

## The Ages 1091

### Chapter 1091 - Worthwhile

Provoking the enemy and their leader was only a tactic; Tianming didn't care if he could take it or not. All he wanted was for the eighty thousand remaining gods to focus their attention on him, rather than the continent. He had no other choice. To the enemy, the people of the continent were his weakness. It was a disaster he couldn't hope to contain.

If they weren't trying to massacre his folk, he would be willing to surrender and follow them back, but they weren't even giving him the choice. Though many already knew his intentions, they couldn't really accept it out of their bone-deep pride.

"Sovereign Xi ordered you to bring me back for her to deal with herself. She didn't mention anything about my lifebound beasts at all, yet that bastard Fengyue wanted to kill my lifebound beasts, only to be slaughtered by me."

As Tianming spoke, his beasts appeared on the top of the cauldron, glaring fiercely at everyone else.

"Now, all my lifebound beasts are here. I'm asking again. Does your pathetic lot dare to come kill them again?"

Ying Huo and the rest joined in on the mocking. "Tortoise Bro, ready your uric hydro cannon and fire at them!"

A jet of dragon piss fired straight at many of the stunned divine moonrace, enraging them even further. Though they knew Tianming was powerful, they still had the advantage of numbers. They only needed to summon their totems to completely overwhelm him.

They immediately began acting. Without leaders, they didn't dare to directly touch Tianming, but his lifebound beasts were free game. Things broke down into chaos right away, many of the divine moonrace not even caring about bringing Tianming back anymore. Anything could happen now, but as long as Tianming didn't stray too far from the cauldron, he could still benefit from its powers.

"Let's kill as many as we can!" They were going to challenge their limits once more. Tianming wasn't worried that they would attack him at all. In fact, he was worried that they wouldn't. So far, it seemed like the divine moonrace couldn't accept being mocked at all and were easily provoked. However, Tianming still noticed a few of them sneaking their way toward the continent. Even without Prince Fengyue, they knew what they should be doing.

"Kill!" How many lives would he save by each divine moonrace he killed? He couldn't even be bothered to count. Relying on Xian Xian and the cauldron, he would defend the surrounding area. He only used seven of his ten godswords, since it didn't seem possible to kill all of them anyway.

The denizens of the continent could all see the fight breaking out above. They didn't have words to describe something like this. It was the most tiring battle Tianming had ever had to fight; there was a sea of enemies that he couldn't hope to deal with. Even with Xian Xian's abilities, it struggled to defend itself

when the totems began latching on to it. Tianming and the rest also had to divert their attention to protect it, so they mainly fought at the top of the tree.

As the godswords swept past, crushing many totems at once, corpses began falling. But they were swiftly replaced by more and more people. Even now, the sheer number of enemies still cast a wide net across the sky.

"We simply can't kill them all off!"

He activated the Imperealm Sword Formation, causing many strands of sword ki to surround the tree. Though he was only a sixth-level ascendant, he managed to slay countless first or second-level ascendants. When their bodies fell to the ground, they turned to dust. It was a meteor shower of dead gods, something most people on the continent had never imagined could happen.

"Are these gods?"

"Is our Human Emperor that powerful?"

"Amazing!"

They began worshipping the godslayer, Tianming, more and more as the gods continued falling like rain. However, they couldn't see how much pressure Tianming was under. He and his beasts were constantly pierced with holes. Even Ying Huo couldn't take that much punishment, though its Skyscorch Featherblasts managed to cause corpses to rain down as well. In the chaos of battle, the divine moonrace couldn't tell how many people had died.

"He's almost dead now!"

"Don't kill him! Just get rid of his lifebound beasts first!"

"Since he dares to challenge us, we'll show him!"

"Burn down that tree! That two-headed dragon is almost dead, too! Give it more gas!"

Lan Huang was completely surrounded by nearly a thousand totems slashing at it and unleashing their totemic calamities nonstop. Flashing lights and explosive booms could be seen and heard all over, though the god corpses didn't stop raining down. With every strike of Tianming's godswords, at least hundreds of people were killed. But he was also being attacked by hundreds of totemic calamities at the same time. No matter how weak they were, the attacks could have eradicated him a few times over, had he not had the Greenspark Tower. It wouldn't be wrong to say that Tianming was unmatched among ascendants in the astralscape of order.

"Die, die, die!" His face was covered in blood, both his and his enemies'; even his eyes were rolling in it. He continued his charge, chasing them down instead of the other way around. Many others discovered how truly terrifying he was, but they were blinded by hate and pride. They wouldn't stop until Tianming's lifebound beasts had been killed. Even so, there were many that were still level-headed.

"Everyone, don't you understand? He's fighting desperately here because he's afraid we'll kill his people!"

"That's right! We don't have to fight him. We came here for a massacre."

"We just have to go down and start killing. He'll immediately go back to the Divine Moon Realm and beg Her Majesty for forgiveness right away."

"Killing his lifebound beasts is pointless! Leave his punishment to Her Majesty!"

From the very beginning, killing Tianming's lifebound beasts was for Prince Fengyue's personal vendetta. All they needed to do to complete their objective was wreak havoc across the continent. With Prince Fengyue dead, there was no point in fighting Tianming head-on anymore. However, during that short outbreak of a fight, Tianming had killed many of their friends and family on top of insulting their pride. Given that they still stood a chance of killing off his lifebound beasts, thanks to their numerical advantage, many weren't willing to give up yet.

"We can't afford to just let this go!"

There's ten thousand of our comrades trapped within the orderian cauldron! Saving them comes first."

"That's right. I think it won't hold any longer. They're attacking the cauldron from within and will soon break out."

"You all better not leave until they're out!"

The eighty thousand of them all had different things in mind. Tianming kept the ten thousand of them confined as another reason to bind down the remaining ones on the outside. However, they still numbered too many. The divine moonrace had countless ascendants to spare, as was evident from how the sovereign had managed to summon an army of a hundred thousand just like that, so ten thousand of them being trapped was no big deal. Tianming didn't know how long he could keep fighting, anyway. There was no way he could wipe them all out, but he had probably killed around ten thousand of them during the past hour, at least.

Thirty to forty thousand deities in front of him tried encircling him to save the trapped ones. He was already too overwhelmed to defend himself, let alone threaten them with the lives of those trapped. Ascendants weren't pushovers, especially in the thousands. By now, at least twenty or thirty thousand ascendants had descended to the continent.

"People are already dying." Tianming closed his eyes and felt their death and despair through the Omniscient Threads. As expected, those fiends were slaughtering the weak and innocent without holding back. That was their aim from the very beginning, though Tianming had managed to slightly disrupt their pacing. He even managed to get forty plus thousand of them to stay to fight him, then killed around ten thousand with Xian Xian's abilities and the cauldron's boost. Even so, there was no changing their objective.

Thirty thousand gods had spread out across the continent. This was the worst-case scenario he hadn't wanted to happen. But with him surrounded and the cauldron shaking from internal attacks, what else could he do? He could barely escape even if he wanted to. All he could do was continue gambling his life. Once his lifebound beasts were at their limits, he would have them return to his lifebound space to heal up.

By now, the divine moonrace that were fighting him were doing so with caution as he continued bathing in their blood. He fought like a savage madman, his kill count nearing twenty thousand. The death of so many of their comrades started psychologically weighing on them.

"What kind of monster is he?"

Many of them stopped and merely stared wide-eyed at the sight. Just then, the ten thousand trapped ascendants broke out of the cauldron, only to see even more blood and gore on the outside. They were all flabbergasted. How could someone like this even come to exist? He was struggling to his last breath just to protect the world beneath them.

"Is it worth doing all of this for a mere mortal world?" somebody asked.

"It is."

That was Tianming's answer. Blood dripped from his eyes as the battle came to a pause with everyone staring blankly at him. Many people started descending and there was no stopping them.

### **Chapter 1092 - Hate Without End**

"Li Tianming, you're truly terrifying."

The fact that he was able to impress the proud and lofty divine moonrace was a sign of how hard Tianming had fought. It was a shame that they still wouldn't hesitate to carry out their sovereign's orders.

"Killing a hundred million of your people is the sovereign's order. If you really want to change it, you should stop struggling and immediately head back to Divine Moon Skycity. Getting Her Majesty to retract the decree is the only way. You might save a few more that way. It's not like we can kill you, since the order was to capture you alive."

They said that because they were afraid that they would be the next ones on the chopping block. They would never forget the youth that caused this bloodbath for the rest of their lives.

"Can't you stop while I head to the Divine Moon Realm?" Tianming asked with a hoarse voice.

"No! Those that have to die shall die!" many answered. They had already spread out, so there was no stopping all of them.

"Very well!" From the very beginning, there was no room for compromise. Killing twenty thousand of them was his limit. If he couldn't kill a hundred thousand of them, that was the end of it. All of this cruelty stemmed from the haughty sovereign on the moon who thought she had everything under her control.

Tianming felt the Omnisentient Threads being severed one after another. Countless people were being slaughtered by the so-called gods; even hiding wasn't doing much. The only way to stop this was to go back and beg her to stop all this. This was her plan all along. She would make him learn the price of his defiance and breaking the formation core.

"Haha, no matter how powerful you are, you still have to kneel to our sovereign and beg. You wouldn't have to do this if you didn't care for the world below, you impudent punk!"

It looked like the deaths of twenty thousand of their comrades hadn't frightened them enough. Tianming now knew that there was no resolving this situation, apart from going to the sovereign. Now, all of the divine moonrace were focused on descending toward the continent. Even if Tianming was ten times stronger than the sovereign herself, he wouldn't be able to stop so many people. They were killing machines mowing down lives by the hundreds. Each of his subjects' deaths were part of the lesson Sovereign Xi had for him. He seemingly heard her laughter echoing throughout.

"Even if you killed Prince Fengyue and twenty thousand of the divine moonrace, that doesn't wipe your weakness away!" he seemed to hear her mock. Sovereign Xi was adept at manipulating the weaknesses of others, after all.

"So you think you have no weaknesses yourself?" Tianming's eyes were now red with fury, fury for the countless lives he felt slipping away at every moment to the divine moonrace. Tianming's time was running out; the sooner he surrendered, the more lives he could potentially save if he could get them to stop their slaughter. He kept his rage all pent up within him as he descended toward the continent to Feiling.

"If only I were stronger... Strong enough to kill all hundred thousand of them..." he said, gritting his teeth.

"Big Brother, the divine moonrace ascendants number more than a million. There was no stopping this from the very beginning. This was fated to happen," Feiling said, her eyes red from grief and rage.

"One day, we'll be able to fight back. We won't remain ants at the mercy of others." When he said that, he felt his mindset completely change. How could he be a good emperor? He was still a beginner at it himself, and he was going through the struggle to find the answer to that question.

"Are you going up to the moon?"

"I am."

"To beg for forgiveness and give up?"

"No. Hand Little You to me. I'm going to look for Bodhi. I'll claim that vixen's head, then bring it down to get the divine moonrace to leave." Tianming's voice was cold and cruel. Killing twenty thousand of them hadn't changed much, so Little You was his last trump card. The biggest thing he had gained from this clash was the growth of his Imperial Will. Perhaps he would be able to reach the seventh level once he went back to the moon. "Even if I can make another breakthrough, the cauldron's power is limited. I won't be able to kill Sovereign Xi myself, but I might have a chance with Bodhi's help." That was the only thing he had in mind now. He could control Bodhi using his daughter.

"Let me go with you," Feiling earnestly said, holding his hand tightly.

"Alright." Tianming didn't want to neglect her anymore. There was no telling how this would play out, and he didn't want this to be their final farewell. He let Meow Meow recover a little more before they zipped to the moon at the fastest possible speed with Little You. His heart didn't stop stinging as he left the continent.

"It'd be too hard to get the whole continent to rise up and struggle together. But since I've chosen this path and am connected to them through the Omniscient Threads, our fates are linked. I shouldn't give up just yet."

He felt like he had failed the lost souls. That was the most fatal thing on the path of cultivation. Revolutions were never perfect, and blood was always shed. He would have to bear the weight of responsibility that nobody else could with all the effort he could muster.

As they approached the moon, it began growing bigger and brighter. Little You's eyes shook as she observed Tianming, having witnessed the bloodbath from before. "Do you hate the divine moonrace too?"

"I do."

"Then my dad will work with you."

"That'd be nice."

"But you killed my big brother, and your scheme caused my mother to die. Once we deal with them, we'll definitely kill you. We'll also make the people of the Flameyellow Continent pay the price of keeping us sealed for two hundred thousand years," she said hatefully.

"At least you're honest about it. There's no end to this cycle of hatred, huh."

They were all marked by the circumstances of their birth. Though she was but a little girl, she bore the combined hatred of the specters, nurtured over two hundred thousand years. From her and Bodhi's point of view, they had no choice but to get revenge for that.

"But I still have to thank you for not telling them about my dad or the billion specters on the flip side of the continent," she said.

"I didn't do it because it'd be pointless. Even if Sovereign Xi knew that the astral killer was a specter, it wouldn't take the heat off the continent. She'd just send another army of a hundred thousand ascendants to kill you all. If your dad leaves Divine Moon Skycity to defend them, it'll make things harder for me."

Tianming was quite sure Bodhi would risk it and work with him. After all, he held two of his weaknesses: the presence of the specters and his daughter, Little You. Both Tianming and Bodhi were lone wolves who didn't have armies at their command, like the sovereign. Their weaknesses were just as bad, and they were about the same when it came to how far they were willing to go. Sovereign Xi had forced Tianming to side with Bodhi this time around.

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When they finally arrived at the moon, Tianming began rapidly absorbing the stellar source. Though it wasn't as dense as stellar pills, it was practically limitless. The fundamental cosmic forces were truly treasures birthed by the universe; however, it would be a nightmare when they began running out. Currently, most of Tianming's astral force was from stellar source. It would take quite some time for him to be able to overcome his limits and fill his albi up completely.

"Finally, Heptaglorry Sky!"

The connection with his subjects through the Omnisentient Threads had helped his Imperial Will grow to a point that he could make back-to-back breakthroughs, though he needed to come back to the moon for the energy to achieve them. He was much stronger than before; each breakthrough marked a substantial improvement over the previous level. But as a result, the orderian cauldron wouldn't be as effective since it only boosted his strength by a set value rather than in proportion to his current power. Even so, with the cauldron, he felt like he could take on twelfth-level ascendants.

"I heard the sovereign is at the twelfth level, so she can go to Orderia. Even if there are as many as three hundred thousand ascendants in Divine Moon Skycity, it should be possible to take her down with the right opportunity, right?" He couldn't wait to squash that venomous snake.

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When they reached the city, Tianming pried the formation open with his arm and snuck in with Feiling and Little You.

"Little You, you're able to find your dad, right?" Tianming asked.

"Yes." She knew that Tianming hated the divine moonrace too, so it was an opportunity for the specters. She was young, but she wasn't a fool. Though she hated him as well, she knew who the harder one to deal with was, so she cooperated.

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Tianming anxiously stood within an abandoned building while Feiling controlled Little You. She seemed like she had lost her soul. Her eyes were glazed over and there was no guessing what was going through her mind.

"Ling'er," Tianming called out.

"What is it?" She turned to look at him blankly.

"What's going on?"

"I'm fine... it just felt like I forgot who I was for a second," she said with a pained smile.

They were beset by constant hardship. The divine moonrace had begun their invasion and Lingfeng was missing, not to mention Feiling's unstable state. Tianming had never been so stressed in his entire life. But as he wanted to ask her more about it, a chill entered the area. He turned and saw a pale, white-robed man appear before him without a sound.

### **Chapter 1093 - Dancing with Wolves**

Bodhi removed his hood, revealing his smooth, shiny head and pearl-like eyes. He looked at his daughter, then at Tianming. "I take it you're trying to threaten me?" he said, his eyes twitching. His voice sounded as cold as it had back in the Ninefold Hell.

"It's a misunderstanding. Little You, explain what's going on to your dad," Tianming said as he turned to her.

She nodded and briefed her father about the situation, which he quickly processed.

"So you reached the peak of power on the moon in such a short time. You are a terrifying one," Bodhi said. The praise was a sign of his caution.

"Let's drop pleasantries. Kill Sovereign Xi with me, or at least subdue her. You get your revenge, and I get mine too."

"Then when are you going to let my daughter go?"

"Once the matter's settled. After that, we can settle things fair and square."

"Can I trust you on that?"

"Yes." Tianming still had the Latticeheart Curse up his sleeves. It was insurance for the grudge Bodhi held against him. He knew there was little chance they could coexist. Even though he would like to, Bodhi wanted him dead, and they wouldn't be talking to each other like this if not for Sovereign Xi.

"Fine. But you're a little too naive about your goals."

"How so?"

"I've seen her. She's hiding her real strength. In actuality, she's past the Orderian Sky level. She's a level higher than me at the Constellation stage, the second major stage of godhood. Even if we work together, defeating her is a long shot, and subduing her's out of the question. Not to mention, this is her turf and she has three hundred thousand ascendants at her disposal."

While Bodhi wanted to kill the sovereign, he was leaning toward assassination. As long as Tianming didn't expose his identity, he could continue striking from the shadows. Initially, the two of them had refrained from exposing each other's origins from the Flameyellow Continent; however, the sovereign had discovered Tianming's origin of her own accord, while Bodhi remained a mystery.

"Constellation stage..." It wouldn't be simple after all. In fact, working with Bodhi to take her down now seemed like a pipe dream.

"However, I do have a way to resolve your situation," Bodhi said, looking intently at him.

"Pray tell."

"There's a woman called the imperial guide. Let's just say she's not merely the sovereign's subordinate."

"Then what is she to her?"

"Even though Sovereign Xi didn't seem the slightest bit bothered about the death of her parents, there's no doubt that her relationship with the imperial guide is deeper than that. She sees her as more important than her own life."

"How do you know that?"

"Observation and questioning."

The devil was in the details yet again, and the most devious always knew to exploit them.



"Are you saying that just like how my weakness is the Flameyellow Continent and yours is the Ninefold Hell, her weakness is the imperial guide?"

"Yes. At the very least, taking the imperial guide captive will force the sovereign to have her troops retreat."

"Then why didn't you do it yourself?"

"Are you joking? The imperial guide is the second most powerful elite among the divine moonrace. There's no way I'd be able to capture her alone when I'm only at the same level as her. You're the one who has to take the risk now, not me. You should make up your mind. I don't like petty games. This is your problem, but I'll risk my life for my daughter as long as you return her to me after all is done."

"Alright, let's do it then," Tianming decided.

"I've been observing her over the past ten days. These days, the imperial guide resides at the Moonnight Patio in the north of the city, while the sovereign is at her palace in the south."

"Amazing." Tianming made a mental note to never underestimate Bodhi ever again. He bore the hatred of his kind that had festered over two hundred millennia and would do anything to get his revenge, even resorting to striking from the shadows and creating a nightmarish legend. However, he didn't know how such a man could look so gentle when he stared at his daughter. When Little You was around, Bodhi was just a normal father, not a murderous demon.

"I love you, daddy," Little You said, not daring to approach as her tears flowed.

"I love you too, Little You." Bodhi's smile was highlighted by the moonlight.

"Ling'er, stay here and don't wander," Tianming said.

"Okay." She nodded with a smile. She really wanted to say those three words too, but her finger just turned into ash. She didn't dare to say anything as she looked at the two grudge-bound men walking out of the compound shoulder to shoulder.

The moon glowed rather brightly today, thanks to the rampant surging of stellar source, a sign of the impending nova source pulse.

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"Ugh..."

The wind blew past their ears, bringing with it a rising chill. Jian Xueyi ran and ran before she finally tripped, her face pale as her body shivered, whether from the cold or the sight of the pile of corpses before her. The friends she had cultivated with left this world just like that. "Huan... Youran... Chen Feng..." Her tears began flowing. "Tianming... save me..."

Her voice was hoarse as she turned herself around and looked up. There was a youth with long, silvery white hair, watching her coldly with sword in hand as if he was looking at an insect. This was a lofty god! He pointed his sword toward Jian Xueyi.

"You're the forty-third cockroach. You folks are really talented at hiding, you know that?" he said, his lips parting into a vile smile.

Jian Xueyi crawled back hurriedly as she blanked out.

"I'm Huiyue Yu. Do I look like a god to you?" he asked, descending and slowly pacing toward her with a teasing look.

"You're nothing but dogsh\*t! Tianming is a real god, unlike the likes of you!" Jian Xueyi said with all the courage and energy she could muster as her soul shook from the fear.

"Hahahaha... Li Tianming, Li Tianming... Looks like your relationship with him isn't simple, given how you refer to him."

"So what? He was my junior a year ago, but now he's much stronger than me. How could a retard like you compare to him?!" she said, fueled by nothing else but rage.

"Is he really that impressive? Then I'd very much like to see him split himself into tens of thousands of copies to save you. Since you're special, I'll take you along with me. I'll slowly play with you and let you experience the grueling process of your crumbling faith. Don't thank me. You deserve it."

Jian Xueyi was at a loss for words. She was truly terrified and wanted to kill herself. However, she noticed that she couldn't even do that. The only thing she could do was talk. The 'god' now stood right in front of her.

"Gods refer to beings that hold the lives of tens of thousands in their hands, got it?"

"You're wrong! You so-called 'gods' died and fell from the sky like droplets of rain! Only the one who killed your bunch can be called a god!"

"Tsk tsk tsk..." The thought of the terrifying sight frustrated Huiyue Yu greatly. He used to be a worthy rival, but Tianming was now killing the likes of him by the droves. All he dared to do back then was unleash his totemic calamity from a safe distance, and even then he had almost been killed. His rage knew no bounds.

"I'll tear off this mouth of yours," he said, squatting down and thrusting his sword into the ground before placing his finger on her mouth.

Jian Xueyi shrieked in terror and despair.

"Enjoy this slowly. This is atonement for his crimes." Huiyue Yu's father was Huiyue Hai, who had undoubtedly been killed by Tianming. He let his rage consume him as he applied force, causing her to shriek even more.

Right at that instant, a clear sound rang through the air. Jian Xueyi closed her eyes as she continued to scream, but the pain didn't come. Opening her eyes, she saw blood drip into her mouth. Huiyue Yu's fingers were still inside it, but the blood had come from his mouth instead.

She turned to look and saw an arrow piercing through his head and out of his mouth. The blood dripped from the tip of the arrow onto her face as she widened her eyes, not daring to make a move.

"Is he dead?" She slapped Huiyue Yu a few times, but there was no response. "Damn you, you little bastard! How dare you try to kiss me with your bloody mouth? I'll slap you to death!"

She rained down countless slaps on his face. "Ouch, it hurts... Why'd your corpse have to harden so quickly?"

Right as she was cursing, a few more arrows whooshed towards them, turning Huiyue Yu into a pincushion. "Enough! He's already dead! Stop shooting!" Jian Xueyi cried as she pushed the stiff corpse away.

She looked up and saw a red-eyed girl in long black robes. The girl looked back at her and put her bow away, then got back on the back of her black beast and disappeared into the distance. Jian Xueyi recognized her: she was Lin Xiaoxiao.

"We won't lose..."

### **Chapter 1094 - Hexamoon White Loti**

The moon glowed brightly during the night and the stellar source surged like it was erupting from a geyser. The entire Divine Moon Realm seemed quite unruly and chaotic as a result. Though the climate was usually warm and humid, it was currently incredibly hot. The sensation of stellar source washing over one's body felt rather prickly.

In the past, stellar source pulses were celebratory occasions in Divine Moon Skycity, during which young folk would flood into the streets and make merry. The divine moonrace appreciated fine culture, performance art, and elegant gatherings. The festivities during those times were a delight for most involved. Yet the city was deathly quiet today. As long as the astral killer was still roaming about, there would be no peace in the city. The gloomy atmosphere was like dark, overcast clouds that pressed heavily on the chests of the citizens.

The Moonlight Patio at the north of the city had remained closed for the past half month. Most of the talented divine moonrace youths only dared to remain in the safety of their homes. Tianming and Bodhi didn't see a single person as they entered the place unobstructed.

There was a cold aura that lingered about Bodhi, an incessant reminder that he was Tianming's archenemy despite their temporary truce. If he was the slightest bit careless, he might get struck with a fatal blow.

They didn't talk one bit along the way. After passing through the bamboo forest, Tianming came to Divine Moon Skylake once more. The residence of the imperial guide was just beside it and protected by three layers of divine formations. Bodhi already knew that Tianming could freely come and go through those barriers, so he wasn't the least bit surprised when Tianming pulled them open to let them through. Soon, they set their sights on the lone building beside the lake.

"It looks to be twenty thousand meters wide and long," Tianming said. Comparatively, the orderian cauldron had a diameter of forty thousand meters.

"She's inside and alone," Bodhi said.

"How do you know?"

Bodhi took a deep breath and said, "The smell."

Though there were still five grand moon guides, they had probably stayed home. Since the imperial guide was alone, Tianming struck immediately. He released the orderian cauldron and used it to cover the entire building. Sovereign Xi had wanted to use it to trap Tianming, but now he was using it against the imperial guide instead. The huge cauldron came descending from the sky and covered up the entire building compound with so much force that the entirety of the Moonnight Patio shook. The cauldron even buried itself a few hundred meters into the ground from the sheer force of its weight. The shaking even caused many parts of the building to collapse, resulting in scattered debris and building materials.

Loud clashing echoes could be heard from within the cauldron. Bodhi and Tianming went full force now that they had exposed themselves. The city had more than three hundred thousand ascendants, so time was of the essence; Tianming only had one chance to capture the imperial guide. Soon, he spotted a lone woman coming out of the rubble. Her hair was tied up in a ponytail and she was dressed in a long robe. Though she was alluring, she radiated a cold aura.

She immediately noticed the cauldron, as well as Bodhi, Tianming, and his lifebound beasts. So far, everyone that saw all ten of Tianming's godswords hadn't lived to tell the tale. Currently, he was only using seven, like he did in the wondersky realm. Though it made him somewhat weaker, he had no choice as he couldn't be sure the imperial guide and Bodhi could be killed that easily. He didn't want either of them to have a grasp on his 'weakness'. Between the rulers of the humans, specters, and the divine moonrace, the one with the most weaknesses would perish first.

"So you've joined forces? Or were you working together from the very beginning?" the imperial guide said with a furrowed brow.

However, nobody answered her. Though she had used a transmission stone, it had been intercepted by the cauldron. Even so, she didn't seem the least bit worried. The deployment of the cauldron was sure to cause quite a commotion outside, so as long as she could hold out, someone would soon come to her aid.

Tianming had come far too quickly. As Prince Fengyue's lifesoul stone was all the way at the Xi Palace, she still didn't know that the prince was dead, and twenty thousand ascendants with him. She turned her unalert gaze to Bodhi, satisfied at the current situation. "Wonderful. I can deal with you two at once."

These were the two that had caused the divine moonrace the most trouble so far. One of them had to die, while the other was useful to the sovereign. Did they think they had her trapped in the cauldron? They've only trapped themselves inside with me, she thought.

They broke out into a fight right after exchanging a glance. Bodhi and Tianming came at her from both sides, with Bodhi charging from the front while Tianming took the back. As the imperial guide had only recently broken through to the twelfth level, she wasn't as powerful as she could be. However, the difference in energy capacity alone made her harder to deal with. She instantly summoned her totems, which were gigantic loti. They stretched out from her forehead through their vines. Each flower was five hundred meters wide and looked much larger than Xian Xian's own. It was a plant-type totem.

While the six lotus flowers were all white, there were subtle differences. Energies of different attributes flowed about their petals. Some were surrounded by flames, while others were covered in lightning, strong winds, frost, and a glimmering metallic sheen, respectively. The final flower glowed brightly with moonlight, illuminating the dark cauldron.

Tianming had heard of them before. They were said to be among the strongest totems possessed by a hexabane, the hexamoon white loti, and each of them had their own attribute. Having both offensive and defensive capabilities that complemented each other, the totems allowed the user to fight long battles. Oddly, it was a fitting trait for plant totems.

When the twelfth-level totems appeared, Tianming felt their power first hand. They were much stronger than Prince Fengyue's godwheels. The imperial guide's aura had completely changed, thanks to the glow from the loti, making her look like a pure and lofty saint that was not to be violated. Her twelfth-level astralforce also began colliding with the cauldron.

With Tianming's new breakthrough, the cauldron's boost wasn't as potent as it had been before, so he would have a hard time taking the imperial guide down, even with the cauldron. His choice to team up with Bodhi was a correct one. The imperial guide and four of her totems faced off against Bodhi, while she only used two to intercept Tianming. Bodhi was a specter and had a body as tough as lifebound beast's, as well as peak abilities to match. He could also use battle arts, so he was a powerful fighter despite being at a numerical disadvantage. Meanwhile, Tianming and his beasts combined had twelve fighting units. Since the guide had only used two totems to deal with him, it was a good opportunity.

He charged toward the flame and lightning loti. Meow Meow and Ying Huo both clashed with the lotus that corresponded to their attributes. Lan Huang slammed toward the fire lotus and Xian Xian used its Radiant Vines to wrap around the lightning lotus, completely sealing it off. Then Tianming came in with his seven totems and used the Moonlight Subdued Strike. The sword formation formed, causing countless moons to rise and fall. The Grand-Orient Sword, three of Tianming's totems, and Ying Huo's Death Inferno struck the fire lotus, while the other four totems struck the lightning lotus along with Meow Meow's Cosmic Lance and Misty Hellthunder. It was a swift and hard counter!

The imperial guide isn't weak, but her distribution of totems was problematic. Tianming smirked. Did she really think she had a chance of stopping Tianming with less than a third of her total might? It wouldn't change anything even if she sent out one more totem to deal with him.

"Break!" The two totems were almost immediately pierced through. His totems and beasts' abilities were already quite potent against other totems in the first place. Even though the two loti were rather durable, they couldn't even use their totemic calamities to counter the attacks, thanks to Xian Xian and Lan Huang's suppression, allowing Tianming to scatter them immediately.

Bodhi and Tianming had come to settle things as quickly as they could, and didn't intend to drag anything out. Tianming had immediately found a chance to take out two of the imperial guide's totems, much to her abject horror. She turned back and stared blankly at Tianming.

"Remember to send another totem to deal with me next time," he gloated as he renewed his assault.

Bodhi glowed bright white in front of her; he looked like a monster. With a simple punch, he seemed to generate the image of a dragon with two heads, each of which slammed into one lotus respectively. It took all of the imperial guide's power to hold Bodhi back, and now she had lost two totems to Tianming.

"This is troubling..."

She was about to be overwhelmed.

### **Chapter 1095 - Summernight Floralsea, Goldenrain Aether**

Faced with so much pressure, the imperial guide immediately used her totemic calamity, Summernight Floralsea. The remaining four loti scattered into countless petals that looked like the countless stars in the cosmic aether. Each petal contained the power of wind, frost, metal, and moonlight. They surrounded her like thousands of swords that could scatter and reform. She could use it for attacking or defending against attacks.

Tianming had to admit that while totem users only had one calamity, they often had interesting properties or effects. So far, he still hadn't discovered the totemic calamity of his decapath era godswords. Though he was impressed, his attacks didn't let up one bit.

The imperial guide now knew how powerful he was. With him coming from behind, she had to spare some concentration to deal with him. "You two crooks will pay!"

The weapon she wielded was a grade-three divine artifact. However, even artifacts of the same grade could have different powers based on their divine patterns. When the divine pattern types were similar, the number of divine patterns decided which weapon was more powerful. For instance, when her weapon had been forged, six kinds of divine hazards were incorporated into it. In other words, her weapon had six divine patterns from divine hazards, making it much more powerful than normal grade-three artifacts.

It was a spear umbrella, basically an umbrella with a long pole and a sharp tip. When opened, the umbrella could be used as a shield, and it could be used as a spear when closed. Though it was unique, it afforded a good balance between offense and defense. Its name was an elegant one: the Goldenrain Aether. Needless to say, this was a gift from the sovereign, which she had spared no expense to purchase from Orderia.

The imperial guide used two third-realm divine arts, Floral Starscape and Shower Veil respectively, one for attack and one for defense, against Bodhi. Meanwhile, three-fourths of the Summernight Floralsea formed by the petals of her totems were sent to deal with Tianming. It seemed like she finally considered him a fighter on the same level as her. Though she found it hard to believe, she had to acknowledge how terrifying he was.

Even so, she had underestimated both Tianming and Bodhi. Among the three main cultivator types, beastmasters and specters were more powerful than totem users of the same level. Bodhi wasn't only equipped with a powerful body, he also fought with close combat swiftly and unrelentingly. His abilities were unleashed from nearly point-blank range and his limbs were as tough as divine artifacts, being able to strike and take hits from the Goldenrain Aether while channeling impressive amounts of astralforce.

He easily struck the umbrella spear away with one fist and used his other to smash a small part of the Summernight Floralsea, applying constant pressure. His eyes were pale white in the darkness and completely expressionless.

"You're a specter! Where'd you come from?!" the imperial guide said, shocked.

Bodhi didn't answer her, but merely followed up with another dragon-like kick.

She used Shower Veil to block it, only to be sent smashing into the wall of the cauldron, causing her to spit out blood. "So you specters are astral raiders now, huh?"

Her face was pale as blood seeped out of her mouth. Specters were spread out all across the vast expanse of the astralscape of order, and those in the Ninefold Hell were merely one of the many groups. It would be hard for the imperial guide to link Bodhi with the Ninefold Hell. It would be far more likely for him to be one of the many specters from the vast astralscape, in her opinion.

Not to mention, she had only begun learning about the Flameyellow Continent and Heaven Cauldron recently. Tianming and Bodhi didn't say a single word throughout the entire battle, either.

While Tianming was surrounded by many petals, he quickly smashed them with the help of his beasts when she was wounded and forced the petals to return to their totem forms. Now damaged, the four remaining loti seemed dimmer than before.

Bodhi focused on fighting the imperial guide herself while Tianming took care of her totems. The totems continued being eroded away, with Tianming's godswords and Meow Meow doing most of the damage. The imperial guide also faltered against Bodhi's assault. To defend herself, she had no choice but to call one of her totems back, giving Tianming even more of an edge.

"Faster!" he roared.

Bodhi managed to land another punch on the imperial guide's shoulder, sending her slamming into the wall again. The impact had almost cracked the back of her skull. What made her feel even more helpless was Tianming's forceful suppression of her remaining loti. With a thrust of the godswords, two of her three remaining loti crumbled. The last remaining lotus escaped back into her bane-ring before it could be taken out.

"What are you two planning?" she asked, despairing.

"Guess."

Tianming and Bodhi charged at her and wounded her heavily.

"Go for the bane-rings!" Tianming said.

Bodhi stretched out his hand and pressed the imperial guide to the ground. Her bane-rings were on her back. They were in the form of six white loti, making them look rather like tattoos.

"No, please, don't!" she cried and struggled, but it was pointless. Bodhi was too physically dominant.

Tianming coldly pierced the bane-rings with his sword.

"Ah! Aaagh!" She moaned in agony as the pain spread through her back. All six of her bane-rings were destroyed one after the other. The hexamoon white loti were completely impaired.

"What are you crying for? Isn't the fact that you're even alive the best consolation you could get?" Tianming said as he pierced the sword through her waist once more, sending the Imperial Sword Prison into her body.

"What did you put in me?!" She turned to look at him alertly.

Tianming didn't answer her question. "She can still fight a little. Your fists won't kill, right? give her a few more punches."

"Don't kill?" Bodhi shook his head and smiled before doing as told, shattering many of her organs. The blood she coughed out contained chunks of them.

"You two sure are cruel..."

"Cruel? If this is cruel, what do you call sending a hundred thousand gods to kill innocent mortals?" Tianming held her up by the back of her neck and put the cauldron away. Then they went to the side of Divine Moon Skylake. The imperial guide had been rather confident, so she hadn't stationed anyone else at the Moonnight Patio, allowing Tianming and Bodhi to deal with her before reinforcements could arrive.

"Let's go," he said to Bodhi. The two of them immediately escaped. Bodhi was more than familiar with going into hiding, as he had done so countless times before. Along the way, the imperial guide kept vomiting blood and eventually passed out. She was barely alive by now.

Right after the two left the Moonnight Patio, countless people flooded toward it. Tianming turned to Bodhi in the dark alley.

"I've done my part to help you. How you deal with the sovereign is your business. I hope you'll fulfill your end of the deal now and return my daughter to me," Bodhi said stiffly with a serious look.

"Very well." Tianming nodded.

The two evaded their pursuers and turned back to look at the Moonnight Patio. With the imperial guide dealt with, nobody but Sovereign Xi could possibly deal with them now.

### **Chapter 1096 - Only Loved One**

Tianming and Bodhi had used striking from the shadows to their advantage. They didn't have many minions, like Sovereign Xi, so they could only lurk in the darkness.

The moonlight turned brighter as the stellunar source pulse intensified. Tianming and Bodhi returned to the compound where they met with the imperial guide in tow. Feiling and Little You were talking when they arrived.

"Little You," Bodhi said, stretching out his hand.

"Daddy!" She jumped into his embrace and he held her high. "I missed you, Daddy."



"Everything's fine now." He patted her on the shoulder to calm her.

Tianming held on to the imperial guide and stood beside Feiling. "So now that you have your daughter back, are you going to kill me?"

"If I do, nobody will learn of my identity," Bodhi said expressionlessly.

"Then get on with it."

"Haha, I wouldn't want to lure the divine moonrace here."

Tianming was no longer someone he could take out in an instant, after all. He vanished into the darkness with Little You.

"Big Brother, how powerful is he?" Feiling asked.

"Very. It was mainly due to him that we defeated the imperial guide, but I feel like he was holding back."

"I can sense the animosity he had against you. Even though you two worked together, he's a machine that runs on hate. He won't forget that you were the one who killed his son and got his wife and comrades killed."

"I know."

If one danced too close to wolves, they would soon be eaten.

"Looks like I'm stuck between a scheming serpent and a lone wolf." That was Tianming's current predicament. If it weren't for the serpent being too powerful, there was no way the hateful wolf would work with him. He had returned Bodhi's daughter, but the Latticeheart Curse was still in effect.

"Use Latticeheart Curse on her too."

"Alright." Feiling used her shaky finger and layered the curse above the Imperial Sword Prison.

"Using her, I have a firm grip on the divine moonrace!" While meeting with Sovereign Xi would be risky, there was no going back. He had no other choice, given the current state of the continent.

"Ling'er, I'll be meeting her alone later. Stay hidden nearby and trust in your own judgment if anything happens."

"Alright, I'll do just that," she said, forcing a smile. The light in her eyes seemed to flicker out of existence from time to time, but even then, she was the only one who could help him now.

"Let's go." The two of them vanished in the bright moonlight.

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The sound of the stellar source rushing was constantly heard as the powerful force surged beneath their feet. Feiling hid somewhere further away while Tianming headed to the palace with the imperial guide, who was just waking up. His presence caused the guards to go on alert.

"It's Li Tianming!"

Tianming held the imperial guide by the neck and raised her up as she struggled. "Have Sovereign Xi come out. I am here to meet her."

"Report to Her Majesty, immediately!"

"He has the imperial guide!"

"So he went to the Moonnight Patio just now..."

"That's weird. How could he capture the imperial guide? She's the second most powerful member of the divine moonrace!"

"That bastard seems to have destroyed her bane-rings and beaten her nearly to death!"

"He has to die for his crimes!"

One after the other, the divine moonrace flocked out to look and were all the more angered. It didn't take long before the atmosphere turned cold. A beautiful woman in a long blue dress and a white cat mask appeared on the palace walls and descended five meters away from Tianming. She coldly watched him through her mask and immediately ascertained the imperial guide's state.

"You worked with that animal to capture her, and even crippled her bane-rings." Every word she spoke had the cold prick of frost. The apparent contradiction of her cold, yet furious demeanor made her even more imposing.

"Yeah, you got it right." Tianming had his fingers around the imperial guide's head, ready to pull it off at any time.

"Not bad, Li Tianming. Time and again, you've foiled Our plans. You also killed Fengyue and twenty thousand others," she said with a squint.

"I had no choice. Nobody asked you to go so overboard. I was ready to surrender and come back to help you with your breakthrough, but they insisted on continuing the butchering. You forced me to do something completely unnecessary. What else did you expect me to do?"

"So you paid us back. We're even, right?" she said with a shrug.

"Drop your nonchalant act." He pinched the imperial guide's face and made her look at the sovereign. He felt the sovereign's rage when their eyes met. The force he applied with his fingers broke parts of the imperial guide's skull, causing her face to cave in. She growled in pain as tears flowed, but she tightly clenched her fists and didn't say a word. The sovereign even looked a little heartbroken.

"You deserve death!"

"Let go of our imperial guide!"

"Vile fiend, may you be torn into a thousand pieces!"

The rest of the onlookers continued howling.

"Why don't you two have a little chat?" Tianming said to the imperial guide, who just closed her mouth and looked away.

Tianming was constantly monitoring the sovereign's reaction. She seemed to alternate between relaxing and tensing up, and intentionally avoided looking at the imperial guide when she could.

"Child, you are playing with fire. Be careful you don't burn yourself," she said.

"Drop the bluffs. I know what she means to you. If you want her to live, heed my conditions. I only ask for two little things. I'm someone who shows restraint, you see."

The whole area turned silent. Nothing but the sound of the imperial guide's cracking bones could be heard. The fact that the sovereign had yet to act meant that she indeed regarded the imperial guide with importance. No doubt, she wouldn't hesitate to fight if Tianming were holding Prince Fengyue hostage instead.

Sovereign Xi was as stiff as a statue when Tianming stated his terms, a sign that she was in a deep dilemma. It was as if he could smell the venomous rage brewing within her. Though fragrant, it was toxic and fatal. No matter how much the sovereign and the imperial guide avoided each other's gazes, they couldn't help meeting them from time to time. Every time, Tianming saw the sovereign's eyes uncontrollably shaking.

"If you're going to stay silent, then just listen. I only have two conditions! First, have your troops retreat from the Flameyellow Continent. Second, head to the mooncore with me to bring Ye Lingfeng back. I'll hold the tether outside while you enter the xenomemory space with the rope."

The sovereign liked to manipulate others with their weaknesses, but Tianming was giving her a taste of her own medicine. Even then, his demands were only to save others and weren't the least bit overboard.

"Dream on!"

"Everyone on the Flameyellow Continent must die!"

"How could someone from the world below challenge the divine moonrace?!"

The onlookers couldn't resist the provocation.

"Sovereign Xi, your reply?" Tianming ignored them and kept his eyes trained on the woman that was on the edge of going berserk.

"Will you return her to me if I agree?" she finally asked in a shaky voice.

"I will do so a month after our deal."

"You'll be stronger than me by then."

"Perhaps, but you hardly have a choice. I'm dictating the terms now."

"In other words, I'll lose completely now that you've captured her, is that it?" Her gaze was growing ever more furious.

"It wouldn't have come to this if you were the slightest bit benevolent. You were the one pushing my limits the entire way."

Sovereign Xi laughed heartily all of a sudden. "You really are an interesting one. You even came after my only loved one in the whole world. Li Tianming, I'll make sure you suffer the worst fate possible!"

She slowly removed her mask, revealing her stunningly beautiful face. Her features resembled those of a goddess. Even so, her beauty couldn't hide the bestial instincts within.

"I hate you! I hate you utterly!" The mask in her hands crumbled as her tears flowed.

"Xi'er, I'm sorry. Let's meet again in the next life," the imperial guide said as she sobbed with her head lowered.

"I'm sorry too, Lianlian." No doubt, the imperial guide was the sovereign's most cherished person. However, what did they mean by that? "If there's a next life, I swear I'll never let you down."

"Let's hope we can live together as normal people in the next life with no more burdens. It's too tiring."

"Yes, let's hope..."

Tianming finally understood. While the sovereign did care about the imperial guide, she was far more concerned with getting her eighth bane-ring. She simply didn't want to lose. There was only one option; she unleashed her full power the moment her mask crumbled.

Tianming couldn't stop it at all. One of the mask fragments pierced the imperial guide in the head. She smiled with satisfaction at the sovereign and slumped down lifelessly. Everyone had witnessed the sovereign kill her own imperial guide, and they felt chills run down their spine.

Sovereign Xi glared at Tianming like a raging serpent under the moonlight. "One must be cruel enough to kill one's own kin, otherwise one can't claim to be a ruler and achieve great things. Li Tianming, have you learned this lesson?"

### **Chapter 1097 - The Imperial Guide's Burial**

The imperial guide's blood splattered all over Tianming's body. She was still smiling as her blank gaze was focused on the sovereign, but her pulse was gone. His hostage was now a corpse, and Sovereign Xi no longer had any weaknesses.

Tianming was rather shocked and couldn't figure it out. Based on how deep their relationship was, the imperial guide should be just as important to the sovereign as Feiling was to him. So why would Sovereign Xi kill the imperial guide herself right after he stated his terms? Tianming couldn't imagine himself doing the same to Feiling.

It appeared that his boundaries and limits were completely different from Sovereign Xi's. She was a narcissist that justified her tendencies with the responsibility of a ruler.

"So your anger at me and the pain you showed is just a self-consolation, huh? The imperial guide can no longer see it, so cut the act," Tianming said as he shook his head. He had finally come to know someone who would do anything, even killing their only beloved, to achieve their goals. It would be like Tianming killing his lifebound beasts to achieve his.

"You used your so-called love to disguise your cruelty and even managed to trick yourself with it. How laughable. You should look into a mirror and see what you look like right now. You'll see nothing but a venomous serpent in the reflection."

Tianming couldn't stand the fact that she was grieving even though she was the one that had killed her. He let go of the imperial guide's body, and the sovereign pulled it back and hugged it tightly.

"We are not acting. This has nothing to do with you. It's fine as long as she understands." She gently closed the imperial guide's eyes and wiped the blood off her face. Then she looked at Tianming and completely unleashed her hate. "You were the one who killed her. We will avenge her and bury you and everyone you care for as an offering for her death!"

He now knew how truly twisted this insane snake was. "You were the one that did it yourself, but you're pinning the blame on me? Perhaps I'd even respect you if you were honest about what you wanted. The only thing that's worse than someone who can even kill their own loved ones is a hypocrite."

Tianming had thought he could turn things around with the imperial guide as his hostage, but his understanding of love was different from the sovereign's. His love was one of mutual giving and protecting. Hers was second to her own self-interest and was something that could be sacrificed when needed. Tianming refused to acknowledge that as a form of love.

Right now, there was no longer anything holding the sovereign back. She couldn't turn back now. All the divine moonrace elites summoned their totems and sealed off the entire area, and Tianming was a fish on their chopping block. Not to mention, the nova source pulse Sovereign Xi had been waiting for was taking place right now.

"We shall strip away every fiber of your being and pave a new path for the divine moonrace." Sovereign Xi put the imperial guide down as boundless power flooded into her body. All signs pointed to her being virtually invincible, especially in her enraged state. "Li Tianming, you're a mere rat that can never escape from the palm of Our hands."

She smiled vilely and added, "We will devour you."

Then she rose into the air as astral force gathered in her body. Tianming felt a huge pressure crushing down on him. She was the strongest person on the moon, and even without moving, Tianming felt like the entire universe was pressing down on his body. Perhaps that was the power of the Constellation stage. The Ascension stage was only the start of godhood, and one could only break free from the Orderian Sky once they reached the twelfth level.

"Follow Us back to the palace. As for your kin, they'll continue atoning for your crimes."

Even if Tianming could help her make the breakthrough, she wasn't willing to spare the Flameyellow humans. She was no different from Autarch Qian in Tianming's eyes, now. The tens of thousands of others had surrounded them so completely that there was no escape. There was only one way for Tianming to break out of her control: the Prime Tower. He had been prepared for this even before Sovereign Xi made her move. He immediately summoned it and hid inside. Sovereign Xi didn't manage to react in time, having not expected it at all.

"What kind of divine artifact is this? You're hiding inside it, I see?"

The Prime Tower rose into the sky, but Sovereign Xi pressed it back down with terrifying force, as expected. Tianming was now technically half in her control, though as long as he didn't come out, Sovereign Xi wouldn't be able to make her breakthrough. Even so, Tianming was the one who was pressed for time. He had only come back to the Divine Moon Realm to stop the ongoing massacre in the first place.

Sovereign Xi rapidly struck the tower, but it remained unmoving like a mountain. It was a divine artifact that was powerful beyond her imagination. In a fit of rage, she continued the assault for a couple of minutes before finally giving up.

"Looks like this nondescript tower of yours is a pretty powerful treasure." She put her weapon away and pondered. The nova source pulse was now peaking. "However, We have Our ways of forcing you out. You might hide because killing one hundred million of your cockroaches down there isn't enough. So how about I cleanse the entire continent of everyone?"

While she wasn't sure she would resort to that yet, she was keen on exploiting Tianming's weakness to the limit. She could destroy her own weakness, but he couldn't. At the very least, he couldn't destroy it as long as he had Imperial Will. It would go against everything he stood for and cause his cultivation to collapse.

"Don't even think of threatening Us with Orderia. This is the Divine Moon Realm, and nobody's word but Ours is law! We have no weaknesses while you fashion yourself a ruler of benevolence, and that will be your downfall!"

She took the tower into the palace. Before she left, she ordered, "Ready the imperial guide's funeral rite!"

"Understood!" everyone chorused and knelt.

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The divine moonrace didn't leave the palace compound. Instead, they remained there to defend their ruler, even though they didn't know what she was up to. They only cared about serving her.

In a hidden corner far away, a girl observed the whole thing with a blank gaze. There seemed to be a hint of annihilation leaking from her eyes bit by bit. She didn't give chase, but instead turned around and disappeared into the night.

## **Chapter 1098 - The Curse You Cast**

In a dark corner of Divine Moon Skycity was a man in a white robe, sitting on a platform with his daughter in his arms. He gently stroked her head as she counted the stars in the sky.

"There are so many. Is every one of them a sun, Daddy?" Little You asked.

"That's right," Bodhi answered.

"So our home, the Ninefold Hell, used to be one of those shining stars before it lost its nova source, right?"

"It wasn't a nova source, but a stellunar source. Our ancestors descended from the empyrean fiendgod race. Even though we weren't that strong, we were at least among the many others in the astralscape of order."

"Oh, I get it now!" She leaned into his chest and rubbed her eyes. "I'm a little tired."

"Then sleep. Sweet dreams."

"But I have so many more questions."

"Then ask them before you go to sleep."

"Okay! You said you would make your final move when you reached the Constellation stage. Are you there yet?"

"Almost. I'm only a hair's breadth away. Maybe I'll reach it tonight, tomorrow, or maybe in a few more days. Daddy will be completely different by then."

He pinched her cheek and looked at the city. "The divine moonrace thinks that my killings are overboard, but they don't know it's only the first act." His time hadn't truly come yet.

"We're still afraid that Li Tianming will expose our identities, right?"

"That's right. If our kin is gone, getting the stellunar source won't mean much."

"We wanted him dead this entire time, but we couldn't find the chance. Now he's far more powerful, and he's even using the imperial guide to control the divine moonrace. He'll be even harder to deal with now."

"Don't worry. As long as he has hope, he won't drag us down. I helped him buy some time today. When I make my breakthrough, I'll kill him and Sovereign Xi both as soon as possible. After that, nobody in the Divine Moon Realm will be able to stop me. I understand fusion formations, and when the time comes, our race will finally be able to rise again after two hundred thousand years." His eyes were filled with hope and ambition.

"We have to end his life in the fastest and most cruel way possible to avenge Mommy and Big Brother." Little You's eyes were filled with boundless hate.

"That's right. I only held back to make him relax his guard and focus on the sovereign. Eventually, the opportunity to kill him will come for sure. When he's gone, the other billion specters will no longer have to worry. We can deal with Sovereign Xi after that."

"We must act really fast, right?"

"Yes. First, we can't let Orderia react. Second, we can't have the divine moonrace turn their attention to the Ninefold Hell. Once we destroy the Divine Moon Realm and transfer its stellunar source to Ninefold Hell, we can leave this place and the Flameyellow Continent. We'll roam the realm of chaos and find our home there."

"Home?" She began tearing up. "Even if we find it, Mommy and Big Brother are gone."

"They'll be with us the whole way, Little You." He gave her a deep hug.

"Little You, you are the most important thing in my life, more than anything else. I'll make the best environment for you to live and grow in." Those didn't sound like the words of a murderous demon.

"Daddy, it's all good now. I'm back with you, right? Even though Li Tianming plotted against us and caused us to harbor this grudge, he didn't treat me badly. He even returned me to you as he promised he would," she said earnestly.

"Truly a just man. I'll leave his corpse in one piece when the time comes." He would never forget the sight of the woman he loved dead at the doors of his palace. In that sense, he was no different from Tianming. They were parallel to each other, both of them sides of the same coin, tethered to both sides of the same continent. But fate wouldn't allow them to coexist with each other.

"Sometimes justice is a fool's errand." A hint of deviousness flashed across Bodhi's eyes. He didn't think that Tianming would return his weakness to him just like that. "Is he a fool?"

Little You shook her head as she recalled Tianming and the twenty thousand divine moonrace corpses falling like rain. She would never think of someone like that as just. "Daddy, I want to sleep now. Sing me a lullaby," she said, stretching lazily.

"Alright, I'll do just that," he said as he delightedly pinched her nose. Eventually, she slowly began to doze off.

All of a sudden, she opened her eyes wide like she was drowning and clutched at Bodhi's clothes. Her face suddenly turned pale as she began sweating. "Daddy... Daddy..."

Her voice seemed faint as her whole body shook. Her eyes even rolled back and her lips were turning purple at a rapid pace. She shriveled up in his embrace and breathed laboriously.

"Little You, what's going on?" Bodhi began panicking as his eyes turned bloodshot.

But soon, Little You returned to normal. She clutched her chest and sobbed, "It hurts... inside..."

"How could this be?" He couldn't find any sign of injury.

"It hurt like that time," she said in a panicked voice.

"When?"

"When that big sister captured me..."

"The one by Li Tianming's side?" Bodhi began to feel his killing intent rising.

"I think she... placed something in my body..."

Bodhi comforted her and stood up. "I knew he wouldn't let you go so easily. Little You, let's go."

"Where to?"

"The compound we were at during the day. This is a signal. Looks like they failed."

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The power of the stellunar source surged everywhere, even in the normal residential compound. When Bodhi pushed open the door and entered, he didn't see Tianming, but a girl in a light blue dress standing in a corner. Her eyes seemed empty, like the most ancient of abysses. It radiated perpetual solace. Those eyes looked like they had seen countless eras before the time of humans.

"Where's Li Tianming?" Bodhi asked.

"Sovereign Xi captured him after she killed the imperial guide," Feiling said.

"She's that cold? Impressive." He brought Little You to her and looked at her intently. "Is this the curse you cast?"

"Yes."

"Undo the curse you cast or you're dead."

### **Chapter 1099 - The Seventy-third Time**

"If I die, she'll be tortured for the rest of her life and can never hope to live a normal life again," Feiling said.

"So you're rather ruthless yourself, huh?"

"That isn't my intention. I only want you to help me once more."

"To save Tianming in Xi Palace?" Bodhi asked. He didn't dare to gamble with Little You's life.

"That's right."

"It's beyond me. I'm incapable of that."

"I'll cooperate with you and lead as many people away from you as I can. If you can enter, Tianming can also fight."

"It's too risky."

"That's why I need your help."

"What kind of curse is it?"

"If it isn't undone, she'll die within a year. As for whether she'll suffer, it's something I can turn on or off at will. You can take the gamble and doubt what I say, but you won't."

"I can also let you experience endless pain until you decide to undo the curse," Bodhi said threateningly.

"You're free to try. All we'll achieve is wiping each other out. The Flameyellow Continent is going through a disaster right now as Sovereign Xi plans to use him to unlock her eighth bane-ring and become an octabane. If she succeeds, you won't even be relevant anymore. Carefully consider your options. As long as he comes out alive, I'll undo Little You's curse."

Feiling didn't waste any words. Everything she said was for the sole purpose of illustrating Bodhi's options. She had never wanted to use the Latticeheart Curse to cause anyone to suffer. The first time

she used it, she only did so to protect the Flameyellow humans with Tianming, and she even undid it once their relationship with Huiye Shi improved. Bodhi was an even more terrifying foe, and there was no other option but to keep him reined in by holding a grasp on his precious daughter.

"Octabane?" Those words caused Bodhi to furrow his brows.

"Specters can coexist with humans, you know," Feiling said. "Hmph... of course they can. With some compromises."

"So you've agreed to help?"

"What choice do I have? You're not exactly giving me any options after sinking so low as to threaten me with my daughter's life." Unlike Sovereign Xi, he willingly caved to his weakness. Perhaps the word 'octabane' had had an unexpected effect. Bodhi had just learned why the sovereign wanted Tianming in the first place. "Come to think of it, how many people can you lead away? I wouldn't want you to die and doom Little You in the process."

"It'll depend on luck."

"Luck..." Bodhi looked at her more intently. He had known from the start that she was no simple girl. Though she usually stood behind Tianming, she was far more mysterious than he was. When they met during the day, he didn't think too much of her. But now, when Tianming was in danger, she looked completely different. She looked oddly cold about the whole thing. Warmth only returned to her gaze when she talked about him. Apart from that, she was like the emptiest of voids.

"Then let's get started!"

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At the lake of blood within the palace compound, Sovereign Xi removed the formation. Tianming could see the rotting lake with the three thousand nailed skeletons from within the Prime Tower. The salacious beauty stood before the tower and said, "The mood is set. It's prime time during the stellar source pulse. Come out, baby. We've obsessively observed and studied the art of love-making. With Our knowledge and assets, We can make you forget your mortal coil."

Her slight drunkenness only accentuated her allure. She slowly undid her belt and opened her collar wider and wider, exposing her fair, smooth skin and luscious mounds. Her figure was as slender as a serpent's and even seemed able to figuratively wrap around and constrict a person. Nobody could escape its hold on the soul.

However, all Tianming felt for her was disgust. No man would risk their life just to lay with a goddess amidst that gore. He didn't react the slightest bit to the temptation, but she wasn't the least bit mad. Instead, she began dancing in front of the tower after taking another swig of alcohol. "You know you're Our baby... What should We do about a disobedient baby? We shall have the remaining three hundred thousand gods We have at Our disposal go down for a hunt. This time, there's no limit to how many they'll kill. Bad babies are to be punished. We won't stop until you cry and beg for forgiveness.

"You've been really naughty. Did you think you could avoid this for the rest of your life? As you hide away, your kin are dying and suffering. So selfish, like the child you are. How could someone like you be a ruler? You have doomed them, you know? You'll only continue dooming even more. At the end of the

day, you only care about your own life. You only serve your self-interest. Don't you think it's a great thing to sacrifice yourself for billions of others? Why can't you be the great man you claim to be? Tianming, stop running away from reality. If you yourself think of your own life as more precious than others', then who are you to blame other people for trampling over them?"

She understood him well and was certain of her plan of attack. The only time she had lost to him was when he destroyed the formation core. Even capturing the imperial guide hadn't been able to stop her. Nothing would stop her from achieving her goals this very night!

"If you don't come out, enjoy listening to your subjects crying out in despair!" she said with a harsh voice. She was losing patience; however, she didn't know that there was no point to all the threats, either. From the moment the eighty thousand gods had started slaughtering away on the continent, The Grand-Orient Sword-shaped Imperial Will in his albi began cracking.

"Water can carry vessels just as well as it can topple them over..."

The will of his cultivation stemmed from his identity as the Human Emperor. He had obtained their mandate and blessing, but now it was cracking when they were in peril. It was just a matter of time before they crumbled completely. By then, Tianming's Lifesbane Will wouldn't be enough to contain all of his astralforce and he would die in a huge explosion.

This was the path of cultivation. There was no turning back once one embarked on the path. They simply had to bear all of the burdens that came with it. If he could overcome this obstacle, his path would be clearer than ever. Perhaps the Omnisentient Threads could lead him to true glory in the astralscape of order. A ruler was one with their subjects in many senses of the word.

However, if his divine will crumbled, it was a sign that his own intent was flawed and he would lose everything. Sovereign Xi had killed the imperial guide in a gesture of unwavering dedication. But now that Tianming's weakness was in her grasp, he knew that not even the Prime Tower could protect him.

"You can risk it for the sliver of a chance you'll survive, you know," the sovereign said. She smiled as her eyes glowed as she saw Tianming step out of the tower. The only complaint she had was the bird above his head.

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Outside the palace, most of the citizens remained at home. There were tens of thousands of guards alertly standing guard at the palace in fear of Bodhi's appearance. The surging stellunar source was already enough to unnerve most of them.

Then, all of a sudden, a scream disrupted the pin-drop silence. The one who cried out was bisected, and then another.

"The astral killer is here!"

Usually, the killer wouldn't show up at the sovereign's turf. But who else could be behind all these deaths? The bisected corpses began piling up, but they couldn't even see their enemy.

"Report to Her Majesty now!"

"No, Her Majesty ordered for there to be no interruptions!"

With the Pentamoon Slayers, the imperial guide, and even Prince Fengyue gone, there was nobody higher up in the chain of command to report to other than the sovereign.

"Over there!" They finally spotted the culprit in the chaos, but were stunned at what they saw. The person walking toward them was a beautiful girl like no other.

"It's not the astral killer."

"Who is that?"

"Capture her!"

She kept killing as she retreated backward. Many were stumped that they were getting slower and slower as they approached her, not to mention the invisible walls that frequently stood in their way.

"Don't let her escape!" Many more began joining the chase, until there were thousands.

"Die!"

Right at that moment, the girl crumbled into dust. "It's the seventy-third time," said a voice from who knew where. It was so bizarre a sight that nobody noticed a white-robed man slipping through the formation of the palace and entering it.

"Is she dead?" But as they wondered, the dust in the air gathered and reformed.

### **Chapter 1100 - As the Dynasty Crumbles, My Heart Beats On**

Tianming stood opposite Sovereign Xi at the blood lake, surrounded by bloody mist. The chaotic moonlight made her skin look pale as snow. Her lips curved into a smile as she relished in being the victor of this match.

"How many times have We said that you'll never be able to escape Our grasp?" There were still some tears in her eyes as she thought of the imperial guide, the one who had accompanied her for her entire life. She knew she would be alone from now on, now that her beloved was gone. Though she hadn't felt any pain when the guide had passed away, the grief and despair at the notion of never ever seeing her again caused the sovereign's psyche to contort in unexpected ways.

During such a beautiful night, she had finally managed to force her prey out of the hole. She scrutinized him from top to bottom like a young girl would her idol, passionate and mischievous. She had never thought it would take a few centuries for her to finally find her true soulmate back when she was a young teen.

There was nothing romantic about all this; she was basically consuming him in one go. It wasn't a lovemaking festival, but a bloody sacrifice! The mood of the surroundings had already been set, though the bird on Tianming's shoulder seemed to ruin it a little. It intensely looked at the sovereign.

"Beautiful, like we talked about last time... You wouldn't mind if little old me spectates your precious session, would you? Now, let's not leave anyone waiting and start the action! I've been waiting for ages!"

Sovereign Xi was quite impressed that they were still in the mood to crack jokes. "Have your bird go back."

"Go back? I thought you were craving a bird!" Ying Huo said.

Even though this was a heavy moment for Tianming, Ying Huo had completely disrupted the mood. The sovereign was rather impatient and couldn't wait any longer.

"Come here!" She pulled Tianming over, but he retreated when he saw something.

"Are you still testing Our patience?" It happened again and again. She didn't forcefully stop him at all.

"Do it again and I'll send the three hundred thousand troops down there!" she threatened.

Her entire attention was focused on Tianming, and she didn't notice that Ying Huo was no longer on his shoulder. Instead, it was flying above the blood lake and using Death Inferno and Infernal Haze.

Countless cloned phoenixes spread out and fell like meteors, much to the sovereign's shock. She didn't know what Tianming was resisting for at this point in time.

"Don't you know what's at stake? Your playing dumb will cause all the humans to pay for your sins!" She mentioned sin again like she truly believed it. She quickly blocked Ying Huo's attacks with much of her astralforce, but she wasn't able to stop all of them. A third of the falling flames struck the blood lake and more than a thousand skeletons were burned to ash. At least half of the lake was ruined now, sending her into another fit of rage.

"Very well, Li Tianming. You forced Us to do this." She glared at the fearless youth with a deathly gaze, breathing heavily from the anger.

"I didn't force you to do anything. I only learned from you. You're right, a real ruler shouldn't have any weaknesses. If you don't care about the death of your precious imperial guide, then I'll stop caring about the deaths of the Flameyellow humans. You mocked me for treasuring life, so I just stopped doing so. From now on, feel free to kill whoever you want. I won't even bat an eye. But I will let you know that since you're unable to kill me now, I'll make sure to bury the dead humans under the entirety of the divine moonrace in time. I will personally make sure that you die the worst death of all your pathetic race. I really have to thank you for pushing me to become a heartless person. Thanks for teaching me how to turn the tables completely. I'm going to use what you taught me to crush your entire race," he said plainly.

Ying Huo landed on his shoulder with a mocking smile. "You really are a fool. Did you think you could do anything you wanted? Have you not heard of never pushing a desperate animal into a corner? You just made it so that there's nothing left for us to lose, so now your breakthrough is completely ruined. Not only that, you are ruined. It's a shame that you were still dreaming about achieving greatness until now."

Sovereign Xi's expression completely changed. Tianming was now someone without any weaknesses, like her. She had witnessed his rise within the short time she knew him and shuddered at the thought. Now that he was an unbridled force that couldn't be reined in by anything, anyone would fear him.

"You really think your childish bluff will work? Then We'll send our troops down now. You'd better not beg for any mercy. Not to mention, destroying the lake is pointless. We've bathed in it for centuries, and

it's already served its purpose. If you know what's good for you, you still have one chance to turn back," she said with her chin raised high.

"Go ahead," Tianming said with a smile and his hands tucked neatly behind him.

"Hmph." She didn't budge one bit. She was certain she knew Tianming's personality. He was just making a final, desperate struggle! "Once this transmission stone is sent, the three hundred thousand troops will mobilize right after gathering."

"Do it."

"Daring, aren't you?" She really felt terrified that Tianming would no longer have any weaknesses. Her fingers shook for a bit, but she still sent the transmission stone off. This was a disaster, and she felt even more nervous after committing to the act. Tianming's current expression made her feel fear.

"You're the one who forced Us! It's your fault!" she screamed, clawing madly at her hair. But as her emotions were going wild, a white-robed man appeared out of nowhere.

Tianming had seen Bodhi long ago, as he could see behind her. Bodhi launched a sudden punch with an afterimage of a golden lion, slamming his fist into the sovereign's back. She wasn't able to react at all from being rattled by Tianming and was sent smashing into the lake, crushing even more of the skeleton pillars there.

"Leave!"

This was his best chance. Tianming knew that with the Latticeheart Curse still in effect, Feiling would get Bodhi to help him. Meow Meow instantly appeared and he got on it before zipping off the moment the sovereign was in the lake. She came bursting out with rage a moment later. Given her power, Tianming couldn't just escape from under her nose that easily, but Bodhi was there to stop her. He continued going east without a word while Bodhi went west. The two of them split up, causing her even more confusion.

One of them was the key to her breakthrough, while the other was someone the divine moonrace had a deathly grudge with. He was the one that kept her anchored to the city. Though a dilemma it was, she quickly made her decision. While the destroyed lake wasn't that big of a deal, it still needed to be restored somewhat, and that would take the other half of the night. Not to mention, the fact that Tianming had escaped instead of hiding in the Prime Tower meant that his behavior from before was just a bluff.

"He was only acting tough, after all."

So as long as she had a grasp on the Flameyellow Continent's survival, there was nothing for her to worry about even if Tianming ended up more powerful than her. However, Bodhi had only appeared before her once. If she killed him, she might even be able to go to the Flameyellow Continent herself.

"Where could you be going?" Even though Tianming had escaped, she felt more relaxed now. She wasn't worried about him escaping, only that he would become as heartless as she was. Thus, she rushed after Bodhi and began closing the distance.

"Looks like you're already close to the Constellation stage. Very well. Today is the day you die!" She attacked in the midst of giving chase, manifesting all of her totems and causing the surrounding buildings to crumble. She had been waiting for him to show up for far too long. Even though she had mentally distanced herself from her parents, she still desired vengeance for them. Their battle caused quite a lot of commotion, with the buildings in the west crumbling one after the other. He was mounting a fighting retreat, as Tianming had expected.

"She really thinks that I have no way of escaping from her as long as she holds the continent hostage." Tianming turned and looked back, finally safe for the moment. He closed his eyes and felt his countless Imperial Will fragments all cracked up. The power in his body was close to going wild. The Omnisentient Threads that he was connected to felt so weak that he could barely see them now.

"Weakness? How could billions of people be the weakness of a single person? Those who had that many people believing in them can only rise nonstop."

That shouldn't be the rule of this world. While Sovereign Xi claimed that to be a weakness, it sounded horribly wrong to him.

"This isn't how hierarchies should be formed." He took a deep breath. While his Imperial Will was crumbling, he felt surprisingly calm. He heard the voices from the threads and fell into deep, meditative thought like he never had before. "Though the dynasty crumbles, my heart beats on."