

Chapter 124: Artifact Binding

“Li Lang, this is our real body. Place your hand on it when you’re ready,” Blue wistfully said.

Not wanting to overstep, Li Lang ignored the somber mood and did as instructed. He held up the strange object that comprised three large pearls of different colors, stuck together to form a triangular shape.

Unlike its appearance, it weighed close to nothing. If Li Lang hadn’t known better, he would have thought it was just some eccentric ornament.

“We will begin the binding process,” Blue said. “It may hurt just a bit and we will have to do it three times, but it should be quick.”

“Go ahead.”

Li Lang had thought of this possibility when he recalled how it went with Ruby. Seeing how Li Lang had nothing to say, the artifact in his hand began to glow.

Immediately, Li Lang felt his Qi being drained into the artifact in his hand. It had such a strong suction force that he couldn’t resist. He was like a raft in the middle of a storm, only to be pushed around by a greater force.

The entire process only lasted several seconds, but to Li Lang, it felt much longer. Within a second, he could feel fatigue beginning to set in. The rapid loss of Qi sapped him of his energy. It made his mind dull, as if he had lost a significant amount of blood.

Then he felt a prick on his thumb holding the blue pearl. He watched as a dash of red entered into the ball as if it contained water within. It quickly settled, leaving Li Lang staring, aghast.

“Is that it?” he questioned.

Blue didn’t have to verbalize her response as a shock ran through Li Lang’s body. It caused him to feel indescribable pain deep within his being. As a bio-defense expert, he was knowledgeable about the human body, but he had no idea what the source of his pain was. That was because the pain came from his literal soul and spirit!

Binding with artifacts was a regular thing for most cultivators. Most people in the Foundation Establishment would have experienced it at least once. However, none of them felt the same pain because it was rare for someone to bind with an artifact that was vastly more powerful than them.

Artifacts were treasures. However, it needed capable hands to take control of them. Otherwise, it would just be a waste. A low-level cultivator wouldn’t be able to make use of its power. In the first place, the artifact spirits wouldn’t allow themselves to take someone that much weaker than

them as masters. It was in their interest to sell them off for additional cultivation resources instead.

Nevertheless, there were still some cases of these low-level cultivators taking in more than they could chew. It left them in a precarious situation where they wouldn't have full control of the artifact. In those instances, only those who learned how to get along with these spirits and grow rapidly in strength would prosper. Others lost control, hurting themselves in the process, or became targets of those lusting for their treasure.

Thankfully, Li Lang didn't have to worry about any of this. With Ruby's presence, it was hard to imagine an artifact spirit being stupid enough to go against him.

After what felt like an eternity to Li Lang, he finally broke free from the chilling pain that seeped into every inch of his body. He found his robes soaked with sweat and breathing heavily.

"Master, are you okay?" Ruby's voice rang out.

"That was... worse than I expected. It wasn't this painful when I bounded with you."

"That's likely because the pain back then crossed your threshold and immediately knocked you out."

Before Li Lang could answer, he felt himself being shaken. He opened his eyes to find Blue, just a few inches away, staring intently at him.

"You're awake? Good, it seems like you didn't get injured either."

"Yeah, I'm fine. Are we done?"

Unfortunately, Blue shook her head.

"There's still two more to go."

She stepped to the side, revealing Orange and Green standing there. Orange had an embarrassed expression, while Green smirked.

"Right, two more times..."

After the painful experience, Li Lang had finally taken ownership of The Great Trial of Water Crest. With this far-reaching event behind him, he began to plan for the future.

His situation had drastically changed. His new artifact spirit did not possess ultimate combat potential, but it contained valuable knowledge.

It brought him closer to power, and one step closer to being able to confront the infamous Abductress who had kidnapped his two childhood friends. After all, the Abductress was someone rumored to be in the Spirit Divide realm, the same level of power as his new Spirit-grade treasure.

It had been years since he had last seen Zi Xi and Zi Xiao Mei. It was hard to say if they were still alive. The only thing he could go on was the Abductress' words that she wouldn't take their lives. Li Lang could only furrow his brows as he thought of the fate his friends had met.

At the same time, he felt a little guilty for being ecstatic at having attained the pocket realm. It had everything he wanted. A safe haven, knowledge, and a sense of security.

I just need to work harder at trying to save them. Trying is the least I can do.

If only there was a reliable expert who I could trade this artifact in return for saving them. Unfortunately, I'll likely end up being betrayed instead. It's just too easy to screw over a weak Energy Gatherer with no background.

For a moment, Li Lang envied Sima Xue and Tang Yulian's powerful background. They likely had elders to rely on, and a family they could unconditionally trust. He was happy for them, but yearned to have things on easy mode as well.

He knew that humans were social animals. They thrived when they united their power together. It allowed them to specialize in their respective field and pool their resources together. As great as The Orchid Covenant was for Li Lang and his peers, it simply was too hard to trust them fully.

The organization was too loose, with mostly benefits being the driving force. At the same time, it was hard for the boys to utilize their resources, as they weren't in a position of power. They were just newcomers. Only those at the top could utilize the collective resources of an organization.

Thinking up to that point, an idea struck him.

Why don't I create my own organization? Hmm, we're too weak for anyone to want to join, but we can still establish a foothold first, right? As long as I use it correctly, the Cleansing Drug is my biggest trump card in this matter.

The more he thought about it, the more attractive the idea sounded. Taking control of an organization meant control of all the resources as well. It would surely accelerate his progress in whatever endeavor he wanted to do. It didn't take much for Li Lang to set his new long-term goal.

"Have you recovered already... Master?" Blue immediately inquired as soon as Li Lang opened his eyes.

“Yes, I’m fine now, thank you. Can you bring me back to my room? I want to get a change of clothes.”

“No worries, Master!” Orange interjected. “I can just fetch them like this.”

With a snap of the finger, Orange materialized some familiar-looking clothes as if he were a genie.

Li Lang didn’t comment on the scene as it wasn’t surprising considering he could teleport living beings such as himself. Lifeless objects must surely be easier. As he got changed into new clothes, he began questioning his new helpers.

“So now that I’ve taken ownership of you guys, does that mean I can control who comes and goes from here?”

“That’s right, we can kick out anyone you don’t want here or open up the entrance as well,” Green said as he flexed his arms.

“Mas...ter, we should first open up the Qi channels to the outside world,” Blue interjected. “We did say we still had a month, but it’s better to restore the place to normality sooner rather than later.”

“Okay, what should I do?”

“We simply need your command. Should we carry out the task of opening the Qi channels?”

“Yes, go ahead.”

The three artifact spirits closed their eyes and stilled for a moment. After a few moments, nothing happened. Even when they declared they had completed the task, the entire place still seemed to be unchanged.

However, the most unsettling fact was how his three new artifact spirits remained quiet, as if they had their attention drawn to something serious.

“Umm, is everything okay?”