

The Ages 1561

Chapter 1561 - Sovereign Starfeather

Strong astral winds blew past their ears. The astral battleship slowed down and cruised toward some shining mountains. There was rain here, but it didn't rain fire like it did on Orderia. Instead, it looked like meteor showers were almost constantly landing across the entire world.

Schools of fish and sea creatures could be seen in the clear and glowing oceans beneath them, glowing from the nova source they absorbed. As the ship crossed the ocean, it streaked waves across its surface. Ahead of them was a large landmass of immeasurable width, but only one city was constructed on it. In fact, the city spanned a myriad miles, constantly basking in starlight. It was none other than Myriadmile City.

The seemingly boundless city occupied the entire continent. It was at least ten times wider in area than the Myriaddragon Mountains, which showed how much more impressive the Violetcloud Imperium was compared to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. They also had half a billion troops, all of whom were fifth-level constellers and above, being on the same level as the celestial orderians. Their faction occupied half of the star, including the Mystgod Pavilion and many other smaller subordinate sects that came under their protection for tribute. Needless to say, Myriadmile City was among the most prosperous places on the Violetglory Star, being located at its south pole. The capital of the Divineglory Dynasty, on the other hand, was situated opposite, at the north pole. Like the sun, the two main factions of this nova source world were on different poles.

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Tianming was utterly shocked by the beauty of the city.

"It looks like the cultivators here love beauty as much as cultivation itself." Qingyu had spent much time in the celestial orderian heartland before, so she knew the difference. Most of the celestial orderian territory was covered in flames. The Ninemoon Palace and Moonfang Sea, where she had stayed, were the quietest places on the entire sun.

"I like this place!" Feiling, now looking like she was in her mid teens, had shed her childish appearance and was growing into a charming woman. While her face was still smooth and tender, she was starting to develop more womanly charms. Notably, her figure had turned even more curvy compared to her former self, though Tianming would like to claim credit for it.

As they continued taking in the beauty of the city, the ship left the waters once more and soared higher. As they passed the many buildings of the shining city, they felt like each tile of their roofs seemed to glow. What surprised him was how the countless people on the streets seemed to know about their arrival. The streets were filled with oceans of people, all of them curious about Tianming's arrival. His real name had proven far more impressive than his pseudonym, 'Lin Feng', and only someone magnificent would be worthy of such a name. As such, hype had begun building around him even more since its revelation. Loud cheers sounded out in waves the moment the ship arrived. Tianming was almost deafened by the sound of his own name.

"They're too passionate!" he said.

"It's only fitting for someone like you, a nonabane genius! Nobody has ever had so much potential!" Gong Xiong said.

Tianming didn't dare to tell him that his sister was also a nonabane; he wanted to let Lingfeng and the rest live a more modest life here. Otherwise, things would be unpredictable with Ye Chen in the picture. All the Violetcloud Imperium needed was to even things out with Tianming, not to gain a huge edge over the Divineglory Dynasty, thus striking a fine power balance to reduce the risk of conflict.

The ship flew past the crowd like it was under close inspection, with countless curious gazes aimed their way. Tianming felt a little embarrassed from all the attention as he smiled and waved. "Hey everyone...." It was really awkward.

"You must defeat Ye Chen!" many cried. It seemed like the presence of Ye Chen had applied quite a lot of pressure on the subjects of the imperium. Just like that, Tianming was brought to the center of the city where a pillar of violet nova source was bursting out in a similar fashion to the Voidsky Flame Pillar. However, there was a divine astralship above the pillar that diffused and spread the nova source across the city in much the same manner as the Divine Sun Palace. It also served as the palace of the sovereign.

"Tianming, the imperium has decided to give you Violetpeak, the place that's closest to the sovereign and the best place for cultivation in all of the imperium," Gong Xiong said after he received a transmission stone.

"Please thank the sovereign for me," Tianming said.

"No need. The sovereign will see you after you rest for a day. I'll take you to the Kilostar Capital tomorrow." Kilostar Capital was also the name of the divine astralship of the Violetcloud Imperium. Tianming could see it hanging in the sky, located right in the center of Myriadmile City. It was shaped like a tower that had a thousand stars embedded into it, each of them containing a lot of nova source. At the center of the tower was a violet miniaturized nova source. Though as impressive as it was, the Divine Sun Palace was possibly more powerful than the Kilostar Capital, as it had one extra miniaturized nova source.

"Alright, then I'll thank the sovereign in person." At this point, there was no avoiding such a meeting. The sovereign had proclaimed a desire to make Tianming the number two figure of the Violetcloud Imperium, whereas Ye Chen was merely a servant of the Divineglory Dynasty. He was called Sovereign Starfeather and was a little bit older than the sovereign of the Divineglory Dynasty.

As they spoke, they reached Violetpeak, which was right next to the thousand-starred tower. It was a huge complex of beautiful castles and had more than enough area. There was plenty of space for even tens of Lan Huangs to run around as they pleased.

Gong Xiong handed him a transmission stone and said, "Seek me out if you need anything. I'll be at your beck and call. Settle in and make yourself comfortable. Violetpeak will be your home from now on, while I, on the other hand, shall go see my dear wife. We haven't met in quite a while, so goodbye!" He left with a loud laugh. Everyone knew why he was in such a rush.

"Our new home, eh?" Tianming's eyes glazed over as he looked at the dreamlike castle. Thus far, he felt like a card being used to counter the Divineglory Dynasty's rising star, so would he really come to call this place home? Sometimes he still felt like Flamehaven or the Grand-Orient Sect were his real homes;

however, he'd had bad experiences in Flamehaven. It was only home to him because his mother was there.

"It doesn't matter where I am. Home is wherever my family lives." He turned to the four companions who had traveled along with him and looked at the lifebound beasts in his lifebound space before those thoughts faded away. "As new as this home of ours is, what's important is that we're all together."

"Alright! Enough wishy-washy words!" Ying Huo flew over his head and right into Violetpeak in a rush of excitement. "Woohoo!"

Lan Huang, Meow Meow, and Xian Xian swiftly followed. Yin Chen also swarmed and spread out into the surroundings.

"Big Brother, stop waiting and come in!" said a beautiful girl in a blue miniskirt from down below.

"I'm coming!" He had just arrived on a new battlefield, but this time he was filled with confidence. "Let's go!"

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Violetpeak was far too big, and they could stay anywhere they wanted. Their lifebound beasts, Lingfeng's Soulfend included, all had a proper place to rest and play. As they settled down, the first thing Tianming had to do was spread four million Yin Chens around. They turned into forty million invisible cockroaches and spread throughout Myriadmile City. It could infiltrate anywhere that wasn't protected by a top-grade defense formation.

"Bathing! Bathing!" The countless cockroaches charged ahead.

"The Violetcloud Imperium needs me, but I need them, too. The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect didn't have good ore veins, caeli imperius, or divine hazard sword ki, but there's all of that here. I won't have to hold back, either!"

The first bit of information he received from Yin Chen was about his security detail. There were around a hundred top elites constantly protecting him since the moment he had arrived; they blended in with the darkness. Each of them was more powerful than a member of the Sunscorch Guard and they were hard to detect. Only Yin Chen was able to spot them with its surveillance abilities.

"Looks like the Violetcloud Imperium really values me highly. I believe these guardians are probably the direct subordinates of Sovereign Starfeather." Before a day had even passed, a lot of information flooded toward Tianming. There were tens of millions of people in his welcome parade, and all of them were discussing his arrival even now. Most of them were comparing him to Ye Chen. At the very least, they all had favorable impressions of Tianming.

"When I see Sovereign Starfeather, I'll request divine ores and universal manna. You guys will be able to evolve then!"

"Long live Little Li! Xian Xian wants meat!"

It seemed like he was in the prime of his life. To the two main factions of the Violetglory Star, Tianming and Ye Chen were already beyond the level of genius. Thus, their growth was of the utmost priority.

Chapter 1562 - Set for Life

The next day, Gong Xiong came on time as he had promised. He wore a different black bearskin this time and seemed really well put together as he led the way. "Come, come. I'll take you to see the sovereign."

The sovereign hadn't wanted to meet Lingfeng and the rest, so Tianming went alone. As he had already gone against someone like the sun emperor, facing one of the two top figures of a nova source world no longer fazed him. Gong Xiong, however, was nervously adjusting his outfit along the way.

"Friend, I look fine, right? Is my hair alright?"

"Brother Xiong, you have no hair."

"Ah, I forgot! Dang, I'm so nervous!"

The two of them headed toward the Kilostar Capital. As expected, the seventy-plus people that shadowed Tianming were always nearby.

"They're the Starchasers, the most loyal subordinates of the sovereign, all of them elites through and through. The sovereign has ordered them to protect you for at least five centuries," Gong Xiong explained.

"Starchasers?" Tianming felt that the treatment he was receiving was far too good. Being the best in a nova source world came with impressive benefits.

"Ye Chen only managed to reach a draw with you despite having enjoyed the benefits of his faction for years, while you've always been on your own. Not to mention, you only just got the rights to head to the ninth level of the Violetglory Pagoda. If you ask me, you're much stronger."

Tianming just laughed without confirming or denying it. Soon, they reached the entrance of the huge complex.

"As expected of a divine astralship with a miniaturized nova source." Tianming could already feel how it was different. This was a true war machine, while the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb was only a transport vessel for now.

They walked along a bright path toward a grand hall. "Sovereign, I, Gong Xiong, have come with Li Tianming."

"Enter," said a deep voice from within.

"Understood." The two stepped into the starlit hall, surrounded by a thick fog. Tianming looked around and saw a man sitting on the throne in the distance, illuminated by brilliant starlight. His eyes shone even brighter than the stars in the fog.

"All hail the Sovereign!"

Right as Gong Xiong was about to get Tianming to kneel, Sovereign Starfeather said, "No need for formalities." He waved for Gong Xiong to step back and turned to Tianming. "Come closer, young man."

"Yes." Tianming approached without the slightest bit of nervousness. The sovereign himself had spared them of formalities, so he didn't kneel and simply came closer, though he still wasn't able to get a good look at the sovereign.

"We've never seen a nonabane totemancer in all of Our life. Might We be honored to witness a demonstration?" He spoke in a far more intimate and friendly fashion than the sun emperor ever had.

"It would be my honor to show it to the sovereign." Tianming summoned nine of his godswords and let them revolve around Sovereign Starfeather.

"These are good swords!" His eyes shone as he praised them. "These nine swords will no doubt shake the world and wake slumbering fiendgods.... They'll sweep across the star and even the astralscape above."

"Should that day ever come, I, Tianming, will not forget the favors I owe to the Violetcloud Imperium."

"Very good...." The sovereign smiled and continued, "Seeing you for Ourselves and hearing you speak are enough for Us to judge your character. We have a good feeling about you."

Tianming nodded.

"Young man, have you married?" came a sudden question.

"I have a beloved. We're set for life," Tianming seriously said.

"What man wouldn't dream of taking three or four wives, or even conquering tens of thousands of beauties across the stars?" asked the sovereign as he stroked his beard.

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"Beauties pale in comparison to the grand scheme of things." He knew that the sovereign was just trying to bind him to the imperium like the Divineglory Dynasty had when they'd allowed Ye Chen to marry their princess.

"Very well." Sovereign Starfeather smiled once more, perhaps finding an incorruptible youth like Tianming even more valuable. "Li Tianming, the Starchasers shall be responsible for your safety henceforth, while Gong Xiong will attend to your cultivation needs. We've decreed that you shall be allowed to utilize any and all cultivation resources of Our imperium. There shall be no need to seek permission. Have Gong Xiong obtain anything you want."

"Thank you, Sovereign!" Tianming had been waiting to hear just that. This was the dream! He could have anything he wanted from universal manna to divine ores, and even sword ki! Gong Xiong would be able to get him anything, and he didn't even need to go through standard channels for requesting resources. He knew that he was no simple disciple. Perhaps nobody other than Sovereign Starfeather himself had such privileges.

"However, you have to demonstrate your value to shut the mouths of those who would question Our decision, understood?"

"Definitely! It's the least I can do!" There was no free lunch in this world; without putting in any effort for the resources he consumed, Tianming might have to spit them back out. Though the resources

weren't freely given or without expectation, Tianming was more comfortable with such an arrangement; he wouldn't feel like he owed too much.

"Gong Xiong, make sure to give this young man a good tour of Our city." The sovereign stood up and vanished in blinding starlight. His last words felt a little chilling to Tianming. He knew that the sovereign had figured out that he wasn't a local, but it seemed that he didn't care where he was from. It wasn't really important. In fact, giving the sovereign the impression that he had backers might prompt him to nurture him even more.

As for Gong Xiong, he seemed ignorant of these subtle intentions and hurriedly left with Tianming. When they left the ship, he patted Tianming on the shoulder and said, "Well done, brother! Thanks to you, I got a new job and won't have to wallow away in that backwater shithole. We're buddies from now on!"

"Congratulations, Brother Xiong!" It had all gone well. As Tianming headed back to Violetpeak, he was planning out what resources he should ask for himself and the other four. He wouldn't hold back. First, he would increase the number of Yin Chens with the aim of not just spreading it throughout Myriadmile City, but the whole world. Next, Meow Meow and the rest still had a lot of room to improve, seeing as they were still only six-star divine beasts.

As they reached Violetpeak, Gong Xiong received a transmission stone.

Chapter 1563: Ye Chen's Letter of Challenge

Gong Xiong laughed when he saw it. "Looks like somebody's desperate."

"What's wrong, Brother Xiong?" Tianming knew it had something to do with him.

"It's Ye Chen." Gong Xiong shrugged. "News of you coming to our imperium has shaken the Violetglory Star, and the Divineglory Dynasty now knows about it. I know Ye Chen is trying to put pressure on you in real life, but I didn't think he'd be so desperate."

"How desperate?" He had just arrived and hadn't done anything yet, but he was about to request tons of resources. No doubt, that would ruffle some feathers. But if he took down Ye Chen, that might just give him a free pass.

"He wants to fight you half a month from now at the Observatory, which is located at the border. That means we have to head there now if we're to make it on time. What do you think?"

"Since he asked for a beating, we'll give him one."

"Badass!" Gong Xiong was already penning a reply. Soon, he sent the transmission stone off. "Now that you've agreed, countless people will be flocking there." Even he felt a little taken aback by all this. They were only two rival youths vying for the top, but the impact felt like a battle between two sovereigns instead. "Still, be careful. Ye Chen forged a well-deserved reputation for himself in the Astraldome. He's much stronger than before."

"Got it." Tianming couldn't wait to fight someone that was actually a match for him. "Looks like I have to head to the Astraldome to see all the fighters there for myself."

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The first thing Tianming needed to do was cement his contributions to the imperium by stealing Ye Chen's thunder. While the imperium was still all too happy that he joined them, based on his previous achievements, that wouldn't last for very long. Eventually, people would be asking questions. But before that could happen, Tianming had immediately accepted the challenge. The entire imperium was rife with excitement.

"Tianming, my master has been waiting for you for too long. Let's go!" Before they returned to Violetpeak, Gong Xiong took him to Shengui Island.

They flew past large lengths of the city and came to a unique place: an island amidst a sea of stars that looked like a tortoise. When the two of them landed, a flamboyantly dressed, hunched old man took large steps toward them with a huge smile on his face. Tianming immediately saw his oily green eyes and sly smile. Without question, this was Old Master Shengui, with whom Tianming had agreed to cooperate back in the wondersky realm. In fact, he could be argued to be the true tie that Tianming had with the Violetcloud Imperium, with Gong Xiong being their intermediary.

Tianming still recalled the old man's white beach in the wondersky realm. According to the information Yin Chen had gathered, he learned that Old Man Shengui was actually the personal servant of Sovereign Starfeather. While he wasn't from a top clan of the imperium, his hard work and impressive power had earned the sovereign's trust. Now, he commanded a lot of authority. In fact, his will represented the sovereign's will. Though he was far from as powerful as he was in his youth, he still had high status.

"Lin Feng, oh Lin Feng! I finally got you to come! Amazing!" the old man said as he shuffled over and pulled his pants up higher, then used the hand he had just used to pick his nose to hug Tianming and passionately slap his back. Then he gave him a look up and down and seemed satisfied. Seeing someone in real life was completely different from seeing them in the wondersky realm; the old man had a unique aura that was only felt in real life.

"Young man, do you want me to assign tens of beauties to serve you?" he said with a dirty look.

"No need, Old Gui. Stop embarrassing yourself. He's not someone who'll be swayed by that. Also, his real name is Li Tianming, so stop calling him Lin Feng," Gong Xiong said, rolling his eyes.

"Li Tianming? What a backwater name. Lin Feng sounds more elegant!" He sure had odd sensibilities.

"Old Master, since I was fateful enough to meet you in real life, I'll be in your care from now on," Tianming said.

"Of course. Don't hold back when it comes to me. I'll be counting on your efforts in the future. Once you get powerful, I'll bathe in your limelight! Let's look out for one another. Here's to great cooperation between us!" He pulled one hand out of his pants, dusted it off, and tried to shake Tianming's hand, but Tianming backed away.

"Old tortoise, stop it! Seriously!" Gong Xiong said. These two were truly one of a kind.

"You're my disciple, so know your place! Is that how you speak to your master? Want me to beat you up?"

"Come on then! It's not a few hundred years ago anymore. Do you think your old bones can take my punch? I came back to pay you back for all the beatings you gave me!"

"Dammit, you bear! Let's see your pathetic ass take this!" Shengui charged toward Gong Xiong and pushed him down on the beach, making quite a scene. After messing around, he slapped Gong Xiong's head and said, "Stupid fool, keep your temper to yourself and stop antagonizing people. You were lucky you brought Tianming back and gained merit for it. Take care of him well. This is the chance we've been waiting for, understood?"

"I don't need you to tell me that, you old tortoise."

If it weren't for Yin Chen, Tianming wouldn't have been able to tell if they were just acting or for real. Tianming had been monitoring Gong Xiong the entire time since they'd departed from Primary, and had also sent Yin Chen to Shengui the day before. It seemed that this really was how these two communicated. It wasn't an act at all, and Tianming appreciated the refreshing directness.

Though one thing was for sure; Shengui was of a common background, and Gong Xiong had a lot of enemies. Each of them were trying to ride Tianming's wave, so they would no doubt do their best for his sake. They were the two key figures that he had to rely on, so he had Yin Chen properly monitor them.

After a quick chat, Shengui brought Tianming to his residence. It looked even grander on the inside than the outside. Though there weren't beautiful servants all over the place, the 'high art' paintings all over the place were enough to make one bleed from the nose.

Chapter 1564 - Genius Squad

"Old Master, you're still incredibly fit," Tianming said.

"I don't have a choice. With all the ladies that need my attention, I need to stay in shape," Shengui narcissistically said.

"Stop pulling his leg. If you can still get it up, I'm your grandson," Gong Xiong said.

"You little.... Are you asking for a beating?!"

"Come on then!"

The two of them were completely shameless.

"By the way, Tianming, are you sure you're immediately going to fight Ye Chen?" Shengui asked.

"Yeah."

"What're the chances of you winning?"

"I honestly can't say, but it can't hurt to go in and test the waters. Winning or losing doesn't matter. It isn't like it's a fight to the death." It was clear that he had no intention of completely crushing Ye Chen at all.

"Alright. Either way, we're bound at the hip now. How you perform greatly affects us. Even though I've lived a glorious life, I came from a common background. Now that I have so many descendants counting on me, I still have to work hard to keep all of this afloat. You're my hope... I'm telling you all this so that you don't treat us as strangers. Feel free to consider us one of your own."

"Old Master, you're overthinking it. When I return from the Observatorium, you'll learn how direct and forthright I can be when I make requests," Tianming said.

"Very well! I like direct people like you. As long as you ask for it, I'll even bring all eighteen of the sovereign's unmarried daughters for you to bed!" said the old man as he thumped his chest. "Alright, we'll call it a day here. I still need to make some preparations before sending you off to the Observatorium with fifty thousand elites. We'll pick you up from Violetpeak. This is your first fight since joining the Violetcloud Imperium, so make it a banger, alright?"

"Definitely. Even though the sovereign said that I could ask for anything, I still have to prove myself to the masses either way." The resources of the imperium belonged to every subject, after all, and the top clans were competing for them as well. As such, there were complex relationships behind the scenes. Even though the Gong Prime Clan was in power right now, it still wasn't able to just grant Tianming whatever he wanted without consequence, given the complex political realities in the imperium.

Tianming had spread Yin Chen to see how he was received by the public. Even though it'd only been a day, he already had a rough idea. There were some who praised him, some who suspected him, and others who were itching for him to fail. While the current sovereign was from the Gong Prime Clan, their clan wasn't the largest and the imperium was far from a monolith.

"Waiting for me to fail, huh?" Tianming would shut them up with his performance. By then, they would have to give him the best resources.

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After he bade the old master farewell, he returned to Violetpeak, where everyone had settled. Ying Huo and the rest had only started playing, yet they would immediately have to set out.

"Are we going to mess with that Chaos Dijiang and the rest again? So we can get anything we want if we beat them up?" Ying Huo's eyes shone as it charged into the lifebound space.

Lingfeng and the rest also wanted to see what the Violetglory Star had to offer, so they would follow along.

"Alright, let's go there together then." By the time they were ready, more than fifty thousand people were waiting outside Violetpeak. All of them were subordinates of Gong Xiong and Shengui, with most of them being solarians, though they were only there as a deterrent. Tianming's real protectors, the Starchasers, were always by his side, and they were peak-level solarians, all of whom were stronger than Jiang Qingliu.

"Whoa, you're bringing those four with you? Are you the genius squad?" Shengui could immediately tell that Feiling and Qingyu were more than met the eye. He already knew about Feiling's wings; even if she wasn't a primalwinger, she was comparable to a rare talent never before seen among them! Shengui didn't dare to imagine how powerful all of them would be once they were a few centuries old. He even began wondering if the imperium would be able to accommodate all five of them. Fortunately, he approved of Tianming's character and didn't think too much about it.

"Let's go!" The group departed for the Observatorium, and it wasn't just fifty thousand. Many more in the city tagged along to watch the match. Eventually, millions of people were on the road.

"Now this is what I call charisma! I never would've thought that a junior would be capable of mobilizing so many people...." Even as old as Shengui was, life was still full of surprises.

But for Tianming, it wasn't just about charisma. If this works out, I can still earn a lot of Omnisentient Will to raise my Imperial Will! Maybe even the imperium will be part of my dynasty! The Flameyellow Continent was one such success story. He had tried to do the same at the Azurecloud Continent and Myriadragon Mountains, but he was too young and there were still the celestial orderians to deal with. Perhaps the Violetcloud Imperium would be a chance for him.

I have to get them to accept my rule by becoming their sole pillar of faith. His goal was clear, and it was time to carry it out. The huge crowd flocked across the sea of stars toward the border, chanting his name as they went.

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"Wanwan, come see this!" Liu Xuanxuan said as she waved toward another girl from the top of a hill. The girl with long, light green hair at the bottom of the hill had it bunned up. It was a rather refreshing hairstyle. She flew above and looked into the distance. "Look, Wanwan! It's the imperium! They're going to the Observatorium!"

"I see...." Liu Wanwan seemed a little dazed.

"Lin Feng—oh, it's Li Tianming now. He's far too impressive. I heard he even defeated a first-level solarian genius at Primary." Liu Xuanxuan had also lost to Tianming, but now she was his fangirl.

Liu Wanwan widened her eyes, but she couldn't spot Tianming in the crowd at all. She recalled all that had happened back then. Never could she ever have imagined that it would come to this.

"Wanwan, do you think he'll be Ye Chen's match?"

"I think Ye Chen's thousands of times weaker."

"Surely that's an exaggeration!"

"If you don't believe me, let's see for ourselves!"

"Alright." The two of them joined the crowd of spectators. By now, they numbered in the hundreds of millions. Fortunately, a nova source world like this was big enough to accommodate so many people. Given the sheer number of people waiting to witness the battle, it was sure to be an occasion without parallel.

Chapter 1565 - The Awareness of a Hired Gun

There was a huge reddish-purple tower on a mountain in the Divineglory Dynasty. From the very top of the tower, one could see half of the capital. And in that prestigious place stood a white-clad youth. The strong winds caused his hair to flutter, revealing his harmless face and clear, yet abyss-deep eyes. In his arms was an unparalleled beauty clad in a tight purple and white dress that highlighted her sensual curves. The divinespring in the center of her chest brightly glowed, giving her an even more impressive aura. They were the most famous power couple that gave the Violetcloud Imperium a headache, the prodigal Ye Chen and Princess Shen Yu, pearl of the dynasty.

"I heard he quickly accepted the challenge. It seems he's not the least bit afraid of you," Princess Shen Yu said, stroking her long hair. Her voice was gentle, yet cold when it came to Tianming.

"There's no need for him to fear me. The fact that he was able to fight me to a draw already shows that he's more incredible than anyone I've ever fought in the Astraldome. I respect him for answering my challenge so quickly this time around. Not to mention, I've also experienced my fair share of growth. It's about time I made up to the me from a few months ago," he said with a bright smile.

"That's right. It wasn't my intention to speak ill of him. However, according to the information we gathered, his actions since his appearance have been rather high profile. It seems that he doesn't share the same respect for us that we have for him. It truly is laughable," she said, pouting.

"It matters not. The higher up he thinks he is, the harder it'll be when he falls," Ye Chen said, stretching lazily. "To be honest, I've been fighting a lot in the Astraldome and the wondersky realm lately, but there's no sense of danger like real-life battles at all. Had Lin Feng not shown up, I would've wasted away from the boredom. His appearance is a good thing for me, so I have to properly thank him for it."

"Hey, he's called Li Tianming now," she said, hitting his chest.

"Sigh... it angers me the more I think about it. I thought the two of us would be brothers with our plain names, yet his real name sounds so bombastic. It won't do. I have to change my name as well."

"What would you change it to?"

"Ye Ritian. How is it? It evokes the sun in the embrace of the sky."

"Stop it, you naughty boy," she said with a tempting look.

"What's naughty about it? You are my sky—your boundless bosom, that is. There's nothing wrong with this name!" Ye Chen proclaimed as he felt her up.

The princess started off shy, but eventually caved in. Right as she was about to commit to the intimacy, the two of them heard someone clear their throat behind them and awkwardly turned around. It was the Minister Supreme.

"Uncle..." the princess greeted with a red-flushed face.

"The arrangements are ready. It's time to go. They're about to reach the Observatory," the man said, as if he hadn't seen anything.

"Alright. Many of my techniques were limited back in the wondersky realm. This time around, I can finally go all out in real life! I'll have to relish the fight!" Ye Chen said, referring to his lifebound beasts. "Now that I'm only a step away from becoming a solarian, hopefully I'll get something out of this fight."

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The tallest mountain of the Violetglory Star was located near the center of the two main factions' territories and was called Mount Starsight. Its peak even extended beyond the layer of violetstar clouds above, reaching millions of meters high, which made it even taller than the Azurecloud Divine Tree.

The Observatory was built upon that mountain and was famous for being a place where duels to the death were carried out. It was a sacred arena to the Violetglorians much in the same fashion as the Infernal Dragon Purgatory of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. In fact, it had even more prestige as it was recognized by everyone, regardless of faction. Not just anyone could fight there, and most people wouldn't even be able to get a spot in the audience. But today, the entire place was filled with people before the main fighters had even arrived.

The crowd was divided into north and south sections. One side was occupied by the Violetcloud Alliance, while the other was occupied by the Divineglory Alliance. The cultivators of Mystgod Pavilion, for instance, sided with the imperium and rooted for Tianming. Both sides were hostile toward each other and itching to fight, despite the normally peaceful and refined nature of Violetglorians.

"The Violetcloud Imperium has arrived!" someone cried. Others made way so the escort could send Tianming to the Observatory. Tianming was shocked to see so many people there to witness the battle. It was far more full than the Violetcloud Battlefield in the wondersky realm had been!

"What in the world? Since when was I so famous? Or are the Violetglorian weaklings just ignorant?" Ying Huo said with its beak agape.

"Maybe Ye Chen and I just so happen to represent the two greater factions of the Violetglory Star. I represent the totemancers with my nine totems, while he's made his name among the countless peoples of the astralscape," Tianming said. While they probably wouldn't individually draw such a huge audience, the powers that backed them would—it was an indirect clash between titans. The people that came weren't only there to see Tianming fight Ye Chen, they wanted to see the imperium take on the dynasty! It was a clash between the two great alliances, one part in a long string of conflicts that stretched back millions of years.

At the end of the day, Tianming was a hired gun, and he made sure to be aware of his situation. "If I lose, I'll have to accept their criticism and disappointment." He had already been paid by the imperium to represent them, so losing now would greatly impact his right to claim cultivation resources. He was all too aware of where he was coming from. After all, he hadn't been born in the imperium and their prestige had nothing to do with him, nor did he have a grudge against the dynasty.

Eventually, they arrived. Tianming stepped into the crowd and descended into the ancient arena without a word.

Chapter 1566 - You Are Pigs

The moment Tianming showed up, the spectators cried so loudly that even the violetstar clouds above were disturbed by the sheer sound. His name was chanted nonstop, almost deafening even him. Looking around, he saw countless people were focusing their attention on him. It was completely overwhelming. They weren't mere statistics; every one of them shot him a complex look. Some were fervently passionate, while others were pensive or cold. There were also those that were crazy about him.

"The people are a wave, while I'm just a drop of water. Even so, the moment I rise above the wave, everyone's attention turns to me!" Tianming had been pushed onto a pedestal. Without the two main factions of the Violetglory Star vying for supremacy, his existence wouldn't matter. For instance, he'd had no such match on Orderia.

"Since that's the case, I should face this with all I have. The very least I can do is to make the people who support me happy! That's half of the people on the southern hemisphere of this star."

He would do his duty as a piece on the game board. With his mind made up, he had no more reservations as he had all of his lifebound beasts appear alongside his totems. Xian Xian's tree took root on the battlefield. He had also reclaimed the two million Yin Chen copies from Myriadmile City for this fight and spread them across the battlefield. Lan Huang ran between the mountains to warm up, while Meow Meow was still asleep on one of the peaks. Ying Huo opened its wings wide to show off its magnificent plumage before turning toward Qingyu and saying, "Yue Yue, look closely at your darling Chicken Bro show off!"

Even though many had seen the nine godswords before, shocked gasps could still be heard. "With an audience like this, it'd be a waste not to show myself off to make it more convenient for me to ask for treasures!"

Tianming's laughter charged the atmosphere in an instant. Beyond the violetstar clouds above were many cultivators of the dynasty with cold expressions on their faces. As Ye Chen hadn't arrived yet, they kept their cool, knowing full well that he was someone that had proved himself in the Astraldome.

"I heard Ye Chen say that Lin Feng wouldn't be his match in real life after the fight in the wondersky realm."

"His real name's Li Tianming."

"I don't care about the name. That's just a label. What I want to know is whether he's aware of Ye Chen's rapid growth in recent months. He's still so arrogant."

"If he doesn't it'll make this all the more exciting!"

"That would make for a good show."

"Look. What's Li Tianming doing?"

People began to chatter when Tianming's nine totems split into countless providence swords, all of which exuded powerful sword ki. Then, they were arranged to display a few words: 'You Are Pigs'. The cultivators from the imperium blew up. It was a childish provocation, but those of the dynasty's alliance felt insulted by the ignorant genius. Waves of cold smirks washed over Tianming.

"What an ignorant fool. He can't compare to Ye Chen at all in terms of character."

"Whoever said they could? It's clear that he's just some lowlife."

"How childish, he's like a three-year-old...."

As much as they pretended not to be offended, they had to suppress the urge to slap Tianming on the face. Regardless, the Violetcloud Alliance was all too humored by that provocation and waves of laughter came from behind Tianming. Perhaps this childish provocation lightened the mood and made Tianming seem down-to-earth, which was exactly what Tianming had wanted to do. He was here with an entertainment mindset; since his benefactors had placed their bets on him, he would ensure that they felt their money was well spent.

"Hey, what's with all the messing around?" Ying Huo asked.

"I want them to get angry and desire my loss. I'll let them look down on me, only for them to realize later that they can't even deal with me. That'll make them even more mad and please my benefactors more so that they're looser with their wallets," Tianming said.

"You're shameless," Xian Xian said.

"Say that again and you're gonna skip a meal."

"Why... Master Li, let Xian Xian give you a back massage!" Xian Xian relented the moment food was brought up.

The words he had formed with his totems still remained in formation as he joked around with his lifebound beasts, much to the ire of the other side.

"Where's Ye Chen?"

"Go, quick!"

"Dammit! Is this some kind of power move? Ye Chen should've been here before Li Tianming!" More and more people began speaking ill of Ye Chen; challengers should at least arrive before the people they challenge.

"Ye Chen, quickly come and deal with this trash!"

They were getting angrier as Tianming changed the words to display 'Ye Chen is a dog'. Those in the Violetcloud Alliance laughed at the juvenile provocation.

"This Tianming kid is too cute."

"Yeah. It's childlike, sure, but in a fun, teasing way."

Tianming was gaining fangirls by the moment; there was no downside to looking good. Ye Chen's late arrival only gave Tianming the opportunity to unleash more and more mockery. Fortunately, the dynasty's army arrived with even more fanfare than the Violetcloud Imperium had. There was no way they didn't know about Tianming's antics, so they hurried up even more.

"Make way!"

Without any grand announcement, a youth clad in white descended into the arena with a loud rumble as the crowd watched. Ye Chen's expression was blank. He looked at the words in the air, then at Tianming, still obscured by the misty clouds, and helplessly smiled. "You're so immature."

Everyone kept their eyes wide open, but they weren't impatient. This was a grand battle that had been building up in hype for a long time. At the very least, the combatants should be given the chance to air their grievances before the fight, which should last around three hundred bouts, right? Yet, nobody would expect that Tianming's nine thousand providence swords would come slashing down the moment Ye Chen had appeared, turning into waves of boundless sword ki.

Chapter 1567 - The Savage Are Silent

Thousands of swords came flying downward in a carpet-bombing fashion. "Huh?!" Ye Chen hadn't thought that Tianming would strike so swiftly. He was only stunned for an instant and quickly reacted, using his tough body to evade and summoning all five of his lifebound beasts. They used their fire, lightning, poison, and other abilities to neutralize the Myriadsword Providence.

Black lightning streaked across the battlefield as a black phoenix soared toward the clouds. Then, out of a screen of black flames, a black qilin came charging. There was also a black squid with thousands of arms, a huge broodmother type flesh-eating insect, and a crimson-black man-eating flower. All five beasts had made their entrance, and they were all fierce and on a higher power level. Even so, Ye Chen still seemed a little haggard despite having dodged most of the totem swords, and some of them had harmed his beasts as well. First blood had been drawn before the battle had even truly started.

"Come on, you won't even greet me before the fight?" Ye Chen's expression turned cold as he flipped his hand and summoned his halberd, the Grand Godless Liberty. The pure white weapon fit the divine image Ye Chen projected as he descended from the skies, yet the five demonic lifebound beasts greatly contrasted against his sacred appearance. Even so, the audience members of the Divineglory Alliance still gave Ye Chen their unrelenting, unwavering support.

"Crush him!" This was the view of half of all Violetglorians, even those who were watching broadcasts back home.

"Li Tianming is truly shameless!"

"That bastard!"

Curses were directed at Tianming nonstop, though that didn't stop him from attacking. His eyes turned even colder as he wielded the Grand-Orient Sword, charging in with his totems and lifebound beasts.

"Go!" With his order, all of his beasts and totems charged in with him. He didn't want to give Ye Chen even the slightest opportunity to say pointless things.

Ye Chen furrowed his brows, sensing the power coming from Tianming. This was a duel he couldn't afford to lose, so he immediately used two trump cards. First, he fused his lifebound beasts to form the Chaos Dijiang, a beast with the legs of the qilin, the body of the broodmother insect, three pairs of phoenix wings, the head of the man-eating flower, and the tail of the black squid.

He also manifested his true guardian spirit, a representation of the Unfettered Astralord that overlaid his body. It was as if the Unfettered Astralord himself had descended upon them, wielding the Grand Godless Liberty like a true god of the stars! He had grown at least three levels higher since the time they dueled in the wondersky realm, a sign that he had done everything he could to improve. He was now at his peak performance.

"I said that I was far more powerful in real li—"

Before he could finish, Tianming's next move interrupted him. He summoned the pandemonium and cyclic constellations. This was Tianming's true peak. The imperial star shone brightly above the battlefield as the taiji diagram on the ground revolved, completely suppressing Ye Chen's unfettered constellation. The cyclic constellation was like a whirlpool sucking in totem ki, causing the providence swords to be sucked inside it and power it up. At the same time, Tianming's five strands of grade-seven

sword ki gathered in the Grand-Orient Sword, making it look far more powerful than the version inside the wondersky realm. Back then, Tianming's sword had been shattered by the Grand Godless Liberty, but that couldn't possibly happen in the real world!

Tianming's dominance was on full display, proof that he was fully capable of matching Ye Chen. The cultivators in the Divineglory Alliance were all speechless; the two constellations had completely overwhelmed Ye Chen's own. As Ye Chen wasn't a solarian yet, his constellation still played an important role.

"Wait, did Li Tianming even use his constellation in the wondersky realm?" one of Tianming's supporters wondered. They watched as Tianming formed the core of the formation with his lifebound beasts while his cyclic constellation interacted with his totems. The separate components synergized with each other to generate shocking destructive power. Just with the constellations alone, Tianming had forced Ye Chen and the Chaos Dijiang to a corner.

First, the abilities of his lifebound beasts rained down. Ying Huo's Solar Explosion mixed with Xian Xian's Demise Greenloti as both these abilities bombarded down. The Chaos Dijiang's flower mouth opened as it roared and charged forward. After fusing together, the beast seemed invincible, and its separate components could still use their respective abilities. But not even it could hold its ground when Tianming's beasts, totems, and constellations launched all-out attacks on it.

The providence swords swept past like a torrential wave, causing blood to fall like rain. Lan Huang came ramming from the flank, its heads biting into the insect body and the flower head as it used its mass to knock its foe down. Then Xian Xian's Radiant Vines came wrapping all around, coupled with its Bloodrain Swords, the explosions of which generated clouds of bloody droplets.

Naturally, the Chaos Dijiang's toxic fog, lightning, and flames also did some damage, especially its many tentacle tails that turned Ying Huo completely black with toxic ink. Yin Chen quickly turned into a gigantic silver centipede and wrapped around the Chaos Dijiang to save Ying Huo.

The pesky phoenix, now angered, used its wings to execute the Ninedragon Tribulation, targeting the fusion beast's rear and drawing much black blood. It smelled so bad that even Ying Huo felt like it was about to faint.

Though the battle was chaotic, Tianming clearly held the upper hand. He used his providence swords and the Grand-Orient Sword to push Ye Chen ever closer to danger! With each slash, practically the entire star shook from the shocked exclamations of the audience. Since the battle had started, Tianming had been dominating Ye Chen!

Chapter 1568 - One Move to End It

Tianming's dominance was the terrifying truth, yet Ye Chen found it hard to believe. Not just him, nobody from the audience on both sides could believe what they saw. This wasn't the outcome they had predicted.

"Wasn't he looking like a hotshot? Why doesn't he just beat Tianming back?"

They felt like they were about to puke. All of their expressions turned dark, but Ye Chen's was the darkest of them all. He had considerably grown in recent times, and triumphed in the Astraldome, yet

not a single opponent so far had given him so much pressure right from the start of battle. The two constellations alone made it hard for him to even catch a breath.

Tianming was a dual cultivator of lifebound beasts and totems. That was the fatal gap that Ye Chen lacked. With Ye Chen's own beasts unable to take care of Tianming's, the totems became an utter nightmare. This was something most people didn't understand, either. Tianming's totems were the flashiest parts of him and a sign of his talent, yet they often ignored the fact that his beasts were just as hard to deal with. Yin Chen, for instance, was much stronger out here than in the wondersky realm, being able to shift between different insect forms. Many locusts chewed their way straight into the Chaos Dijiang's body, much to the horror of those watching. Ye Chen had come to the battle filled with confidence, but Tianming had instantly disrupted his rhythm and hadn't even given him a chance to speak.

"If this goes on, I'll just be a stepping stone for him, a laughable joke." Ye Chen had never considered the consequences of such an outcome. He took a deep breath to calm down and made a choice. "Rise, Chaos Deity!" It was his final trump card, and one that he thought he would never have to use, but he had no other choice. The Chaos Dijiang swallowed Ye Chen into its mouth, much to the shock of the audience; there had been no precedent of lifebound beasts eating their beastmaster. The next instant, the beast began to change form, contorting into a form with ultimate potential.

Tianming was shocked to see the metamorphosis. In a few breaths' time, the bestial form of the beast shifted into a more humanoid appearance, seemingly fitting itself around Ye Chen. Even the Archaionfiend, distantly related to the spectral progenitors, was shocked to see something so out of this world. A humanoid giant appeared in front of Tianming, smaller than the Chaos Dijiang, but tougher. Each of the beasts' unique characteristics were still present. Even the Grand Godless Liberty seemed to have grown in size. Tianming had thought that this half-man-half-beast was a gigantic specter werebeast of sorts. Ye Chen now controlled it and even had access to its abilities. Though it was disgusting, it was powerful without a doubt. Ye Chen exuded an ancient, savage aura, making him look like a yaksha demon. The spear in his hand looked like a fishing trident, ugly yet terrifying.

"Now that's impressive." Tianming was quite surprised by this sudden change. "Whatever it is, I'll kill it all the same." He didn't let its sudden appearance dampen his fighting spirit, and his lifebound beasts were just as pumped as he was. Now that the enemy was a bigger target, it would only make coordinating attacks against it even easier.

"Keep going!" Naturally, their fusion also made them stronger, but Tianming hadn't even gone all out yet. He welcomed the onslaught of the Chaos Deity as the audience cheered.

"Come! Let's end the fight in one move!" The Chaos Deity executed a divine art with its spear and gigantic body with absolute destructive potential all while using abilities with all four of its limbs. Even the audience section rumbled from the sheer power, with many people there shocked to the point of crying. Comparatively, Tianming and his beasts were much more pleasing to the eye.

"Come get it!" The little army clashed with the gigantic humanoid monster, with the providence swords in front, Tianming in the middle, and his lifebound beasts all around him. The Grand-Orient Sword couldn't wait to expunge all the sword ki it had gathered as Tianming blended Fienddragon Blood Transience in with the other five moves; he was using Sixdragon Tribulation! The move by itself was

already powerful enough, but coupled with Exaltation, Abyss thrust, Fireblast, Sacrifice, and the other moves, as well as the sword formation of the providence swords and the sword ki, the combined attack grew ever closer to the pinnacle of perfection, not to mention pressure from the two constellations!

"Die!" With the totems paving the way and taking the brunt of Ye Chen's attack, the combined attack ushered countless dragons in a charge toward the Chaos Deity!

"Attack, my siblings!" Ying Huo led the charge from the sky, while Meow Meow stuck to attacking from blind spots. Lan Huang used its Primordial Wheel to deflect the abilities of the enemy before crashing straight into the chest. Then countless black roots emerged from the arena to stop the Chaos Deity from retreating. Countless Yin Chens also swarmed around the Grand Godless Liberty.

Tianming, surrounded by swords, gathered all the astral force and sword ki he could muster and uttered a booming war cry as he closed the distance. The Chaos Deity used Unfettered Wandering, Decide, only for the providence swords to disrupt its astral force. Tianming then came from the front while Ying Huo came from the top, slamming its wings against the Chaos Deity's head as it was attacked simultaneously from all directions. With a loud boom, flesh and blood went flying. The Chaos Deity was blasted apart into five beasts and one person, all of them lying in a pool of their own flesh and blood without the slightest movement.

Nobody could tell whether or not they were still alive. The only thing that was clear was that Ye Chen had lost. The white-haired youth retracted his providence swords, an action that made it look like thousands of swords were piercing his body as the totems returned to their bane-rings. Now, it seemed that he was the only one left standing in the arena, while the other—who was just as shockingly talented—laid at his feet, completely bloodied, creating a stark contrast that was etched in the minds of those who witnessed this scene. They would never forget this for the rest of their lives. The entire star was so dead silent that it almost seemed that the nova source world itself had stopped revolving.

Chapter 1569 - The Arrogant Shall Fall

The battle that should have lasted three hundred bouts didn't take place. Instead, it wasn't even on the same level as the exchange of blows they'd had in the wondersky realm. From the very start, Ye Chen had been dominated nonstop. Even after using his Chaos Deity, he was still hopelessly crushed! This was completely mind-crushing for someone as confident as he was. It wasn't just Ye Chen that suffered the feelings of defeat, half of the audience felt like Tianming's providence swords had pierced them in the heart, whether they were watching it live in the Observatory or through broadcasts. Their eyes were about to pop out as they speechlessly watched the scene unfold, clutching their hands tight.

Tianming took a deep breath and looked ahead at the countless people from the Divineglory Alliance staring at him. There were too many despairing, awkward, and aghast stares being sent in his direction. Not a single one of them could hide the look of defeat on their faces. Their conceptions of Tianming and Ye Chen were immediately distinguished from one another. The two used to be on the same level, like binary stars orbiting each other. Yet now one was clearly below the other. The draw between them was old news!

The silence continued for a little longer before the spectators in the Violetcloud Alliance broke it with booming cheers, cheers so loud that the violetstar clouds above shook. Even Tianming's hair and robes fluttered from the sheer sound of his name being chanted by billions of people. Waves of fog swarmed

toward him; it was faith he had received from the Violetglorians for the very first time. Though it was minuscule, it was still a start. Once it began, the rest of the way would be much easier! This marked the first step he had taken to become a world god of a foreign world. The only thing he lacked was people kneeling at his feet to outright worship him.

"This feeling is amazing! It almost makes me want to experience it for life!" He instantly felt a wave of relaxation wash over him. Even though they had won the battle of Myriaddragon Mountain, the sun emperor was still far too powerful. Tianming's presence was only a minor inconvenience for him, even to the point that he had to escape and come to the Violetglory Star. But when he finally triumphed over Ye Chen, he had finally paved a way for his own rise. Looking at his defeated rival and the dispirited onlookers, he felt his passion burn. His ambitions began growing to a new peak.

Facing those from the Divineglory Alliance, he thumped his chest and yelled, "There was only one draw! In the future, none of you will be able to look at me with your heads raised!"

This was a provocation that shook the entire world. Even many on the Violetcloud Alliance's side were shocked by his wild arrogance, but that was his right as the undisputed victor! So many immediately cheered even louder. There were few, if any, who could make such bold proclamations! The ones on the opposing side began grimacing even more.

"Don't get too cocky! The arrogant shall fall!" But before many of them got their words out, Tianming had already turned away and left to join the elites of the Violetcloud Imperium with his lifebound beasts. They afforded him the best protection anyone could ever have. Only the sovereign and his direct subordinates could be allowed to go near Tianming.

"We return victorious!" Shengui spiritedly said with his thumb raised in praise. The people made way for their cohort, watching them with excited gazes of admiration as the millions from the imperium left. It hadn't felt like a fight between juniors at all, but one between sovereigns, and it was a fight that wasn't even close. There was a clear winner and loser.

Amidst the sea of despair was Princess Shen Yu in her violet and white dress that was so long it dragged along the ground. People began turning to her and saw her destitute expression. She clutched her dress with both hands, as if her pride had been completely trampled on and let out an ear-piercing sigh. This single loss had wiped out all the prestige Ye Chen had obtained, causing his reputation to fall by leagues. It was something that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Those of the dynasty retrieved Ye Chen. Even as he regained consciousness, he didn't get to see Tianming again, but based on the looks of the people around him, it was clear that he had completely lost. He took a deep breath as waves of pain, despair and feelings of hardship washed over him. He had never imagined that such a day would come to him since he got the Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts.

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In a long, dark corridor lit only at the end by starlight, Ye Chen dragged his feet along, holding his body up against the wall. He was covered in sword wounds and there were still remnants of sword ki left in his body, making it hard for him to even move. Looking up, he saw a long, floor-touching dress covered in violet stars. Her silhouette seemed to stand out in the darkness. Though it was a familiar sight, some

part of it looked distant and foreign to him. It was as if it was hard for him to approach as she walked faster and faster away.

"Can't you help me along?" Ye Chen said with a dry cough.

"Oh, alright. I thought you wouldn't need it." Princess Shen Yu stopped and turned back, her eyes narrowing just the slightest bit when she saw him. The Ye Chen she had always known was a shining figure of brilliance. This desolate, haggard look was something that made him look really foreign. The two of them now seemed like strangers to one another. She held him up and said, "Come on, we're almost there."

"Wanwan, I only lost once. It isn't a big deal, right? Do you need to be so obvious about it?" Ye Chen said, his eyes reddening.

"I'm not! What part of me is obvious? Don't be so sensitive," she said with a helpless tone.

"I'm sensitive, eh.... It's one thing for people to change the way they look at me, but if you're doing that too, I don't think there's a point anymore...."

"But I'm not! You... forget it. I'm not here to argue with you. Calm down, I'll weather this hardship together with you."

"Alright... let's go." He didn't want to say any more. Things that he had no rightful claim to would always be lost once problems arose, even if he'd defied fate to obtain them. Nothing was as ideal as he had imagined it to be.

Chapter 1570 - Pentarchy of the Astral Archclans

The two of them entered a grand hall that was a little too brightly illuminated that it hurt the eyes. Ahead was a man in a crown and astral gown, looking down on them. The divinespring in his chest shone so bright that it was hard for those in front of him to look up.

"Ye Chen, how do you feel?" said the man in a deep voice.

Ye Chen took a deep breath and had the princess loosen her hold on him. "I encountered my destined rival. Thanks to my recent explosive growth, I also began to underestimate my enemy. I'd thought that he was insignificant at first, but now I see how lucky it was for me to have been able to face someone like him. I fully admit that this loss today is my fault, but I refuse to believe that it'll stay the same for the millennia to come. With a rival like that, I'm motivated to put in far more effort than I ever would've. As long as I haven't restored my honor, I shall not rest." He had pondered those words for quite a long time.

"Very well. You seem to be quite lucid about your situation. However, a price must be paid for your loss all the same. As long as you haven't reclaimed your honor, you shall endure public criticism. Even those of our dynasty shall look upon you with shame, understood?"

"Yes. This is only fair."

"At the end of the day, you're still far from your peak. Such a loss can only aid you. As for whether you'll forever remain beneath someone else's feet, it all depends on you."

"Yes, Sovereign! Perhaps I might even have found the key to open the gates of the Solar stage. That's what I gained from the battle," Ye Chen said, his eyes filled with passion.

"We'll talk more when you succeed. You're dismissed."

"Understood!"

"Shen Yu, stay back," said the man.

The princess started for a moment, then nodded in agreement. Ye Chen gave her one last look before leaving. He stood at the door for some time, and soon, the princess emerged. Her eyes seemed a little red as she slumped into his embrace the moment she left. "I'm sorry... my feelings were out of control, so I wasn't able to speak out for you. It won't happen again."

"It's not a big deal. I'm not a petty person like that. Let's go," Ye Chen said with a smile. He leaned against her shoulder as they walked along, though he turned back to look at the hall. There's no ounce of sentimentality at all, huh? It's nothing but transactions with them. If I win, they cheer. If I lose, they jeer.... When I win, she's Wanwan, and when I lose, she's Princess Shen Yu all of a sudden. Is this how all divineglorians are?

His mocking thoughts didn't show on his face. Either way, he had clearly seen everything. He thought he had found himself a home he could truly belong to, yet now it seemed he was just another contractor they could cast away without batting an eye.

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Tianming returned to Myriadmile City covered in glory. He had a feeling that he would be staying there for quite some time. This time around, he had found true stability. Among the crowd, he could see waves of people and bustling activity all across the city. It was on a much grander scale than the welcome parade he had received. It seemed that everyone from the Violetcloud Imperium was out to welcome him on the streets, the roofs, and in the sky. Deafening cheers rang out the moment he entered the city, filled with boundless passion and worship. His status within the imperium had risen yet again.

"Li Tianming!" they called out his name with zealous fervor.

"Welcome back, Hero!"

The crowds were so dense that Shengui even had to clear the way and get them to calm down. It was thanks to Ye Chen's miraculous achievements that Tianming's reputation had gained such a huge boost after the duel.

"The Goldseal Archclan congratulates you, Li Tianming!"

The battle had stunned all of the top clans in the imperium. The Goldseal Archclan was a top clan that had existed since ancient history, being one of the historic hegemony of the imperium. The other top clans also came to congratulate Tianming; only their patriarchs were absent from the fanfare.

Tianming had already gotten Yin Chen to gather information for him. The imperium had a five plus one power structure. The reason it was five plus one rather than six was because it was a combination of the

Pentarchy of the Astral Archclans with the newly risen Gong Prime Clan, which was also known as the Armstotem Clan. Sovereign Starfeather was from the Gong Prime Clan.

The reason for the distinction between the Gong Prime Clan and the rest was that the Pentarchy of the Astral Archclans, which included the Goldseal Archclan, were the true founders of the imperium. They had ruled over it for as long as people could remember, with successive sovereigns always coming from one of the five archclans. Even now, the majority of imperium subjects were in the faction of the Pentarchy.

The Gong Prime Clan were known as the Armstotem Clan, as their totems took the form of combat arms. They used to be one of the twenty-three great families subordinate to the five archclans and had a far smaller foundation and history compared to them, but they had begun rising in the past three hundred thousand years. Nearly half of all the sovereigns of the imperium during that time were from their clan, causing their influence to explosively grow in a relatively short timescale to the point that they rivaled the Pentarchy of the Astral Archclans in scale. Even putting aside the sovereign, the Gong Prime Clan would still rank among the top three clans in the imperium.

Feeling their hegemony challenged, the archclans of the Pentarchy formed a tight alliance, not allowing the Gong Prime Clan to join them and turn them into a hexarchy. Even so, their might and influence couldn't be passed off like nothing.

As the Violetcloud Imperium was a sect, in a sense, clans could exist within them. But when it came to legitimacy and authority, the Pentarchy still commanded most of it, not that the Gong Prime Clan cared for the empty title of archclan. In a way, it was like how the Sterling House of Fang had come to occupy a crucial role in the Archaion Sect despite not being the orthodox descendants of the sect's founding clan.

Naturally, the clans had different ways and attitudes to ruling. Though the Gong Prime Clan seemed to be enjoying relative prosperity during the reign of Sovereign Starfeather, they might come under huge pressure once the next sovereign wasn't from their clan. The old guard always stood unified against the new, after all. That was how Divineglory Dynasty differed from Violetcloud Imperium. There, power was passed down through a predefined dynastic lineage of divineglorians.

The world of sovereigns is truly wondrous. There can only be one sovereign in the imperium, and the next can only rise once the previous dies. Maybe that's because the Omnisentient Will of half a star can only sustain the existence of one sovereign.