 7/7.

Second Calamity: Suppressed - 8 Years.

"Eight more years..." The deadline had shortened considerably due to his killing of Yuan Longshi, a Blessed. In the future, he'll have to balance out eliminating Blessed with his timeline. After all, he needed to ensure the maximum amount of time to reach the Realm of Sages, cultivating a Soul of True Sin, and ensure he had another card to survive a failed calamity.

Ohn!

Just as he thought this, a familiar feeling bit into his mind and right arm. His eyes brightened considerably.

Karmic Luck Value: 1,432.3 → 1,356.7.

First Calamity: Survived - 7/7.

Second Calamity: Suppressed - 8 Years.