

The Ages 971

Chapter 971 - Xenomemory Space

Yuxing Town was but a small place in the Divine Moon Realm, and the strongest resident there was a samsaran. So there was a limit to how much information Tianming could get. There weren't many there who were truly informed about the wider state of affairs of the Divine Moon Realm.

However, he was able to ascertain something: the Huiyue Clan of Huiyue City was one of the top clans on the moon. Huiyue City was among the largest cities as well, so the siblings' status was no doubt relatively high. Now that he knew that Ye Lingfeng and Qingyu were there, he should be able to find out more information about them from Huiye Shi.

He decided to head there and got a map before heading off in the direction of the city. On the way, he encountered a seventh-level life phase samsaran beastmaster and stopped him. Since the people of Yuxing Town didn't know much about the xenomemory space, he figured this well-dressed person who had seemingly high status should know more about it.

"Who are you and what do you want?" the middle-aged man asked cautiously.

"We just have a few questions. If you're willing to answer them, we'll give you something in return," Tianming said as he took out a tribulation artifact, of which he had more than plenty.

The man, seeing his sincerity and noting his strength, politely said, "Ask away, friend."

"Do you know where the xenomemory space is?"

"Is that really it?"

"Just answer the question."

"It's at the center of the core of the Divine Moon Realm."

"Within the stellunar source?"

"Yes, right at the center of the core is a place where the power of the stellunar source doesn't reach."

That meant Ye Lingfeng was still somewhere in the Divine Moon Realm. "Can normal people even reach it?"

"The divine moonrace controls the pathways to the center of the core, so only their elites are able to access it. The center of the stellunar source is a place with lots of chaotic forces and energy. Staying there for too long is really dangerous. They only go there for one purpose."

"What's that?"

"To banish criminals to the xenomemory space for eternity. It's akin to a death sentence." The beastmaster had a rather high cultivation, so he got straight to the important points.

"Where can the pathways be accessed?"

"From cities controlled by the divine moonrace."

"Is there one in Huiyue city?"

"There is," the man confirmed.

That happened to line up with Tianming's purposes. Though he had wanted to take his time to familiarize himself with the Divine Moon Realm, he had to hurry and get Ye Lingfeng out of trouble.

"I have one last question."

"Pray tell."

"What exactly is the xenomemory space? What's so special about it? Is it really impossible for anyone to escape it?"

"This... it's a most peculiar location, according to legend, so I only know vague generalities about it. I can't be sure that what I know is correct."

"It's enough that you tell me what you know."

"Alright. It's said to be the entrance to a completely different region of space that's twisted and malformed. There's all kinds of dangers lurking within it. It's basically a world in its own right. As far as I know, nobody has been able to leave it. It's also said that such an area exists in Orderia's core as well, and the same applies to other outpost stars. As such, they're naturally formed prisons. Some say that the region has something to do with the production of stellar and nova sources, as the moment the source vanishes, the linked space will also vanish."

"Why is 'memory' part of the name?" Tianming asked.

"It's said that the world inside is like a dream formed from the memories of the prisoners. Every thought within it can become reality, so it's like a dreamscape."

"Interesting. But if nobody has ever been able to escape, where'd all these rumors come from?"

"That's a question that I struggle to answer myself."

"Alright!" Tianming nodded. While he desired more information, he at least had some hope that Ye Lingfeng could be saved.

"Do you have a friend who was banished inside?"

"Are you sure that's a question you want to ask?" Tianming said, giving him a look.

"Apologies for my transgression."

"Here, take it!" Tianming handed it over as promised.

"Many thanks!" The man bowed before turning to leave, though before he went far, he said, "If you want to know more about that place, head to Huiyue City. The divine moonrace there should know more. After all, they just recently banished the Nightfiend there."

"Understood. Thanks!"

"You're welcome." The man proceeded to leave for good.

Tianming and Feiling were currently in a maple forest that gently glowed with the light of the moon. As far as they were concerned, this was a dreamscape to them.

The stellar source beneath them pulsed like a heart. It was like there was a gigantic volcano beneath them that let out wave after wave of energy, and Ye Lingfeng was at the center of it all.

"Looks like Feng's in much more trouble than we thought." Tianming seemed a little worried.

"Big Brother, he might not have given up yet. Let's see if we can help him by going to Huiyue City," Feiling said.

"Alright, let's go!" He resolutely turned to the city's direction. "Those two were forced to part and Feng only lived when Qingyu threatened suicide. That means we still have hope. But either way, the divine moonrace were the ones who forced them into this situation."

He recalled what Li Wudi said about being experimental subjects and the workings of fate. "What did he mean? Beastmaster and totems? Who did those experiments? No matter what, anyone that harms my family won't end up well."

The two of them headed toward Huiyue City, passing by many other brilliant cities and natural sights of the Divine Moon Realm. Finally, they saw a gigantic crescent moon-like megacity at the horizon. They were finally there.

"Big Brother, do we look for Huiye Shi right away?"

"Yes. We'll ask her about all we need to know." With the Latticeheart Curse, they would be able to easily get the answers they wanted.

Chapter 972 - Divine Moonrace of Huiyue City

Huiyue City was a megacity that had a long history of being ruled by the divine moonrace. The walls were near a hundred meters in height. While it wouldn't be considered a problem for larger lifebound beasts, someone on the scale of Tianming couldn't even get a good view of the city from outside the wall. Even after nearly breaking his neck by looking up, all he got to see were some guards.

This was the core of the Divine Moon Realm; the guards were at least fifth- or sixth-level samsarans and some supercentenarians were likely to be ascendants. The city had many gates, and Tianming and Feiling were in front of one of them. It was so large that they couldn't quite see the ends of the gate from left to right. The walls seemed to be made entirely from spirit ores and each brick had moving heavenly patterns, a sign that the city was defended by a divine-class protective formation.

"It's said that the Divine Moon Realm is defended by a spherical formation. That's the foundation of their security, and it can only be powered by a stellar source. The formation is only activated during wartime. I wonder how impressive it truly is."

Tianming saw the cloudy sky of the moon, but couldn't imagine a formation that could envelop the whole moon. Realizing that stellar sources weren't just able to nourish life and fuel cultivation, but fuel a formation as well, Tianming began realizing how important this source of energy was.

He spotted some elite figures flying directly into the city while most others had to enter from the gates. It looked like the entry controls were far stricter here than on the Flameyellow Continent. "They seem like they value a certain something."

"What is it?" Feiling asked.

"Order."

Normal people had to enter one by one without making any noise. Otherwise, they would be chased away. "Ling'er, didn't you learn Li Caiwei's Dreamdemon Arcana?"

"Yeah, I did."

"Then you should morph into an uglier form, otherwise you'll attract trouble," he said, rolling his eyes. Her aura was far too alluring, even on the Divine Moon Realm. While nobody at Yuexing Town had dared to mess with them, her looks would attract too much attention here. Tianming wanted to keep a low profile.

"Does this look bad enough?" Feiling asked after adjusting it a bit.

"A little more!"

"What about now?"

"Keep on going."

"I'm turning really ugly..."

"You're on your way there, but even after ten more times, you'd still be a looker."

"I'm sure you're just messing with me now." Hearing that, though, did make her feel good. The final transformation made her look like a pretty scion, but nothing more. That would allow them to pass the checkpoint without attracting any undue attention from the high-nosed guards.

Once they were inside, Tianming asked where the Huiyue Clan was and headed in that direction. Along the way, they took in the sights of the prosperity of the city.

"This city should glow at night. It'll surely look even more beautiful," Feiling said.

"That's right. By the way, did you notice something?" Tianming paid more attention to the people than the landscape.

"What is it?"

"Among humans, apart from the divine moonrace and rootbeast race, it looks like there's another type without totems or lifebound beasts. Those humans can cultivate even without lifebound beasts. I reckon they're the most basic form of humanity. Perhaps their bloodline is closer to the divine moonrace, or maybe even the celestial orderians."

"That seems to be the case."

They kept hurrying to find Huiye Shi, for they couldn't afford to dally on the matter of Ye Lingfeng's survival.

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Huiyue Palace took up nearly a third of the entire city. Even so, there was still a rather severe lack of space in their estate, due to the sheer density of people within the clan as a result of how prosperous it was. Even so, none of them were willing to leave and live in the wilderness.

The reason for that was simple: the distribution of the stellunar source. Different places had different levels of concentration. The Huiyue Clan had constructed their base at the location with the best concentration, then further boosted it with formations. As a result, the members of the Huiyue Clan would only grow stronger and stronger. Other, smaller cities only got far smaller allocations of stellunar source as the divine moonrace monopolized the resource, and the amount they got was dependent on a strict quota.

The Huiyue Clan had hundreds of ascendants above a century old, or thousands if you include those above a thousand years old. All of their newborn children wanted to cultivate at the best location possible. There were also many divine moonrace academies within the palace that guided the young clan members in their cultivation, and the ones in direct charge of the children were moon guides.

Liu Yizhao was a moon guide that taught at the Glowmoon Compound. Huiyue Yin and Huiye Shi were his students, and he was also the administrator of the Flameyellow Continent, a position which he only held in name and didn't have any real duties for. All he did was collect a paycheck for the title.

Today, he was teaching as usual. The students had just returned from gaining insights from the caeli at the divine moon hall, and Liu Yizhao was relaxedly answering their doubts and questions with a fan in hand. Soon, evening came and his class was over. The disciples of the Huiyue Clan bowed and thanked him before leaving.

At that moment, Liu Yizhao waved and said, "Huiye Shi, stay back and come with me."

"What is it, Moon Guide?" she asked, surprised. She had been horsing around with her fellow girlfriends moments before, so her hair and clothes were a little messy. She was filled with the vigor of a young girl.

"I have a little more pointers for your heavenly will to aid your progression to the Ascension stage. The others may leave."

"Yes, Moon Guide!"

"Alright..." Huiye Shi wasn't too happy about being held back. She turned to her friends and said, "Wait for me! I want to go to the cherry blossom bath too!"

"Don't worry, just work hard!"

The rest soon left. Liu Yizhao cleared his throat and walked past one cherry blossom tree after another to a cultivation room. When she followed him in, he said, "Close the door."

"Yes, Moon Guide." She closed the door and sat cross-legged on the ground.

Liu Yizhao stood behind her with a dark glint flashing across his eyes. Gently, he said, "Now, listen closely to my explanation.

"Hurry up!" She couldn't wait to go and have fun, and wasn't enjoying this personal tutoring session at all.

Standing behind her and looking down on the smooth, fair nape of her neck, he ogled her curves through her form-fitting dress. The rich vigor of youth coming from her body seemed to spread throughout the room. He took a deep breath and relished in it before he started his explanation. "The Ascension stage represents a fundamental change in a lifeform. It's an important milestone for every peak cultivator. Only by becoming an ascendant will one gain a divine body, divine soul and divine force. Only then can one free oneself from the moon's pull and begin their ascension toward the astralscape of order!"

All of that was common knowledge. Huiye Shi wondered with much annoyance why she even needed to hear it again.

"Next, all you need to do is understand the key for energy conversion. Doing so, you'll understand the divine body's cycle formation, as well as the transformation of the soul and body. All of that is crucial!" As he said that, he traced his finger across the back of her neck.

"What're you doing, Moon Guide?" Huiye Shi backed off from him and glared. She was incredibly sensitive to matters like this. Among Liu Yizhao's tens of concubines, many of them used to be his students. She was well aware of his antics and methods.

"What's wrong?" Liu Yizhao asked with a smile and his hands behind his back.

"Do you take me for a fool? Take your disgusting eyes off me. I am of the Huiyue Clan. How dare someone from the Liu Clan lust after me? Do you want my dad to kill you?!"

"Like how you plotted to kill your brother?" Liu Yizhao chuckled.

Huiye Shi was taken aback and her expression shifted. "What are you talking about?!"

"You know your parents didn't look deeper into this because they trust you. If word of this gets out, it'll be over for you. I'm sure you don't need me to remind you of just how strict the rules of your clan are."

"You're just making things up!" Feeling a little panicked, she immediately darted out.

"You know, it'll feel good if you go along with it. There's no need to resist and ruin it for yourself. You're still young, you know, so it'll be a shame."

Huiye Shi stopped and angrily glared at him. "Aren't you embarrassed? How could someone of your age pull something like this?! If I expose you, it's over for you too!"

"Then do you have proof? With what I have on you, I can make you obey me for life. I'm not really picky about my methods, you know." He was dead set on devouring her. "You're free to put up a fight. I always like the young ones a little feisty."

He continued approaching her as she backed off. She couldn't think of anything she could do to get herself out of this situation.

Right then, someone knocked on the door. "Who is it?!" Liu Yizhao snapped.

"Shishi, stop cultivating! The person you were waiting for is here! It's Li Tianming! He's waiting for you outside!" a girl said.

"I'll be right there! I'll be taking my leave, Moon Guide!" Huiye Shi took the chance to open the door.

"Come back tonight. We need to make up for this lesson," he said with a furrowed brow. The moment he said that, she was gone. "Li Tianming, eh... That name sounds familiar."

Though, he couldn't quite place who it was. "Whatever. She may have escaped this time, but let's see if she's able to keep doing so."

He cracked a smile and looked at his finger. "Ah, young ones are great! How supple and firm her skin is!"

Chapter 973 - The Fiend Under the Cherry Blossom Tree

Huiyue Palace was an impressive sight. The guards were fully armed and armored, with a crescent moon insignia on their breasts. They stood in a neat line, and were mostly of the divine moonrace. Some had their totems out as they patrolled the skies. From the entrance, the palace compound looked just like a paradise, especially with the clouds, moonlight, cherry blossoms, and pristine white and pink walls.

Though the guards put up a threatening front, they mellowed considerably when Tianming mentioned Huiye Shi's name. They knew that Feiling was an ascendant and felt that Tianming's aura was also rather impressive, so they didn't throw their weight around too much. They just asked them to wait as they entered to make the report.

Soon, Tianming saw Huiye Shi running toward him with a blissful expression. When she spotted Feiling beside him, she immediately pouted. "Huh? Old vixen? You seem... uglier? Hmmm, I guess your age is catching up to you."

"Stop messing around and come with us. I have something to ask you," Tianming said.

"Where are we going?"

"Anywhere will do."

"Then let's go inside to my room," she said with a shy smile, then turned to Feiling. "You know you want to."

"Do that again and I'll beat you up," Feiling snapped furiously.

"Haha..." She even dared to poke her tongue out. Then again, following her inside wasn't the worst idea. The palace was the best place on the entire moon for cultivating, after all. If they could gain access to the divine moon hall, they'd definitely make rapid breakthroughs.

Right after they entered, Huiye Shi suddenly recalled what had just happened. "Hey, I think we have trouble!"

"What is it?"

"I don't know how Liu Yizhao did it, but he figured out what happened to my brother! Now, he's lusting after my young, nubile body and using that to threaten me! Tianming, you forced me to do it, so you'd better take responsibility," she said in a manufactured pitiful tone of voice.

"You're still singing your own praises at a time like this?" Tianming was impressed.

"Hehe, that's called being cute."

Tianming and Feiling exchanged glances at the sheer wonder of how weird she was.

"So what do I do?"

"Just satisfy him then. It won't be a problem then, right?"

"Hmph, you're heartless."

"Or kill him."

"Nonsense. He can crush me with two fingers."

"Leave that aside for now. I have other questions for you."

"Alright!" She continued leading the way to her private quarters.

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As night fell, a relaxing breeze blew through the pavilions of the Glowmoon Compound. The blooming cherry trees and tall walls glowed faintly under the moonlight. Liu Yizhao had drunk quite a bit and was feeling a little tipsy. He lay against his chair and opened his arms, waiting for the young bunny to crawl into his embrace.

All of a sudden, he seemed to turn a little angry. It seemed that someone had come. The liquor he'd been drinking had been brewed with the finest spirit herbs using a complicated process. Rather than alcohol, it was more like a spirit potion that was so potent that it slightly dulled his consciousness.

He opened his arms and smiled as he said, "Come, sit down! Let daddy see how impressive you are!"

Even though there was no response, the atmosphere suddenly turned cold. Almost immediately, it felt like billions of ghouls had assailed his body. He immediately snapped open his eyes and gasped, his gaze and moustache shuddering at the sight of the white-robed man before him. The man was pale, sickly, and completely hairless. However, there were thousands of stars within his pale-white eyes. He looked just like a saint, but his savage aura made him seem like he was perpetually surrounded by countless vengeful wraiths. It was a fiend that stood atop a sea of blood. A single look was enough to send a chill down Liu Yizhao's spine.

"Bodhi!" He recognized him immediately. It was someone he hadn't bothered with and had almost forgotten, yet that person had come to the Divine Moon Realm and was right before him. The instant he realized his intruder's identity, he was forced to his knees by a terrifying force.

Immediately, Liu Yizhao summoned his totems, but he didn't think Bodhi would be so savage. Almost immediately, he gripped Liu Yizhao's shoulder and pulled on his right arm with force, plucking it from his body.

"Aaaaaaagh!" His eyeballs were about to pop out as his body twitched. Yet, strangely, his shriek didn't seem to have disturbed the relative peace of the pavilion at all. Bodhi had ensured that not a single sound would be able to leak out. For that to be possible, it meant Bodhi's power was a few leagues above Liu Yizhao's.

Liu Yizhao recalled that Bodhi was at the fourth level at best, and couldn't even defeat Huiyue Yin. Terror, fear, and disbelief immediately filled his mind as he watched Bodhi crush all four totem bane-rings on his severed arm with a cold, disdainful look.

"No, it's impossible... You were on a dying planet! How could you have gotten so much power?!"

Bodhi was far stronger than the other specters. Once, Liu Yizhao had made Bodhi kneel, but now Bodhi was holding his lifeless arm and toying with it like a clown.

"Don't kill me, I beg you! Spare me! You win!" Liu Yizhao yielded fast. Even without his totems, as long as he lived, he would still have a modicum of power, although he would be no different from a normal human. But once he was dead, he would have nothing.

"I have a question for you," Bodhi said with a tragic expression.

"Ask away!"

"Who else but you knows that I'm here?" he asked.

"If I tell you, will you spare me?"

"I won't, but at least you'll die a more pleasant death."

Liu Yizhao despaired.

"Little You, come," Bodhi said, waving. A girl came walking out from a corner.

"Daddy." As she approached, countless hairs sprouted from her body. By her third step, she had turned into a gigantic white wolf. The sight of that was so shocking that Liu Yizhao couldn't even say a word. He watched as the wolf devoured his severed arm bite by bite.

"If you tell me, you won't be eaten like that. I'll give you a short moment to decide," Bodhi said plainly.

"Bodhi! I can tell you a secret. It relates to the truth of the slaughter of the specters. If I tell you who the real culprit is, will you spare me?" Liu Yizhao begged with tears and snot flowing from his face.

Chapter 974 - Heart of the Divine Moonrace

"The truth?" Bodhi stared intensely at Liu Yizhao. His pale lips twitched slightly as he asked, "I've asked around. You received word of the death of that youth, Huiyue Yin, in the mortal world. After that, you accompanied his parents to kill the specters for revenge. There's nobody else. I only gave you a chance to speak to confirm the facts."

"No, that's far from the truth! I'm the only one who knows what's up, so if you kill me, all those specters would've died in vain!" Liu Yizhao was desperately clinging to his only lifeline.

"Then tell me."

"Spare me first, and we'll talk." Liu Yizhao's tears flowed uncontrollably. He was like a helpless chicken waiting to be slaughtered.

"Huh, there aren't that many people on the Flameyellow Continent. I can easily find out what I need to know. In fact, I can just go to Huiyue Du and Yusheng Luo for answers." As Bodhi spoke, the wolf's saliva kept on dripping onto the ground.

Though Liu Yizhao wanted to say something else, Bodhi kept hammering his fists into his body like he would a sandbag, breaking every bone and organ within. Even though he didn't outright die from the hits, he wouldn't last long. He wallowed in endless despair. When Bodhi tossed him to the ground, he slumped and flopped like a dead fish. He looked up to Bodhi, who now looked like the king of all things evil. The darkness and despair of the world seeped into every fiber of his being. He took a deep breath as death crept toward him. Even as he struggled to breathe in, he couldn't stop his life from seeping away.

"Little You, eat him. Take your time. He won't die too quickly with his divine body," Bodhi said.

The wolf yelped and licked its snout. It opened its mouth and let its saliva drip on Liu Yizhao.

"If... if I tell you the real culprit... can you end this quickly?" He no longer expected to be spared; he only wanted the torture to end.

"Sure."

"It's Huiyue Du's daughter... Huiye Shi. You've met her. She plotted against her brother... and blamed the specters for it, making her parents lose their senses..." More blood gurgled out of Liu Yizhao's mouth.

"She isn't powerful enough to pull something like this off, right?" Bodhi did remember the girl, so the main actors of the show lined up with his expectations. He knew that this was the truth, as he had made sure to instruct Yi Jun and the rest not to touch a single hair of the siblings.

"Maybe... there is... another ascendant... Flameyellow..."

"I see. I guess that leaves two more heads to claim. One shall be Huiye Shi's, and the other her accomplice's," Bodhi said, smiling.

"Now... end it quickly," Liu Yizhao pleaded.

"You'd want that, wouldn't you?" Bodhi said. The white wolf proceeded to nibble away at Liu Yizhao, causing him to howl in searing pain.

"Bodhi! How dare you not keep your word?!"

"Not keep my word? Did you keep yours when you slaughtered my kin?" He smiled, still seeing Liu Yizhao through the gigantic wolf's fangs. "This grudge that has been built up over two hundred millennia... I'd initially just planned to kill all of the divine moonrace, but now I want all of them to die the same death you're suffering! The results are the same, but the details lie in the process."

Bodhi smiled as he cried tears of blood. He watched as Liu Yizhao struggled and suffered, wallowing in despair as he was devoured. When it was finally over, he hugged the gigantic wolf, wiping his tears on its fur. "Little You, daddy's really lonely. You're the only one I have left in this world."

"Daddy..." The wolf turned back into the eight-year-old girl. She almost puked as she nestled against Bodhi.

"What's wrong?"

"I... I don't like this taste..."

"Then what do you like?"

"Grass. It tastes refreshing."

"After the debt of blood is paid, after you taste every single one of our enemies, I'll take you traveling around this world. How does that sound?"

"I'm looking forward to it," she said with a nod.

Bodhi hugged the girl tight, looking at the pool of blood on the ground. He knew the divine moonrace would definitely know of Liu Yizhao's death even if his corpse wasn't found, thanks to lifesoul stones. "We should kill at least ten more people so that nobody suspects it has to do with the specters. As for Huiyue Du and Yusheng Luo, we'll mix them in with the other victims. From now on, we'll start dying the entire Divine Moon Realm red."

The dreamy world was the very same one they loathed with a passion. "Huiye Shi, huh..."

Bodhi looked toward Huiyue Palace. His slaughter had just begun. Since the day the specters had returned, this was fated to happen. The only thing that changed was how cruel it would be.

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The place Huiye Shi stayed at was called the Shiyu Compound. She had close to peak status among the Huiyue Clan, so she didn't have to squeeze in with the others. However, the place was far too delicate and it wasn't a vast field, so Xian Xian and Lan Huang couldn't come out and play. Lan Huang remained in the lifebound space and vented by running back and forth, greatly disturbing Ying Huo and Meow Meow. The two, along with Xian Xian's spiritform, left the lifebound space to catch a breath.

Once Tianming and Feiling arrived, Huiye Shi snuck the two into her place. She pretended to ignore Feiling and kept making moves on Tianming as she showed him around her beautiful residence.

"Sit down and lay off the flirting," Tianming snapped, getting her to shut up and shrivel up.

Huiye Shi had only wanted to test out Feiling's reaction, but she noticed that Feiling had ignored all of her attempts. It felt really frustrating, much like punching the air. The two of them seemed too closely knit for her to pry apart.

"What's up then? You don't care if I live or die? Be careful, because if the moon guide rats you out, it's over for you too," she snapped.

"This is indeed troublesome, but I have something else I need to ask you first," Tianming said, anxious about Ye Lingfeng's predicament.

"What could be more important than this?!" She rolled her eyes in frustration.

As Tianming had her life in his hands, he wasn't afraid of telling her of Qingyu and Ye Lingfeng's relation to him. "Do you know how I can save the Nightfiend you guys banished to the xenomemory space?" he asked solemnly.

"Huh? Did I mishear what you just said?"

"Just answer me."

"How are you related to him?" She began to recall that the Nightfiend had come from the chaos skyjail on the Flameyellow Continent. Tianming was also from that same continent.

"He's my little brother."

"But you don't even share the same surname! Not to mention, he's a specter!"

After seeing the specters, Tianming did have his guesses that the infernal soul race were in fact an offshoot of the specter race. They could use the abilities of lifebound beasts, had tough physical bodies, and could utilize battle arts. Given the many varieties and bloodlines of specters, the infernal soul race was probably one of those branches, likely from a different line than Bodhi. Not to mention, Ye Lingfeng was probably far more unique than the rest.

"Let's just say we're sworn brothers, alright? Now, answer my question," he said, slamming the table to hurry her up.

"Huh, so does that mean you escaped from the chaos skyjail too?" she said as she stared at him with wonder.

"What's that?"

"It's the 'brain' of the Flameyellow Continent, that sealed area that nobody can enter. The one sealed up by the Canal of the Dead."

"That's called the chaos skyjail? Is there a reason it's called that?"

"I'm not too sure myself. I only know it's a unique place. There's probably fewer than ten such chaos skyjails that samsarans and above aren't able to enter. Nobody knows what secrets they hold. It's a designation that's been used since ancient times. Basically, it's a unique, but useless place."

Tianming committed it to memory. Even though he still had his doubts, his main focus now was Ye Lingfeng. Who knew what kind of pain or suffering he was enduring now? "Alright, forget the rest. Tell me how I can save my brother."

"Normally, you wouldn't be able to."

"I'm guessing you're going somewhere with this?"

"I heard that before every criminal is banished, they'll leave a drop of blood behind. Through it, the controller of the xenomemory space will be able to track them down. However, this is only a contingency. Basically, only heinous criminals are banished within, so nobody's needed to use that contingency before. I can't even be sure it's real. I'll ask my dad to confirm it tomorrow."

"Alright!" What Tianming feared the most was that there wouldn't be any hope. Now that there was at least a chance, he would do his best to bring about the result he wanted. "Where would the blood drop be stored?"

"Naturally, within the capital of the Divine Moon Realm, Divine Moon Skycity. It's located at the center of the Eightmoon Skycities and is the heart of the divine moonrace. Huiyue City ranks last among the Eightmoon Skycities. The other seven are all controlled by the other Eight Great Clans. The Huiyue Clan is one of the eight, naturally."

"Alright, we'll go there then," Tianming said to Feiling.

"Do you think you can just waltz in? It's the heartland of the divine moonrace and the territory of the Divine Moon Royals! Even though it's a huge place, those who aren't of the divine moonrace aren't even allowed to travel there!" she said, rolling her eyes.

"Is there any way I can enter, then?" Tianming asked.

"Well, there's one! Let me take your hand in marriage!" She patted her chest and laughed heartily.

Chapter 965 - Realm Lord, Sovereign Xi

"Is there something wrong with your brain?" Tianming tapped her on the head. She cried out in pain and teared up with grievance.

"You're too rough! I'm not lying!" She pouted, then added, "Though, I also like it rough."

"So you're saying I can go to Divine Moon Skycity if I become a clan member?" Tianming asked.

"Yes. That's the basic condition. You can become a member even without moonshine as long as you marry me!"

"Could you stop talking about marriage?" Tianming didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Fine, second question: who's in charge of the entrance to the xenomemory space?" Tianming asked.

"That's naturally the legend of our clan! The empress of our clan and the realm lord of the Divine Moon Realm. People call her 'Her Majesty Sovereign Xi'. She's the number one expert of our realm, and she even trained in Orderia when she was young. Her talent is unmatched, and she has a harem of three thousand handsome men. She's my idol!"

Huiye Shi was incredibly excited as she spoke, and continued jabbering on, "Did you know? I have the same taste and aesthetics as Sovereign Xi, we both like pretty guys! Every one of her concubines has city toppling beauty, and every... whatever, you don't care."

“Are you a queendom?” Tianming sighed. An emperor with three thousand concubines was a common sight; however, it was gender flipped here in the Divine Moon Realm.

“What? Do you look down on women? Is your mother not one?” Huiye Shi glared.

Tianming was stunned. He had just been expressing surprise.

“Don’t talk nonsense,” Tianming said sternly. “What I mean is can she find Ye Lingfeng in the xenomemory space using his blood?”

“Duh. She forced him in herself. Li Qingyu was discovered and sent to Orderia by her as well. Supposedly, she got large credit for this,” Huiye Shi said.

“Is that so?” Li Tianming frowned. “Do you think I could possibly request for her to save Ye Lingfeng?”

“How could you? The Nightfiend eats totems. Even the celestial orderian race thinks he’s a brewing disaster. If that nosy woman hadn’t used her life as leverage, how could he have lived? Exiling him was already a great mercy. Sovereign Xi was about to kill him before that nosy woman butted in and infuriated her!”

“Say ‘nosy woman’ one more time, I dare you.” Tianming glared.

Tianming had a rough idea of things. Ye Lingfeng did have a chance of escape, but it would be hard. The most important thing was the attitude of this ‘Sovereign Xi’.

However, executing Ye Lingfeng was most likely the direction of Orderia, and Sovereign Xi had to listen! Tianming knew that the likelihood of gaining her help was almost zero.

“Wow, so fierce! I feel so wronged,” Huiye Shi said melodramatically with a moving expression.

“Stop! I’ll ask the questions, and you answer!” Tianming wanted to whack her again.

“Hmph!”

“How does your Sovereign Xi take people from the xenomemory space? Don’t they say that place can’t be left?” Tianming asked.

“She has something called the xenomemory rope. As long as one end is outside and held by someone, she can enter deep inside. She’ll find the person using the drop of blood, then the person waiting outside will reel her out.”

“I hear the risk is great though. There’s the fear of the rope breaking, or the people outside messing around. If something happens, the empress will be stuck. Let me be blunt: it’s impossible to save Nightfiend. The whole celestial orderian race wants him gone forever because he’s a heresy that can suppress us.” Huiye Shi finally said the words deep in her heart.

“Would it work if I snatched the xenomemory rope?” Tianming asked her.

“Well, if you know how to use it? But who will pull you from the outside? And the most important bit is how will you snatch it? Sovereign Xi can slay you with one breath! You shouldn’t meet her anyway. No pretty guy she meets has ever been able to escape her.”

Tianming was clear now. "Got it. Ling'er." Tianming turned to her.

"What do we do?"

"Snatch the rope. Anyone who disagrees, we kill."

"That's all we can do. I just hope Little Feng can endure a while longer," Feiling said.

In the end, it was still about strength.

Huiye Shi was stunned to hear their words. She gaped at them, saying, "Are you two mad? No wonder you two can be together, you're both the same! This is the Divine Moon Realm, not your Flameyellow Continent! We're the divine moonrace! This is our territory, and Sovereign Xi is our number one expert—"

Tianming was too lazy to care about her. "Based on what you know, how long can Ye Lingfeng last in the xenomemory space?"

Tianming needed to put all his focus into improving himself to have a chance. Only if he was strong could he protect his continent and dynasty. Only if he was strong could he bring his brother away from suffering!

Huiye Shi thought he was just bluffing. "I'm not sure. This is all rumor. Anyway, it's very uncomfortable inside. You'll get lost and confused, but I don't know if you'll die." Huiye Shi felt like the atmosphere was slightly tense.

Tianming's intensity was slightly terrifying. It was just like before, and frightened her enough that she didn't dare to crack jokes.

"So you're saying I need to move fast!" Tianming lowered his head.

With a native helping him, he already knew the way forward. He was just a newcomer without a foundation. If he wanted to rise quickly, he needed the divine moonrace's help. And Huiye Shi was the only divine moonrace member who could help him. Furthermore, he trusted her a lot, as her life was in their hands and there was the Latticeheart Curse that could make her suffer for a year before miserably dying.

"Huiye Shi, I want to use all the resources of your clan. Your manna and caelum, everything!" Tianming stared at her. It was an order, not a request.

"Fine, I get it. You want to go all out for your brother. You hope to become strong, so you can save him. You're so brave! I'm falling in love with you all over again."

Huiye Shi bashfully lowered her head. "Considering your accomplishments in the Flameyellow Continent, you can definitely make a meteoric rise now. I'm looking forward to it. If you show enough talent, your status in the city will rise, and you'll get more resources the more you rise. If you have the ability, I can help you fight for anything, including the manna our clan can't use." Her words were sincere.

"If so, I won't treat you unfairly," Tianming said seriously. Huiye Shi was his only hope for Ye Lingfeng! The divine moonrace had a strict hierarchy. It was impossible to use their resources without Huiye Shi, and he needed the best resources.

Huiye Shi was excited. "So you want to pay with your body?"

"Don't be ridiculous. You and I are impossible." Tianming held Feiling's hand as he spoke.

"That's not for sure."

"What do you mean?"

"Are you a fool? How could you cultivate in the divine moon hall if you're just my retainer? If you want everything in our divine moonrace, you have to be a member of the clan. Marrying me is your only choice. The clan won't trust you and reward you otherwise. You can fact check this with anyone."

Tianming had no choice but to face the truth. This made things difficult.

Huiye Shi pouted. "Fine! My life is in your hands anyway, so I have no choice but to do my best. I just hope you'll release me from the curse earlier, okay?"

"Let me handle this," Feiling cut in. "If you can help, we can bury the hatchet. And if things work out and we can trust you, I can grant you freedom earlier."

"Fine, I'll be more sincere then."

Chapter 976 - Path to Ascendance

Huiye Shi sucked in a deep breath before looking at Li Tianming. "It'll be a fake marriage between us, and most importantly, you can't be my official husband. You can at most be a concubine I take before marriage. It isn't a glorious position, so don't expect any ceremony."

"I'll basically just bring you to see my parents, then record it in the clan records. It'll save a lot of time. It's just to give you a status in the clan and won't really affect your life. Live-in in-laws are all over the place here, so no one will mock you. Of course, the status will still be lower than us clan members.

"However, with me around, no one will bully you. As your talent and level increases, your name will spread and your status will shoot up. You'll probably even pull me up along with you. In the end, this is just a meaningless status. If you don't like me, I can't force love, can I?"

Tianming understood. In the end, this status would only be a little above a servant.

Huiyue Yin had many such concubines. It was the same for men and women. There wouldn't be any ceremonies, and not even any announcements. After he joined the clan, he would need to make introductions only if he met someone. It wouldn't affect his life, and was just a fake relationship just to fool outsiders.

Honestly, Tianming would never have considered this method if not for Ye Lingfeng. After all, he and Feiling hadn't even gotten married yet.

“There’s nothing to hesitate about, is there? Honestly, I just want to escape sooner, so I’ll do my best to help you. In the end, it’s just a fake relationship.” Huiye Shi smiled.

“Go out first, let me talk to him,” Feiling said.

“Alright! This is my room, so no hanky panky! I’m still a young girl!” Huiye Shi left the room, leaving behind Tianming and Feiling.

“Big Brother,” Feiling said softly, making Tianming look over with a gentle gaze. “I understand. I know you’re doing this for Little Feng. His life is in danger, so this much is no big deal. What matters is what’s inside your heart, right?” Feiling held Tianming’s hand and smiled warmly.

“I’m just afraid you’ll be uncomfortable inside,” Tianming said.

“How’s that possible? I’m not so petty!” Feiling winked at Tianming. “Of course, I’ll smack her if she keeps trying to tease you!”

“I can’t be bothered with her. Her heart is too fickle, so I need to keep a respectful distance.”

“Then isn’t it settled? Tomorrow, go and become a live-in son-in-law!”

Feiling hugged him from behind. Her long hair fell onto his shoulders and Tianming grabbed a few strands and sniffed, fragrance entering his nose.

“Alright then, it’s time to begin my new life!” Tianming’s eyes blazed as he looked out. “That so-called Sovereign Xi should be at the peak of the Ascendant stage, or even higher. If I have enough resources or fortune, I can catch up!”

His sovereign inheritance, Primordial Chaos Beasts, and the Aeonic Grandbane gave him unshakable confidence.

“The first step is to use the divine moonrace’s caelum to reach ascendance!”

“The power of the stellunar source here is majestic, so I can continue on as well,” Feiling pinched his ear and said. Feiling was different from Tianming; she wasn’t good at combat. However, her Perpetia Sutra came from Xuanyuan Xi’s memories and gave her a path of growth.

Those caelum might very well be useless to her. Her path of cultivation could only be found in her memories and Perpetia City.

The two hadn’t been talking long before Huiye Shi got impatient. “Hey, dear concubine, don’t cuckold me before we’re even married!”

Tianming snorted in amusement before letting her in.

Huiye Shi gnashed her teeth. “I realized something. You’re a Li! That... Li Qingyu is a Li too! Are you two related?”

“That’s my sister!”

“Seriously, blood related this time?”

“Yes.” Although they weren’t, actually, there was no difference to Tianming.

“Eh, you two do look similar. So you have a sworn brother who’s the Nightfiend and your sister is the Ninemoon Goddess. Why’re you so lousy then?”

“Hey, you’re looking at Flameyellow Continent’s number one genius here,” Tianming said confidently. Huiye Shi simply giggled.

Tianming was too lazy to care. “Help me prepare somewhere to stay. When I make my rise, you won’t be forgotten.”

“Sure, I have a lot of rooms here. However, the soundproofing isn’t good here, so if you’re going to cuckold me, don’t do it too passionately. I can’t take too much excitement,” Huiye Shi said.

Tianming was speechless.

It didn’t take long before they settled down, and the three discussed the matter of identity.

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It was late at night.

“The clan is huge and complicated. We really care about rules and etiquette. Don’t just offend anyone, our rules are very strict. Your talent is good, but you’re still young, so you aren’t strong enough,” Huiye Shi said.

“What’s the standard of my age group here?” Tianming asked.

“Eighth or ninth-level samsara for those around twenty. The best would be eleventh-level,” Huiye Shi replied. In the Flameyellow Continent, those of Tianming’s age would only be fourth-level.

“There aren’t any ascendants your age,” Huiye Shi said. That was the reason she had thought so highly of Tianming. If he could reach the same height as the divine moonrace’s greatest geniuses in the Flameyellow Continent, where would he end up if he grew up in the Divine Moon Realm?

“Ok, you can go away now.” Tianming pointed at the door.

“You’re going too far! Hmph!” Huiye Shi had just taken two steps when she suddenly realized something and looked back at Tianming in shock.

“What?”

“My gosh!” Huiye Shi was stunned.

“What happened?”

“I just realized that Li Qingyu is a miracle of the divine moonrace and rootbeast race. She has totems and a lifebound beast. If you’re her brother, you also have a lifesbane! You can get totems too!”

“Don’t let anyone know my relationship with her,” Tianming said sternly.

“Why? If you have enough bane-rings, you’ll have the same treatment as her and go straight to Orderia!” Huiye Shi said. She could clearly tell that Tianming’s lifebound beasts were much stronger than Li Qingyu’s.

"I can't."

"I get it! Li Qingyu was just dragged away like that. If that happens to you, too, no one can save Ye Lingfeng!"

"Exactly."

Tianming didn't share the other reason. From Li Wudi's letter, Tianming didn't trust the celestial orderian race. He had a feeling that nothing good was happening on Qingyu's end, so he had to stay hidden in the dark.

"Hey handsome, mind revealing how many bane-rings you have?"

"The highest your clan has is seven, right?" Tianming asked.

"Yes, that's our Sovereign Xi!"

"I, too, have seven." Tianming held some in reserve. He was only telling Huiye Shi because she had guessed it and he was curious about totems.

There was no reason for him to reject the boost from totems!

"Seven! Lemme see!" Huiye Shi nearly fainted.

Tianming's bane-rings were in his saint palace, so they weren't visible.

"Mine are special, they're inside my body," Tianming said.

"Where? Three inches below your abdomen, in a bold and powerful place?" Huiye Shi winked.

"How are you so... this?" Tianming rolled his eyes and gestured at her.

Feiling was still drinking tea at the side. In her surprise, she coughed it all out onto Tianming's face.

"One more question," Tianming said.

"Come, come, come!"

"If I create totems and have both totems and lifebound beasts but want to hide my relationship with Qingyu, and especially the number of my totems, is there a way to do so?"

Chapter 977 - Chaos in the City

Totems were something Tianming had been troubled over recently. If he showed a mighty totem, he would be exposed like Li Qingyu and have the same ending.

"That's easy!" Huiye Shi said.

"What's easy?" Tianming was surprised.

"Our clan also has idiots that want to have lifebound beasts and totems together. They'll use blood pacts to form a symbiotic bond with wildbeasts. They do have both in the end, but we usually call them idiots."

“Why?” Tianming asked.

“The lifebound beasts contracted this way are usually very stupid, cultivate slowly, and have weak battle power. Growing them is hard. You have an extra number, yes, but you sacrifice your talent to do so. Your cultivation speed will slow down. It’s a mistake made when they’re young that they regret for life. Honestly, many people have dreamed of this and a lot of research has been done. However, there have never been any successes. Nowadays, no idiots do this. But just call yourself one of them and everything will be settled!” Huiye Shi giggled.

“What if I’m too strong and attract attention?”

“If you really can have seven totems, hide three. Never bring them out. As long as they don’t exceed five, Orderia will never take note of you no matter how mighty your beasts are.”

“Understood!” Tianming felt his ambition surge. So he could awaken totems! He just had to make sure not to use more than five. If he really had ten, he would be able to use them to great effect one day. There were many scenarios where the hidden totems could be a trump card.

Next, Huiye Shi gave Tianming advice on how to rise. Actually, she was being very sincere. While it was thanks to Feiling’s curse that she couldn’t offend Tianming, her merit was still great.

Tianming said seriously, “No matter what, thank you.”

“Heh, as long as you know it. Make sure to keep the noise levels down. My maidenly heart can’t handle anything too stimulating!”

“In the end, you really can’t expect good words from a scoundrel.”

Huiye Shi looked at Feiling, and there was a brief struggle in her eyes. Before, she had been very prideful in the Flameyellow Continent and had looked down on the two. However, in the end she had been inflicted with a curse. She was actually feeling very gloomy, but she had no choice now. Now, she had little chance of getting Tianming, so she had given up.

“Bah, I’ll just help and think of it as penance for my pervertedness and stubbornness then. I just hope they’ll free me.” Huiye Shi couldn’t not be worried. Although she hadn’t felt the curse since she’d returned, she would always be fearful and stressed when no one was around.

“That moment of impulsiveness led to a huge mistake. I hope the heavens will give me a chance to make up for it.” She didn’t dare tell Tianming that she was related to that time Huiyue Yin had forced him to dire straits. He would definitely be ruthless to her, considering his protectiveness of Feiling.

“I’ll bring you to create your totems the next time the divine moonlight falls,” Huiye Shi said.

“Alright.” Tianming could see another matter taking shape.

“How old are you?” Huiye Shi asked Feiling the ultimate question in her heart.

“Younger than him by three years, why?” Feiling turned her beautiful face to her.

“I don’t believe you!” Huiye Shi cried out. Her biggest advantage, her age, actually didn’t exist! She was twenty eight!

"I can't be down about this. Here, those under fifty are still young," Huiye Shi tried consoling herself.

"Goodbye, perverts!" she said loudly. Filled with despair, she left the room. However, in her anxiousness, she tripped over the doorway and fell flat on her face.

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The next day, Tianming was in the core of the city, greedily sucking in the power of the stellar source. Although his level didn't rise, his power was growing by leaps and bounds.

"Li Tianming, get your ass out here! Time to go meet the in-laws!" It wasn't even the crack of dawn before Huiye Shi was shouting loudly from outside.

Tianming was relaxed after a night of cultivation as he left the room.

"Is she not following?" Huiye Shi pouted.

"No," Tianming replied.

"Fine. I had even prepared a status for her as my servant. It'll be more convenient for her that way," Huiye Shi said, pleased.

"Do you really have to try so hard to pretend to be number one?" Tianming asked.

"Silence!" Huiye Shi was really starting to sound as if Tianming was marrying into her family.

"Right, how's it going with the moon guide?" Huiye Shi asked as they walked.

"I'm still thinking. He won't dare to do anything if people are around. Don't go for lessons for now, and wait for him to get anxious," Tianming said.

"Hmph, I don't care, but you have to protect me now that we're married," Huiye Shi said.

"I know, I know." Tianming disliked her noise.

"Don't talk too much when you meet my parents. I'll do the talking."

"Okay."

"I'll bring you to cultivate once you're in the clan."

"Okay."

However, a heavysset young woman suddenly came running over. She crashed into Huiye Shi, sending her flying. The two rolled on the ground a while before finally managing to get up.

Huiye Shi had dust on her face and was furious. "Huiye Zhuzhu, are you crazy? I took two hours to put on this makeup, and now you've ruined it!"

"Shi Shi! Something happened!" The fat woman was in a panicked state.

"What?" Huiye Shi was confused. Why had it suddenly become serious?

"Last night, there was a shocking incident. We kept it under wraps to prevent a panic, but it's still leaking out!" Huiye Zhuzhu said, pale.

“What happened?” Huiye Shi said.

“Eighteen of our middle tier experts were assassinated last night. Not even their corpses were left! I heard all the seniors went on high alert after the first death. When they went to investigate, things kept happening and the casualties kept rising.”

“What? Someone dared to assassinate our people? If they’re middle tier, then they’d be moon guides?” Huiye Shi said with shock.

“Yes! Being able to massacre them means it must be a high tier expert. The whole city is in an uproar now and I’m sure the whole realm will know within the day.”

“That’s impossible! This realm is our territory. Who would have the guts to do this?” Huiye Shi shook.

“I heard it may be people from elsewhere, maybe even astral bandits!” Huiye Zhuzhu was frightened. “What if there’s a lot of them and they’re lecherous? I haven’t taken a concubine yet!”

“You? You’ll probably be safe.” Huiye Shi rolled her eyes.

“Hey, who talks about their friends like this? Just wait for when I slim down.” Huiye Zhuzhu glared.

“Get lost, I have a boy now. I’m bringing—”

Huiye Zhuzhu gave Tianming a look. After a moment of surprise, she said disdainfully, “Nothing much!”

Despite her words, the woman was drooling. She gave Huiye Shi a pat on the shoulder. “You’re definitely my friend.”

“Alright, alright, I really have something on. We’ll bathe together next time. As for the assassin, don’t worry. This is still our territory and I’m sure they’ll be caught soon.”

“I see! Still, we won’t be able to go for lessons now,” Huiye Zhuzhu said.

“What?” Huiye Shi was confused.

“I forgot to say, the first death yesterday was our moon guide, Liu Yizhao.”

Tianming and Huiye Shi exchanged a shocked look.

“What?” Huiye Zhuzhu asked suspiciously. Why was their response so weird?

“It’s just so tragic that I’m tearing up.” Huiye Shi tried her best to stifle her grin.

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Outside the city, there was a massive tree wreathed in moonlight. A bald man in white robes was resting on a branch, a little girl sleeping in his arms. His hands were covered in blood.

He stroked her hair while gently singing a lullaby. “Sleep, sleep....” The man narrowed his eyes as he looked at the city ahead.

“When the sky darkens, we continue.” These were his hunting grounds.

Chapter 978 - Meeting the Parents

Once Huiye Zhuzhu left, Tianming and Huiye Shi continued on their way to meet her parents. On the way, Huiye Shi kept smiling and cussing. "That damned old crook with a sh*tty personality finally died! He deserved it, that prick! That sneaky fuck constantly had his mind on taking advantage of girls and he's finally paid for it!"

She felt on top of the world. But when she turned back, Tianming's brow seemed furrowed in worry. "What's wrong? Liu Yizhao is dead. It's a great boon to me. Why don't you look happy? Do you pity him for dying? I asked Zhuzhu and she said his death doesn't have anything to do with our clan."

"It's not that I'm unhappy, I just wanted to ask you if this is something that usually happens around here," Tianming said.

"Nope, never. This feels like a coincidence! Don't worry, the killer will soon be caught and the truth will come out. Now that the moon guide is dead and there's nothing to contradict our story, we're completely safe."

The death of Liu Yizhao had in fact come as a great boon to Tianming. He was among the people who had met him on the Flameyellow Continent, after all, but Huiye Shi was the only one left. Had he seen Liu Yizhao here, the latter might have figured out that he had something to do with the death of Huiyue Yin. But as Tianming wanted to make progress in his cultivation, he had no choice but to take the risk and come here.

Initially he had planned to do his best to avoid the moon guide, which should be possible given the sheer size of Huiyue Palace. And even if they did meet, there wasn't too much Liu Yizhao could do about it. There simply wasn't any merit in exposing the truth behind Huiyue Yin's death. First, how would he explain the reason he didn't reveal the actual truth to Huiyue Du while they were slaughtering the specters? Second, even if exposing it would cause Huiye Shi trouble, that didn't take away from the fact that he was trying to use it to threaten her into providing sexual favors.

For someone with a status like him to lust after the daughter of a friend would be a huge blow to his character. The only reason he had even dared to attempt such a thing was that he thought he could take advantage of her youth and naivete.

No doubt, Liu Yizhao would instantly be able to tell that Tianming was the accomplice, but he wouldn't reveal it unless he really had to. If things came to that point, it would definitely look rather bad on him, which was the reason Tianming had even dared to head to Huiyue City in the first place. As long as he was careful, it was a non-issue, but to think Liu Yizhao would be killed without a witness before he even became a real problem... At the very least, they were safe as far as Huiye Shi was concerned.

"What about your parents? Will they have anything to say about me?" Tianming had never expected things to turn out this way back on the Flameyellow Continent. Otherwise, he wouldn't have shown himself when her parents went to slaughter the specters.

"Well, it's a little risky, but it shouldn't be that much of a problem. I made sure to bury the matter of my brother within the past month, so it's never been brought up again. I even tested them a few times on this and I can say that they wouldn't think too much about it. After all, you're not even an ascendant, so you shouldn't have been able to kill my brother."

"Wouldn't they ask how I managed to come here even though I'm not an ascendant?"

"I'll just say I had a friend bring you here. If they ask who, I'll mention Jiang Feiling. The cover I gave her makes her someone from the Divine Moon Realm, after all. My parents haven't met her, and they don't keep tabs on who I hang out with."

"You sure are meticulous." Tianming had thought about these issues the night before. He had planned to talk it over with Huiye Shi before they left, to get their stories straight, though it was less important now with Liu Yizhao gone.

"Of course! I'm rather smart, you know! Just try to lay low later and let me do the talking. Once we deal with my parents, you'll be completely in the clear."

"Alright, I'll let you do your thing," Tianming said, seeing how confident she was.

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Huiyue Du and Yusheng Luo were among the elites in Huiyue City, and had higher status than Liu Yizhao. Normally, they resided within Duyue Mansion. Among the divine moonrace, children usually moved out of their parents' abode at the age of twenty, but they would still visit often. Duyue Mansion was far larger than the Shiyu Compound, and the guards and servants there also had high cultivations. They were surprised to see Huiye Shi visit with a youth and were discussing who he could be among themselves.

"Mom, Mom, are you here?" she yelled when she entered the courtyard, pulling Tianming along through the complicated maze of corridors. Eventually, they reached her parents' chambers deep inside. There was a beautiful building constructed above a lake and surrounded with cherry blossom trees. It was a truly beautiful sight.

"Mom, are you here? Answer me! Or I'll come straight in!" she called out.

"Alright, just wait... Mmmmhh..." rang an oddly seductive voice that surprised Tianming and Huiye Shi.

"It's still midday! I'm impressed!" Huiye Shi said with her face flushed.

The two of them then sat near the center building as they waited. Soon, the rear door of the building opened, allowing a thick wafting fragrance to seep out. Tianming stood up and saw a beautiful woman dressed in a loose silk dress coming out of the door, her face still flushed. When she saw Tianming and her daughter, her eyes lingered on him for a moment. "What is it? Why'd you bring an outsider here?"

"Where's Dad?" Huiye Shi asked.

"He's cultivating. Don't interrupt him." Yusheng Luo sat down, her long, fair legs slightly revealed through the slit in her dress.

Huiye Shi hurried and brewed her some moon tea. Yusheng Luo then gracefully poured herself a cup and enjoyed a sip. Huiye Shi looked rather similar to her mother, but she was obviously much younger and jumpy.

"Why don't we ask Dad to come out? I have a matter to discuss and he'll definitely get angry at me if I don't tell him about it beforehand," Huiye Shi said, mischievously poking her tongue out.

"What is it? Tell me."

"Mom, I want to take a concubine. It's him," she said 'shyly'.

"Oh? Are you serious?" Yusheng Luo seemed rather surprised as she sized up Tianming once more.

"Hmmm, why does he seem somewhat familiar?"

"You don't remember?"

"Not really. Since we're talking about this, I'll ask your dad to come discuss it together." Yusheng Luo then called out toward the building. Soon, a huge, burly man came out with a pot in hand. He had a head of messy hair and stubble on his unshaven face.

A little annoyed, he sat down beside his wife and took a swig of wine. "Shishi, you said you wanted to take a concubine?"

"Yes, Daddy, I like him. He's talented and charming. Apart from the fact that he's of low status, he's perfect in all other ways. With some nurturing, his future is boundless," Huiye Shi said.

Tianming didn't think that women here, not just the men, would actually be able to take concubines. Not to mention, they used the same word for male and female concubines; there was no distinction. It was indeed a bit of a culture shock.

Huiyue Du stared at Tianming like a beast and furrowed his brow. "I know him. He's that native of the Flameyellow Continent. I even had him clean up the remaining specters."

He had recognized Tianming after all.

"Ah, I remember now. It was him," Yusheng Luo said.

Chapter 979 - Eighteen-Year-Old Human Emperor

"Lord, Lady, I've done as you have instructed and wiped out as many specters as we possibly could," Tianming said. "I see." Huiyue Du pointed at him and turned to Huiye Shi. "Come and explain what's going on."

"Well... When I first went to the Flameyellow Continent, he was the one who tended to us. He's the human emperor, and his authority is accepted by all the humans on the continent. After the Moon Guide went back, he took me around to travel and have fun. I gradually came to understand and like him. I know you might feel like his status is rather low, but he's a true legend over there and is really talented!" Huiye Shi didn't hide anything at all. In terms of age and cultivation, he wouldn't be able to lie to those two. He was twenty-three and at the tenth level of the Samsara stage.

Fortunately, they weren't aware of his actual combat capability. It was too ridiculous for someone like him to be able to fight against ascendants. Not to mention, for him to be able to gain control of an entire continent at his age made it so that her parents had no choice but to regard him seriously, as opposed to their aloof attitude from before. If they knew that he could fight ascendants, there was a risk that they would suspect him of killing Huiyue Yin. So his lower cultivation was the perfect cover.

"Get up there. We'll verify your actual age," Huiyue Du said as he tossed a spherical heavenly pattern formation on the ground.

"Go and let my dad see how amazing you are!" Huiye Shi said mischievously.

"Alright." Tianming entered the age-evaluation formation. It seemed to fuse with his body and react in a mystical manner. To think that something so complicated was used just to evaluate the age of a person.

The moment he entered, different lights began forming on the formation. At the very end, only eighteen stars manifested. As he was in the life phase, his body was filled with youthful vigor. The eighteen stars showed him to be biologically eighteen.

"Eighteen! Amazing, Li Tianming..." Huiye Shi was almost mad that he appeared to be much younger than her, but quickly changed her tune. "He's ten years younger than me! You're far too young!"

"It might have something to do with me being in the life phase now. I'm already twenty-three," Tianming honestly said.

Seeing that, Huiye Shi's parents exchanged a surprised look.

"He's only twenty-three, but he's already at the tenth-level life phase and was even able to unify an entire continent that's even larger than the Divine Moon Realm?"

"Not to mention, he did all this without a stellar source?"

By now, they couldn't take their eyes off him. Tianming had thought that they would be arrogant and continue looking down on him, yet it appeared that things were going smoothly. They also didn't even bother asking how he came to the moon. They probably figured that since their daughter had her sights on him, she had enlisted the help of someone else on her own accord to bring him here.

While they were still shocked, Huiye Shi said, "Daddy Mommy, please give me this chance! I really think he's destined for greatness! He might not have any standing now, but once he becomes mine, I'll continue nurturing him! Eventually, he'll make it on his own!"

She hustled to Yusheng Luo and said, "Mom, even if he isn't enough, I'll just take a few more men with higher status for myself. That won't be an issue, right?"

"It won't be an issue indeed. You lass... you really know how to pick the good ones," Yusheng Luo said as she pinched her daughter's nose.

"Of course! I'm your daughter, after all! I inherited your good eye for men!" Her blatant flattery did annoy her father slightly, though.

"So he's a member of the rootbeast race?" Though annoyed, Huiyue Du still tried to objectively evaluate Tianming.

"Dad, he's not a member of the rootbeast race! His lifebound beasts are actually formed with blood pacts. He has Lifesbane like us and has four bane-rings, but they manifested within his body. I was planning to help him awaken his totems, too. Even though blood pacts aren't that good, the fact that he managed to reach the tenth-level life phase means he's an exception! I think he'll be able to use both lifebound beasts and totems, just like the Ninemoon Goddess!"

"Since he only has four bane-rings, you shouldn't compare him with the Ninemoon Goddess. Not to mention, her lifebound beast was born with her. It isn't a blood pact," Huiyue Du said.

Tianming didn't know whether there were other people with Lifesbane outside the Decimo Dao Nation, but it was obvious that Huiyue Du wasn't too clear on it either. It didn't even occur to him that Tianming could've come from a chaos skyjail. And as Huiye Shi had predicted, they didn't really make too much of a fuss after hearing that he only had four bane-rings.

Now that he had shown off his talent, it all depended on Huiyue Du. He was the one who would decide whether or not to give his first son-in-law a pass. Huiyue Du waved for Tianming to leave for now, and he did as he was instructed.

Once he left, Huiyue Du said, "Shishi, this person is indeed talented, but his foundation is pretty average, especially the fact that he has both lifebound beasts and totems. He's not the same as Li Qingyu, and his future progress might be hampered. There are many people who grow quickly in the beginning, only to find that they have a really low ceiling for potential. Don't overestimate him."

"There's still a chance he could be a gem, right? Even if he isn't like the Ninemoon Goddess, it doesn't matter as long as he can benefit our clan. He's only a concubine anyway, so I can just discard him if he turns out to be useless," Huiye Shi argued.

"You can't say that. Once you take him in, you'll have a duty as his mistress. You can't just abandon a concubine. And even if you don't mind, others might and you'll have a hard time finding a good man to marry among the divine moonrace."

"It doesn't matter. There's many people that marry other races. I want a few more for myself too. If I marry a divine moonrace, I can only pick one and that's rather boring. Not to mention, I'd have to leave your side."

"Even if you take more than a hundred men of other races, it wouldn't compare to a single divine moonrace man," Huiyue Du said.

"Dad, that won't necessarily be the case..."

"I'll be direct with you. Your uncle, Huiyue Hai, has talked to me about his son. He wants to tie the knot between the two of you."

"Huiyue Yu? I don't like him."

"Why? Because of his achievements? He's about the same age as you, and he's an ascendant. He's even more talented than you. Not to mention, he's hardworking and polite. There's nothing to complain about."

"It's precisely because he's that accomplished that he'll be the dominant one in the relationship! I don't like that. I want my men to be talented and obedient at the same time! Right, Mom?" Huiye Shi said. Yusheng Luo couldn't help but chuckle.

"Enough messing around! Between Huiyue Yu and this person, even an idiot would know who better to pick. Stop being so stubborn."

"No! I like him and I want him!" Seeing that it was going to be hard, Huiye Shi threw a calculated tantrum. She tugged on her mother's hand and broke into tears, much to Huiyue Du's dismay.

"Come on," Yusheng Luo said as she tugged on her husband's arm. "Let her do as she pleases. You know she wouldn't fall for just anyone. As for Huiyue Yu, they grew up together. If Shishi liked him, we would've known by now. If she marries him and has to suffer because of it, none of us will be happy! Not to mention, it's akin to losing our daughter to another family. Rather than that, getting a good son-in-law that serves our family would be much better, right? We've already lost our son..."

"Are you sure?" Huiyue Du began wavering at his wife's words.

"I think this is fine. Not to mention, Huiyue Hai would profit by having our daughter as his daughter-in-law. It's a bit of a reach, really."

In the end, the thing that finally moved Huiyue Du was the fact that he had lost his son, Huiyue Yin. Marrying their daughter off was the same as giving their only child to another family. Seeing how Huiye Shi was crying herself into a mess, he stood up and waved. "Alright, stop crying! Do as you please!"

Chapter 980 - A Million Silvermoon Caeli

Huiye Shi's eyes glowed as she shifted from tears to smiles in an instant. Hugging her father's arm, she said, "Thank you, Daddy! I'll definitely keep a close eye on him and not let you down!"

"Sure." Huiyue Du pulled her aside and looked at his wife. "You should deal with this. I can't be bothered to meddle. I'll be going now."

He then left through the rear exit. It was clear to see how annoyed he was; not at the fact that his daughter had chosen Tianming and refused Huiyue Yu, but rather at the fact that he couldn't marry his daughter out to another family after the death of his son.

Once he was gone, Huiye Shi pulled Tianming close and winked. "It's done!"

"Amazing." Tianming secretly shot her a thumbs-up.

He then approached Yusheng Luo, who gently said, "Look up and let me see your face clearly."

"Understood." Tianming looked up at his 'mother-in-law'. She was far too young and looked just like Huiye Shi's elder sister, so it was hard for him to consider her a senior.

"You're rather handsome," she said with a smile. Tianming merely chuckled lightly. "Alright, this is it." She sipped her tea and continued, "I'll arrange for you to be added to the family registry later, but we can't use your identity as a native of the Flameyellow Continent. It would only bring mockery to our family. Instead, I'll let you pick the identity of a local here."

"Thank you, Mom!" Huiye Shi said with a face full of smiles. That was all the more convenient for Tianming.

"Just remember not to go down to the world below anymore. Otherwise you'll be caught and punished, understood?" Yusheng Luo said. It seemed like she was going to overlook the implication that Huiye Shi had someone go down and bring Tianming up here.

"He definitely won't go back! We're starting our new lives here!" Huiye Shi said.

"Come back in a month to report on your progress," Yusheng Luo said.

"Understood. We'll definitely surprise you!"

"You little..." Yusheng Luo gave her daughter a loving gaze and turned to Tianming. "Make sure to obey the rules here and not cause her any trouble."

"Understood," Tianming said. He didn't find it humiliating at all, as he had never really had anything going with Huiye Shi in the first place. All he wanted was the identity of the divine moonrace.

Yusheng Luo tossed him a green talisman. "This is your proof of identity. Keep it with you."

Tianming put it away. Ostensibly, it would mark him as a son-in-law and concubine. A real member of the divine moonrace could be identified from the crescent moon mark on their foreheads without needing any identification. The green of the talisman oddly seemed like a certain kind of hat...

"Leave us for now," she said, pointing at the door.

They had finally passed this obstacle. Tianming had wanted to leave long ago, so he did as he was told. He waited outside for Huiye Shi for her to take him to the divine moon hall. When he was outside, Yusheng Luo waved for her daughter to sit on her lap.

Huiye Shi asked, "Mom, is there anything else?"

"Have you sealed the deal in bed yet?"

"No..." Huiye Shi said shyly.

"Well, it's a complicated art. Shall I teach you a few tricks to get him enamored with you?" Yusheng Luo said with a wink.

"No, it's embarrassing!" Huiye Shi got up and zipped off.

"Ah, youth... How nice." Yusheng Luo stood up and left, her alluring figure swaying as she walked.

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"Concubine! Walk slower! Wait for your 'lord husband'!" Huiye Shi cried out.

"Can you shut up? Don't force me to whack you," Tianming snapped. She was so punchable that Tianming had been holding back the urge since he met her.

"Oh? Daring, aren't we? Stinking concubine!"

With nobody else around, Tianming grabbed her and pressed on the back of her neck. "Stop messing around and take me to the divine moon hall now. Don't waste my time."

"Fine, you brute!"

Tianming let go of her and they headed to the divine moon hall, which was the foundation of the Huiyue Clan's cultivation. It was the lifeblood of the legacy of their millions of forebears that continued to fuel and support their newer generations.

Each of the Eightmoon Skycities had a divine moon hall. While Huiyue City's was ranked last among them, it was still a place that the non-divine moonrace could only dream of going. Regardless of gender, anyone that managed to gain the favor of the divine moonrace would benefit from their status and make it big. As a result, there were many people that married into divine moonrace families on the moon.

"We've dealt with my parents and the moon guide is dead. My mom even forged a local identity for you. You're completely safe now, and can cultivate without worry. As for your totems, we need to wait for the descent of the divine moonlight unless you're at Divine Moon Skycity. I'll tell you when the time comes."

Everything was going much smoother than Tianming had anticipated. With access to the divine moon hall and the stellunar source, the rest depended on his own efforts to strengthen himself.

"As my 'parents' know my origins, I can't show off more power than Huiyue Yin before I reach the Ascension stage." With that, he had to rush to the Ascension stage. "There's only a few more levels after the tenth-level life phase! I have to continue!"

They finally arrived at the divine moon hall. Tianming saw a gigantic moon-like object floating in the air just like the moon that Tianming had seen outside of the Divine Moon Realm. It gave off a steady, pulsing glow and seemed ancient and arcane. It was akin to the moon of Huiyue City, casting a glow of prosperity on its residents, and the legacy from the caeli around it was selfless and impressive. It was no wonder this was among the most important things to the divine moonrace. If the Eightmoon Skycities were destroyed, it would spell the end of the divine moonrace, too. For the same reason, Xuanyuan Dao had moved the Old Deepstar Path to Xuanyuan Lake.

No doubt, there were many levels of protection there that Tianming couldn't detect. But with Huiye Shi with him, nobody stepped out to stop him. Some people recognized her and asked her about Tianming's status, and she was happy to answer them.

It was common for males and females of the divine moonrace to take concubines, but as Tianming was Huiye Shi's first man, he attracted some measure of attention. While the others wouldn't gossip about it to her face, no doubt they would do so behind her back. While she hadn't told them who Tianming was, they at least knew he wasn't a member of the divine moonrace.

"I thought she would form a union with another divine moonrace."

"Now that she already has a man, no other divine moonrace would want her."

"I bet she wants to take in a few more men, then. Well, she's not the first to do so... but women should always be more conservative."

"Conservative? Doesn't your mom have a few husbands herself? Who are you to talk?"

"Shut up!"

As they were chattering away, Tianming used his talisman to go through the many protective gates that led into the hall. Finally, he reached a long moonlit corridor that stretched out into an endless world. It looked like a void filled with nothing but countless silver moons, at least a million of them. Each of them looked to be about the size of a head, but there were too many to count. The light from all those moons seemed to paint the sky white. They were all caeli from the ancestors of the divine moonrace, all of them ascendants that had lived across the countless generations. There were many more that were of even higher quality than the emperor's caelum, far too many.

A million was just a rough estimate; there could be ten times that. Currently, there were only ten thousand people training in the divine moon hall, so there were far more moons to go around, completely in contrast to the Old Deepstar Path. If it weren't for the thousand specter caeli Tianming obtained for it, it would be too insignificant to even compare with the divine moon hall.

"Caeli are the foundations of a clan's prosperity, after all..."

"Stop being awed and come here!" Huiye Shi pulled him along past many caeli along the way. His Imperial Will shook when he was near each one.

"There's even higher grade ones inside! As long as you can attract the seniors' caeli, they'll guide you!" she said.

"Alright." He continued heading deeper with her as his guide. Soon, the number of caeli around him gradually increased.

"Oh, my..." Huiye Shi seemed surprised. "You seem to be rather popular here. Normally, those who aren't of the divine moonrace find it hard to gain the favor of our ancestors. Sometimes, not even one of these silvermoon caeli will bother with them."

"Well, you just haven't seen someone like me before," Tianming said. When he stretched his arms wide open, tens of thousands of moons seemed to flood toward him. Once more, he felt his heavenly will advancing by leagues. Even stronger caeli with far different cultivation experiences descended toward him, bringing with them insights of the Ascension stage. He had completely forgotten the flow of time. If not for Huiye Shi's reminder, he wouldn't have known that it was already night. Feiling was still waiting for him back at her place.

"Alright, let's head back." He could use the night to absorb the stellunar source. "I reckon this should be enough for me to reach the death phase."

In a single day, he had made more progress than in the past two weeks. He had indeed come to the right place.

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When he left the divine moon hall, the sky had darkened. However, the divine moon hall looked as brilliant as ever.