

The Ages 991

Chapter 991 - Yin

On the streets of Huiyue City, a group of young girls were playfully running around, earning the ire of many who didn't dare show it. The one in the front had short hair and wore a tight, monochrome suit that accentuated her figure. Her skin was a healthy tan and her gaze was aggressive, to say the least. She wore a set of gleaming earrings.

"Yin," said Huiyue Jie when he saw her messing around.

"Brother?" The cat-like girl started for a moment. She waved for her mates to wait while she went to him. "I didn't think a busy man like you who's earned Sovereign Xi's favor would have time to visit your sister."

"I need your help."

"Alright! Get straight to the point," Huiye Yin said.

"Do you know Huiye Shi?"

"Of course I do. She's one of my pals, a cute and obedient one at that. Have you come to fancy her? You're Sovereign Xi's man now, so you can't possibly fall for someone normal like her, you know."

"Enough nonsense. I need you to tease her for me. Make her days miserable, but make sure not to seriously hurt her, alright?"

"Why?"

"Don't ask. If you do it well, I'll do what you asked me to last time."

"Why do you need me to do it? Can't you do it yourself?"

"Didn't you claim to be the queen of Huiyue City? You must have many more ways you can do it than me. It's your area of expertise, right?"

"I guess you understand me well after all!" Huiye Yin patted him on the shoulder and chuckled.

"You aren't a child anymore, so stop acting like one. Don't go everywhere and make trouble," he said disapprovingly. Though, he was envious of how carefree she could afford to be.

"Sigh, here to lecture me again? If I had something between my legs, you wouldn't have been picked to join Xi Palace, got it?" she said, raising her brows.

"If you say so," Huiyue Jie chuckled. If only they knew that joining Xi Palace wasn't the glorious affair they all thought it was. He waved and said, "Goodbye, Yin."

"Bye, Jie." She returned the wave and rejoined her friends.

"Hey, what'd your brother say?"

"He really has a refined aura. Sovereign Xi has a good eye for men."

Huiye Yin raised her hand and said, "Come, sisters! Let's mess with Huiye Shi a bit. I heard she got a man now and is forgetting her place."

"Would that be alright? She just lost her parents..."

"I've heard enough from you! Shut it!"

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Someone was calling out from outside Shiyu Compound. Huiye Shi could tell who it was. A little dazed, she walked out and saw a group of young girls ahead at the courtyard. The one leading them all was a girl with short black hair. Huiye Shi unconsciously shirked away in fear. "Sister Yin, are you here for me?"

Among the many youths of the Huiyue Clan, Huiye Yin was famous for her boldness. She had a unique personality. While the arrogant bullies were usually male, she was different. Oftentimes, it was her and her goons that bullied others, earning her the nickname of queen. Back then, Huiye Shi had to follow her around. When Huiye Yin's actions got a little out of hand, she wouldn't take part.

Despite the strict rules of the clan, they were useless against Huiye Yin. Not only was she the daughter of the clan leader, she was also intelligent enough to not leave any evidence of her antics. If the clan leader himself spoiled her without chewing her out, then others wouldn't dare to snap at her either. It was often said that her obedient elder brother kept earning praises from others nonstop and leaving none for her, causing her to seek attention by causing trouble. It wasn't far from the truth; the perfect brother she had made all her efforts look like jokes in comparison.

"How can I help you, Sister Yin?" Huiye Shi asked the most terrifying person in Huiyue City.

Instead of answering her, she turned to the other girls and raised her hand. "Listen up! Tear off her clothes, cut all her hair, and scratch her face!"

"Yes!" They charged at her immediately.

"Huh?!" Huiye Shi thought she had misheard it. She had always been supportive and obedient! "Why?!"

Nobody listened to her and their rush didn't let her resist at all. Some tore at her clothes, others at her hair. Some pushed her down and carved out ugly patterns on her face. She felt the searing pain and her head getting lighter while her clothes were torn apart. Tossed into a corner, she huddled and sobbed. "Sister Yin, what'd I do wrong?"

Her clothes weren't a big deal, since they were all women. Her face would also heal up with some treatment. However, how long would it take for her hair to grow back? She was devastated when she felt her bald head.

"I'll tell you next time." Huiye Yin waved and laughed with the other girls.

"Next time?" Huiye Shi almost fainted.

At that moment, Feiling heard the commotion and came out. Seeing Huiye Shi had been bullied, she didn't hesitate to come forward and put a cloak on her. Seeing her shaved head, she snapped, "What's going on?"

Huiye Shi was still grieving her parents. How could they do something like that?

"Who's this?" Huiye Yin asked, tilting her head as she looked at Feiling.

"She's just a servant," Huiye Shi said.

"A servant? Then you'll get the same treatment package as your master, the triple deluxe. Girls, go!" Huiye Yin said with a cruel smile.

"Quick, run!" Huiye Shi urged. Even though she used to loathe Feiling for being a threat to her life, when Feiling had consoled her after her parents' death, her first reaction was to ask her to run for her own good.

"They've gone too far." Feiling bit her lip and pulled Huiye Shi with her as she ran. The girls chasing them suddenly slowed down. In almost an instant, Feiling flapped her three pairs of Celestial Wings and disappeared.

"Oh? So she can run that fast? Give chase!" Huiye Yin felt challenged. The girls kept pressing on with ugly curses croaking from their mouths, but Feiling disappeared in an instant.

Chapter 992 - Last Step Before Ascension

"Sister Yin, should we continue our search?"

"No need. I've had enough fun today. Let's continue next time," Huiye Yin said. She knew what Huiyue Jie was going for. Bullying didn't entail going all out right away. Instead, it intensified without an end in sight, causing more despair than all-out hazing ever could.

"Isn't this a little overboard? Why're we bullying Huiye Shi? She always stays in her lane," one of them said.

"Shut up! She challenged me!" Huiye Yin growled.

"Alright..."

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Tianming returned from divine moon hall that night, only to see Huiye Shi in tears and Feiling beside her patting her back. Seeing her bald, he couldn't help but say, "Did you get sick of the mortal coil and decide to become a nun?"

Hearing that, she burst out crying even louder than before.

"Don't tease her. She was just bullied," Feiling said.

"Oh?" Tianming came forward and raised her face, only to see the turtle-shell pattern of the carvings and almost burst out laughing.

"Hey, why're you laughing?! Do you have a heart?!" Huiye Shi complained.

"What's going on?"

Huiye Shi then explained what she knew.

"Isn't that a little weird? Does it have something to do with me?" Tianming asked.

"Just because you beat up Huiyue Yu? It can't be. Huiye Yin is Granny Yuehe's granddaughter," Huiye Shi said.

"Then why?"

"I don't know! She said she would come again! It's over for me!"

"I'll leave you to cry for a bit." Tianming pulled Feiling inside the courtyard. Huiye Shi burst out crying even louder outside.

"Will she be alright?" Feiling asked, turning back to look a few times.

"It's fine. Let her vent. At least she wasn't harmed in any real way," Tianming said. Looking at Feiling, he asked, "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. There were those at the Dipole Sky level yesterday. I might not be able to fight them off, but running is still not an issue."

"Not bad. But no matter how good you are at running, you can't run from me!" he said, gripping her hand tight.

"Stop boasting. If I want to run, you won't be able to touch anythi—mmm!" Before she could finish, Tianming closed in with a kiss. Her face immediately flushed red and she punched him many times.

"Damn, do it lighter! You hit hard, you know?" He could still feel his chest pulse.

"You deserved it!"

After messing around for a bit, they sat down in a pavilion.

"So, how are you progressing?" she asked.

"I've trained a little bit more. The divine moon hall really is useful. After absorbing more stellunar source tonight, I'll reach the eleventh-level death phase."

"You're far too fast."

"Of course. I'm a professional."

"If we keep a low profile, you should be able to reach the Ascension stage without a problem."

"Yeah. I plan to do just that, so I'll need you to look out for Huiye Shi."

"If it's just the same lot from today, I'll be able to escape with her. I already told her to stick close to me."

"Then it'll be fine. She's really obedient, there's no way she'll run off too far."

Tianming had to prioritize breaking through to save Ye Lingfeng, so he couldn't afford to mind small matters like this. Thankfully, Feiling was here so he didn't need to worry. Every night, the power of the

stellunar source would emerge from the ground and the eye-catching silvery light would automatically flood into people's bodies.

"Ling'er, have you heard anything about the killer lately?" Tianming asked.

"I did. Apparently he went to all of the Eightmoon Skycities apart from Divine Moon Skycity. Now, all of them are sealed and will probably stay that way until he's caught." Feiling had heard that from Huiye Shi.

"For a top elite like him, as long as he doesn't fall for any traps, even Sovereign Xi herself won't be able to capture him," Tianming said with a troubled look.

"That's right. The divine moonrace are in trouble."

"Thinking back to that night when I was cultivating, something weird occurred to me. Don't laugh when I tell you this. I have a feeling that the mysterious killer is the specter, Bodhi."

"Him? How could that be possible? Wasn't he only a fourth-level ascendant?"

"That's what he claimed to be, at least."

"But he couldn't even take a strike from Huiyue Yin, right?"

"That's right. It might have to do with the fact that he had just been released from the Ninefold Hell and didn't have any stellunar source to convert into astralforce."

"However, I heard that he is growing stronger according to the attacks on the other cities. Some believe he's a tenth-level ascendant or above. That's far too high. Given how desolate the Ninefold Hell was, and the bloodmoon caeli of the specters, there hasn't been anyone among their ancestors that was nearly that powerful. The strongest of them were third level, at best. How could someone so powerful exist? Even among the divine moonrace, who have countless caeli, there's only a handful of tenth-level ascendants. It isn't that easy for anyone to reach that level, anyway," Feiling said.

"I've thought the same myself... but my instincts keep telling me that it's him. I can't really confirm it now, and I worry that if I announce it, the divine moonrace will immediately go down to exterminate all the remaining specters regardless of whether or not it's true. That won't change anything and the killer is still here to threaten them. If the divine moonrace takes the billion remaining specters as hostages to force him into a trap, assuming the killer is even Bodhi, there's no way they'd bring all those specters to the Divine Moon Realm. In other words, they'll make the Flameyellow Continent their battleground! We'll potentially lose billions of innocents. The divine moonrace doesn't care about us, after all," Tianming said.

"So, whether or not it is Bodhi, it's not something you can say, right?" Feiling now knew what he was thinking; it was a pretty thorough analysis. The humans of the Flameyellow Continent had finally managed to gain a hope of survival, and any more battles would be detrimental.

"Yes. Not to mention, Bodhi hates the divine moonrace. Great Emperor Xuanyuan has been dead for a long time, so the only remaining target for revenge is the divine moonrace. The humans of the Flameyellow Continent aren't worthy of his wrath, given how weak they are. Perhaps he's also afraid of making the presence of the surviving specters known to the Divine Moon Realm, hence why he didn't

start anything on the Flameyellow Continent and inadvertently spared them. This is a hard balance to tread. As for the divine moonrace, they have far more elites and there's nothing I can do to help them. The only choice I have is to try gaining some power or standing before the balance crumbles. Ideally, I'll gain enough power for the divine moonrace to have to be wary of me."

"Big Brother, it sounds like you're certain that it's really Bodhi."

"It's still just a gut feeling," he said helplessly.

The enemy was really careful, and Tianming knew far too little about the astralscape. Perhaps it really could be some random astral pirate.

"I do think you're right, though, at least based on the potential motive Bodhi may have. Do you know what the key is?" Feiling asked.

"What?"

"The first person to die was Liu Yizhao, and the strongest ones in Huiyue City to perish were Huiyue Du and Yusheng Luo. The deaths of the others are just padding to cover the killer's true intentions."

"You're right! Not to mention, he even tried to look for me and Huiye Shi on the night he killed Huiyue Du and had planned to immediately kill me. He changed his mind at the last minute when the city was being sealed. Now, it makes sense. The only question remaining is, how has he become so powerful?"

"I have no idea about that either. This person is terrifying," Feiling said with a shudder.

"Looks like we're in more danger than we thought, then. The fate of all humanity, including my dynasty, will hang by a thin thread if I die. If the Veneramoon Formation is deactivated, I'll be in grave danger. I also killed Bodhi's son, and if he knows that I was the one who also plotted for the extermination of so many specters, he'll definitely be filled with hate for me."

"The only way to overcome this is to be as powerful as him," Feiling said.

"That's right." Tianming held her hand, feeling rather pleasant after having figured it all out. As long as the formation was active, Bodhi wouldn't be able to harm him. Once that was past, they could flee and remain in hiding. As long as Bodhi wanted to keep the remaining specters safe, the Tianming dynasty would survive, so he only needed to make sure he didn't die.

His weaknesses were the humans in his dynasty and the billion surviving specters. Tianming and Feiling didn't want a battle to be fought on the Flameyellow Continent. They looked each other in the eye and smiled. Despite their upcoming hardship, they were filled with hope.

At that moment, they heard Huiye Shi outside. "My hair's gone, I don't want to live anymore! Waaaah!"

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Ten days later, Tianming reached the twelfth-level life phase in the divine moon hall. There were only two more steps before Ascension, or one, as far as the divine moonrace was concerned. He was at the crucial point and making as much progress as he could while the killer was still running rampant.

Apart from his cultivation, he also trained in the Hexapath Samsara Sword and even the Godsoul Canon, the latter of which had made great progress. He felt like he was on the cusp of the next level as he paused and headed back to the Shiyu Compound.

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In the past few days, the 'queen' of Huiyue City had come looking for Huiye Shi thrice, but Feiling managed to keep her safe and slip away. Little did they know that Huiye Yin had devised a new way to keep them there: surrounding the entire compound.

"Sisters, they'll never be able to escape with what we have! We allowed Huiye Shi to escape three times and I've had enough of being humiliated! Do you have the frogs ready? We'll stuff her belly with them and make sure she never wants to eat another meal in her life! As for that lowly servant that doesn't know her place, capture and kill her. Toss her corpse out of the city."

By now, the minions no longer dared to question why Huiye Yin was so obsessed with bullying Huiye Shi. There was nothing good that could come from ruffling an angry tiger's fur.

Chapter 993 - Moonsoul Blooddragon

Huiye Shi lay flat on a stone desk in the garden of the Shiyu Compound with a bronze mirror in hand, sighing at the sight of her own reflection. "It's been days, but only a small bit of hair has grown back. How long will it take until I can finally meet people again? Waaah!" Crying was just a regular affair for her nowadays.

"It's time. Do you want me to apply the ointment for you?" Feiling gently asked.

"Of course! This secret hair growth ointment that I went through hell and back for had better work!"

Feiling ground a few tribulation herbs into paste, then rubbed them between her hands before applying it to Huiye Shi's scalp. As the herbs were green, it looked like a patch of grass was growing out of her head. Seeing how smooth and oily it was, Feiling couldn't help but chuckle.

"What're you laughing at?!" Huiye Shi snapped.

"If you want to live well, you can't avoid getting some green on that head. Calm down," Feiling said, consoling her with a shoulder pat.

"You damn vixen! I will crush you one day!"

"Know your limits."

"Hmph!" Huiye Shi looked at the mirror again. "Damn, it's so green..."

She didn't even have tears left to squeeze out. She lay flat on the desk with her arms and legs raised toward the sky. "Why am I so unlucky nowadays? Ever since I met you, nothing good has happened to me."

After much complaining, she noticed that Feiling was still applying the ointment for her. "Thanks for putting up with me."

"Don't worry about it," Feiling said.

Huiye Shi didn't dare to leave in recent days and had even been saved by Feiling a few times. She was starting to feel rather regretful about what had happened back at the Flameyellow Continent. Nowadays, the two were more like friends.

After applying the ointment, Feiling was going to start cultivating again, yet lethal danger was approaching. She suddenly turned back and saw a savage-looking bloody light approaching them at rapid speed from outside the garden.

"What's that?!" Huiye Shi cried, leaping off the desk. The thing that came flying was really threatening, and the two of them wouldn't be enough to fend it off. It looked like a blood dragon more than ten meters long. However, it was no living thing. Instead, it looked like a dragon-shaped chain divine artifact that had its own will. It targeted Huiye Shi and Feiling and homed in on them at high speed.

Feiling had already backed off a few steps, but her expression suddenly changed. If she were to run alone, she would make it. But she still went back and pulled Huiye Shi to her, causing her to slow down slightly. What she didn't expect was that the flaming dragon-shaped chain wasn't targeting Huiye Shi, but herself instead!

She quickly used Spaceshock Punch, but the chain wrapped around her hand and tugged sharply. With a sharp noise, the chain wrapped itself around her whole body and bound both her delicate hands. The sharp chains pierced into her skin and began to burn, causing her to shriek in pain. If it weren't for her unique constitution, her body would have ended up charred beyond belief.

Faced with such power, even if she survived, it would feel horrible. Her face was getting rather pale as she struggled with all her might, to no avail. Enraged, her eyes gradually turned white. Then, markings that looked like patterns of walls surfaced on her skin and stopped the burning. Her expression changed to a gentle, yet terrifying one.

"This is Brother Jie's Moonsoul Blooddragon! How..." Huiye Shi immediately hurried to help free Feiling from the chains, only for her hand to be charred the moment she touched it. She felt tears welling up. "It hurts! What can I do?"

"Go look for him!" Feiling croaked in a hoarse voice.

"Alright, wait for me!"

Right as Huiye Shi turned around, the door was kicked in. The black-haired Huiyue Yin entered with her minions with a scornful look. "You won't be able to leave, Shishi. I heard you like delicacies. I brought something for you to try."

She held out a linen sack, within which croaks could be heard. When she opened it, many black frogs leapt out. They were ugly, fist-sized wildbeasts covered in venom and boils. "Take your time to enjoy it!"

The other girls behind Huiyue Yin shuddered at the sight and could only look pitifully at Huiye Shi. They were rather sympathetic toward her, and didn't understand why Huiyue Yin was bullying her.

Huiye Shi almost fainted at the sight of the blackblood frogs. Without parents to complain to, she was helpless. She immediately prostrated herself and said, "Sister Yin, I beg you... tell me how I offended you? I'll definitely fix it!"

"You didn't. I just wanted to mess with someone without parents to fight back for them. Hehe," Huiye Yin said. Those words caused Huiye Shi to despair. Huiye Yin immediately ordered, "Press her down and stuff them into her mouth! Don't let her swallow them whole. Make her chew and enjoy it."

The other girls grimaced in disgust and hesitated.

"You're all useless. If not for me, you would've been bullied by the boys growing up! Sheesh, I'll do it myself!" She picked up a frog by the leg and approached Huiye Shi, who was helplessly struggling and squirming. "You useless bunch who can't even do something as simple as this, go kill that servant! She deserves it for always wanting to ruin my fun."

"Understood!" The minions felt that would be much easier to do, and a few of them charged straight toward Feiling.

Meanwhile, Huiye Yin, relying on her four-level superiority over Huiye Shi, lifted her up and proceeded to stuff the frog into the poor girl's mouth, regardless of her struggles and pleading. She turned back to see that one of her minions already thrust a sword toward Feiling. The servant girl would die with no doubt.

Never in her wildest imagination would Huiye Yin have even fathomed hearing a clink when the tip of the sword struck Feiling's throat. She looked blankly at her fair, jade-like skin that looked like a wall made from white jade. It was completely unscathed from the strike. What was worse was the mysterious power that suddenly began emanating from her. All of them shuddered for an instant, and a few who were trying to attack even took a few steps back.

Then Tianming rushed in through the entrance and saw Feiling being subdued and almost killed, as well as Huiye Shi being force fed frogs. His rage had been simmering from the bullying she had to endure lately and it reached its boiling point when he drew his sword.

"Waaah! Save us!" Huiye Shi cried as if seeing a ray of hope.

Feiling also seemed to change. Her body seemed to be automatically reacting moments before, but now the light in her eyes vanished. She had returned to normal right before almost exploding. Like usual, she had no memories of what had happened and didn't know her throat had almost been pierced through.

Huiye Yin and the rest thought it was merely an elaborate illusion. When Feiling was bound by the Moonsoul Blooddragon once more, Huiye Yin smiled and turned to Tianming. "Oh? So this is the new top genius of Huiyue City? You aren't even an ascendant, yet you let yourself be called that? How does it feel to see me bullying your woman?"

She spat on the ground like a ruffian and shook her head derisively. "You aren't even good enough to polish my brother's shoes! Know your place!"

Tianming had never called himself the top genius. Instead, he kept an even lower profile after defeating Huiyue Yu and was never seen doing anything else but cultivating. But now, it seemed that Huiye Yin's

bullying streak had something to do with him. For her to go this far, even though he hadn't done anything, showed the fundamental flaw in her character.

Even without her provocation, Tianming was already at a breaking point at the sight of Feiling's life being threatened. He looked at her teary eyes and struggling expression. She was definitely afraid of the threat of losing her life. Without a word, he summoned the dragonhide and held the Grand-Orient Sword close as he stepped menacingly toward them. Women or not, they were going to pay.

Chapter 994 - Hexachromic Deergod

It wasn't just him. Ying Huo, Meow Meow, Lan Huang, and Xian Xian were all infuriated.

"How dare that bitch mess with my little mommy?! Xian Xian's pissed!" Even though Xian Xian often changed the way she addressed Feiling, what couldn't be disputed was its love for Feiling. If it weren't for having to cultivate, it would prefer to remain by her side.

Even the sleepy Meow Meow immediately snapped awake in a hostile manner at hearing about Feiling's plight. "I'll crush the balls of anyone that dares to touch Ling'er!"

"Cat Bro, they have no balls," Ying Huo said.

After Meow Meow got a good look, its rage didn't abate in the slightest. "Then I'll claw their faces off!"

"Charge!"

Tianming and his four beasts charged and started fighting in the Shiyu Compound. First, Xian Xian immediately put the entire area under its area of control, making sure all their opponents were surrounded by trees. Having reached the twelfth-level life phase, all of them had undergone a fundamental change, being really close to the Ascension stage.

Tianming's strong reaction stunned Huiye Yin for a moment. Then her expression turned savage. So the reason my brother had me bully Shishi is that he's unhappy with this fellow, right? How dare that outsider raise his hand against me? Nobody can blame me for crippling him, then! Does he even know whose turf he's on? Turning to her minions, she snapped, "Continue what you were doing! I'll take care of him!"

Even though Huiye Yin couldn't quite compare to her brother, she was second only to him in the entire city. She had just reached her forties and was at the Trisource Sky level of the Ascension stage, ranking her second among the juniors of the Huiyue Clan. As for Tianming, he had claimed to be at the twelfth-level life phase back then, so he wasn't even a god yet. Logically speaking, his abilities shouldn't have changed within a few short days.

Given his performance against Huiyue Yu and the rest, the clan had estimated his capabilities to be around the level of a Dipole Sky cultivator, which Huiye Yin could already deal with five years back. She didn't even bother manifesting her totems and charged straight at him while her minions continued bullying Huiye Shi.

As for Feiling, the moment she returned to normal, someone immediately tried to kill her once more. Ying Huo used Infernal Haze and Meow Meow used its blinding speed to run past Huiye Yin toward the

minions, who were at best first-level ascendants; a few of them were even samsarans like Huiye Shi. One of the girls raised her sword toward Feiling once more, only for Ying Huo to charge in and use the Ninesky Beastsoul Formation on her. The nine beasts bit directly onto the four bane-rings on the girl's arm and immediately tore it apart with sword ki.

"Aaaaah!" shrieked the girl as all her totems faded away. Ying Huo's show of force immediately scared the others who were approaching Feiling into taking a few steps back.

"It crippled my totems!" she cried. "How dare a lowly outsider like you destroy the bane-rings of a divine moonrace?! You're dead! Dead, you hear?!"

All across the Divine Moon Realm, non-divine moonrace who married into divine moonrace families usually didn't dare to offend any divine moonrace, let alone ruin their totems, hence the girl's sheer disbelief.

"Kill all his lifebound beasts! Don't just stand there!" Huiye Yin said after witnessing it. Her queenly authority had just been challenged, and she wasn't having any of it.

"Get them together!" The eight girls formed two groups and summoned their totems, sending some against Ying Huo and others against Meow Meow. Meow Meow had successfully defended Huiye Shi and tossed her near Feiling, then turned into its Regal Chaosfiend form. It glared at the tens of totems with a fierce gaze.

At the same time, Xian Xian's Radiant Vines and Bloodrain Swords came to support them. In its rage, it whipped and targeted all the totems, causing countless leaves and petals to fall all over the place and collapsing many of the buildings in the Shiyu Compound, causing quite a commotion. By now, the battle had attracted quite a lot of attention, though nobody dared to stop a fight the clan leader's daughter had instigated.

Xian Xian, Ying Huo, and Meow Meow alone managed to hold back eight foes, four of whom were ascendants. They didn't hold back at all, thanks to all the rage they felt. Xian Xian focused on controlling the crowd of totems, while Meow Meow unleashed its many offensive abilities. Ying Huo played the role of disruptor by charging straight into crowds with its small body, spilling much blood with its wings.

"If I don't thoroughly crush you here and now, you'll think we're easy to pick on!" Xian Xian said as the blood lilies bloomed, scattering its petals at the totems when Bloodrain Swords was used. Even though there was no blood to drain, the petals could still damage them by exploding, thereby lowering their combat capabilities.

Despite the chaotic battlefield, Ying Huo and the rest still managed to strike terror in their enemies' hearts. Now, they were all praying for Huiye Yin to come to their aid. After all, a third-level ascendant like her would definitely be able to take them all on singlehandedly.

Tianming and Huiye Yin clashed; Tianming only had Lan Huang by his side now. It was a beast almost as large as Huiyue City itself. Meanwhile, Huiye Yin manifested her totems, giants that stood two hundred meters tall, though they were puny in comparison to Lan Huang. Tianming, on the other hand, stood on one of Lan Huang's heads as they roared. While it fought against Huiye Yin's totems, Tianming pinpointed her location.

Though Huiye Yin may be arrogant and boastful, she had the capabilities to back it up. With the legacy of the clan leader, she was far stronger than the likes of Huiye Shi's brother and Huiyue Yu, not to mention she was a hexabane. Apart from the five moons on her right arm, there was a silver moon in the middle of her left palm. They were six grand moons!

Her six colorful totems blocked Tianming's view. They had strong physiques that gave them a really burly air, which was only intensified by their deer heads. Six colored halos circled around their massive antlers.

If one's totems were gendered, they would usually match the gender of the terra, which usually corresponded to the actual body. However, female deer didn't have antlers. The only plausible explanation for that was that Huiye Yin's terra was male, which was almost fitting, given her tomboyish demeanor. Regardless, gender didn't factor much into the actual power of these hexachromic deergods.

With a single look, Tianming could tell how ferocious Huiye Yin was. Her totems, like her, wielded a blade and a sword each. Her blade was really thin and didn't look too different from her sword. Both of them were divine artifacts; the sword was called Frostmoon Heart and the blade was called Galemoon Sky. With the gigantic totems radiating all sorts of colors behind her, she looked like a psychedelic war god.

Seeing Tianming enraged, she felt the urge to laugh. "Who do you think you are to challenge me on my turf? Piss on the ground and look in your reflection, will ya? You're just a brat! I'll show you what adult society has in store for you. You don't even know your place. Don't think I'll stoop so low as to grab a bone from a desperate stray dog like you!"

The only answer she got was Tianming and Lan Huang's charge. The gigantic twin-headed dragon used Primordial Wheel, gathering much of the rubble and dirt for added mass before ramming toward Huiye Yin. The six hexachromic deergods immediately descended to defend her from the blow, slashing their swords and blades at Lan Huang.

Lan Huang let its Kilofold Rings revolve at maximum speed. Coupled with its impressive momentum, it couldn't be stopped even by the combined effort of all six totems! With a loud crash, the totems were forced back and slammed into Huiye Yin.

"I'll send you flying!" Lan Huang howled.

Chapter 995 - Totemic Calamity, Imperial Sword Prison

Lan Huang recalled the times when it had played with the Archaionfiend and was pumped with excitement. It stopped spinning and planted its humongous claws on the ground, then suddenly bumped two of the hexachromic deergods into the sky with its heads, almost sending Huiye Yin herself flying as well. Lan Huang alone seemed to be able to take on six totems at once.

Even though the totems' kicks and slashes had managed to pass through Kilofold Rings to cut it and leave wounds behind, Lan Huang was so engaged in the battle that it ignored the pain. As long as the enemy's attacks couldn't kill it in one hit, the wounds would automatically heal up. The Greenspark

Tower's effects allowed Lan Huang to be a gigantic shield for Tianming to stave off the totems' attacks with.

Huiye Yin was already furrowing her brows at Lan Huang's ferocity. She had been told since childhood that the rootbeast race were all simple fools. Who knew that having an actual corporeal body, as opposed to ethereal bodies of totems, would give them so much leverage? Putting aside their abilities, Ying Huo was even able to use battle arts, something that should have been exclusive to totems.

Totems didn't need to train to use battle arts at all, since they were basically extensions of the user's body. The hexachromic deergods, for instance, were agile and finely controlled, so they were able to use blades and swords together. Not to mention, there were usually more totems than lifebound beasts.

With two totems sent flying, only two were left to hold back Lan Huang while another two worked with Huiye Yin to attack Tianming. But at that moment, countless roots sprouted from the ground of the Shiyu Compound and tied down those two totems, rendering Huiye Yin without help as she faced off against Tianming, now equipped with the Dragonhide.

The Shiyu Compound had almost entirely been destroyed. Tianming's sheer power once more worried Huiye Yin. She noticed that the battle had been fought on equal footing so far, and that unnerved her. Like Tianming, she was able to use sword arts with both weapons at the same time. With Frostmoon Heart, she used Chillstar Nether. With Galemoon Sky, she used Sixmoon Blade Rampage.

Chillstar Nether left a trail of ice wherever the sword passed. While they were small and fine, they were fatal. The ice could freeze and kill Tianming in an instant. It was almost a sure-kill move. As for Sixmoon Blade Rampage, that reflected Huiye Yin's nature better. She held the blade in her right hand and mobilized all the astralforce in her body to form six moons that were in essence countless blade slashes that shot toward Tianming. Her totems also used those two battle arts against Lan Huang in retaliation while the ones bound by Xian Xian's roots were cutting themselves free.

"Die!" Huiye Yin went in for the kill. She knew that they were gathering an audience, and if she couldn't settle this soon, someone would come to save Tianming. While she didn't really mind, she had to go all out to not lose any face after receiving such a provocation.

Currently, four of her six totems had recovered their combat capability, and all of them used those two battle arts. Countless strands of sword ki and blade slashes seemed to swallow Tianming up entirely. At the same time, the hexachromic deergods flashed with six colors. When the colors intertwined, a piercing sound was produced. The sound waves seemed to form into solid light and shoot toward Tianming's head.

That wasn't a battle art. Instead, it resembled abilities more. These were totemic calamities, special techniques similar to a lifebound beast's abilities. Only the bane race's totems had them, and even then, only pentabanes or above could awaken them. Their totems could only have one totemic calamity at most, but that alone greatly boosted their power.

Huiye Yin's totemic calamity was called the Sacred Hexachromic Tune. Totemic abilities were exceedingly rare, with less than five percent of the divine moonrace actually managing to awaken them. However, they were exceedingly formidable. That was the basis of the confidence of totem users. Not only did they have many totems, but they could cultivate much quicker and even use their totems to

execute battle arts, as well as awaken totemic calamities. Even having only one calamity was enough to turn the tables.

Tianming felt that totems did indeed have many advantages, but to him, lifebound beasts with abilities were far more powerful. When the light-formed sound came shooting toward him, Lan Huang raised its head and roared. A Primordial Soundwave slammed against the solidified sound, the waves canceling each other out. The ability of a Primordial Chaos Beast had actually managed to neutralize the calamity of a totem!

That was when Tianming counterattacked. Meow Meow had already dealt with its foes and joined the fray as a gigantic Regal Chaosfiend, biting down on one of the hexachromic deergods by the neck. Then it used Myriad Thundernet to entrap another, taking on two totems alone. But that didn't stop it from sending Hellchasing Soulthunder Huiye Yin's way. The sudden burst of lightning affected her moves.

At the same time, Xian Xian's Radiant Vines came whooshing in. Not only were they able to tie down two of the totems, they also thoroughly whipped them to the point that she snapped one of the arms of a hexachromic deergod!

Without her totems at her side, Huiye Yin's offensive capabilities tanked by at least two-thirds. However, she should be proud, for she was able to cause Tianming to use three of his lifebound beasts against her. Ying Huo was left behind taking care of the rest, while Meow Meow, Lan Huang, and Xian Xian were focused on her totems.

Tianming used the fifth strike of Hexapath Samsara Sword, Hadean Reincarnation, and clashed with her. In his hands were the eighteen layers of hades. Flames, frost, lightning, galestorms, seas of blood, lost souls, and hungry ghosts were concentrated in those blades, rendering a demonic aura around Tianming. "When humiliating others, be ready to be humiliated yourself!"

Reason no longer mattered. He was enraged enough that she had tried to have Feiling killed. Without Huiye Yin's totems protecting her, she was completely engulfed by the vortices of hell.

"Open your eyes and see who's stronger!" Tianming had made rapid progress for the sole reason of being able to control his own fate when the time came. If a samsaran defeating a first-level ascendant wasn't flashy enough, how about a third-level ascendant?

The Human Emperor's Dragonhide shone brightly as he clashed with Huiye Yin. The two of them fought without their totems or lifebound beasts, though Huiye Yin had been struck by Hellchasing Soulthunder. Her moves had already been affected by the lightning and she was completely dominated by Tianming.

"Aaaagh!" No matter how hard she tried to resist, Tianming's attack assaulted her in waves. Even with her astralforce, she felt like driftwood in a raging sea! As her form crumbled, Tianming pierced through her flurry of attacks with his black sword and thrust it into her lower abdomen, drawing blood.

Tianming could have killed her just then, but she was still the daughter of the clan leader, after all. While he was mad, he hadn't lost all reason yet. All he wanted to do was to teach them a harsh lesson, not kill them.

Huiye Yin shrieked from the stab and flung her sword and blade away. Though she wanted to retaliate, Tianming slapped her face with the flat of the gold sword, knocking a few teeth flying. Then his sword flashed once more and cut off her short hair before carving a turtle-shell pattern on her face.

"You!" she raged, despite the pain in her belly. Having reached the Ascension stage, there was no longer a saint palace in the abdomen, so an attack there wouldn't cripple her and could be recovered from. However, Tianming used the Imperial Sword Prison, infusing it in her body. With his mastery of the skill mature, he could hide it in his opponent's body and keep it dormant. Once he activated it, it would claim Huiye Yin's life!

"Now scam!" Before she could cuss more, Tianming drew his sword out and kicked her in the face, sending her flying. Then he turned to attack her totems. As long as she didn't unmanifest them, they would be able to crush the totems, which would take her a month or two to recover from. Tianming and Meow Meow made quick work of the first totem, tearing it to pieces.

When Huiye Yin got up and saw it, she freaked out. "How dare you?!"

She was terrified of him and knew she couldn't win, so she quickly withdrew her remaining totems to prevent any more damage. The battle had finally ended. Tianming landed lightly on the ground, looking at her battered form, with blood flowing out of her belly, her head bald, and her face disfigured. She was entirely covered in blood. She even vomited, contorting her face even more.

Many people had witnessed the battle, thinking it to be much more shocking than Tianming's last. A samsaran with lifebound beasts had just crushed a third-level ascendant. Each level of progress in the Ascension stage represented a humongous gap, far more than each level of the Samsara stage.

The onlookers were all stunned by Huiye Yin's defeat, except for one person, who smiled: Jie. He had been there from the beginning with his Moonsoul Blooddragon. He smiled because Tianming, an unparalleled genius, was the perfect scapegoat for him. "If he doesn't shock the entire Huiyue City, there's no way Sovereign Xi will lust after him."

Chapter 996 - Jie the Fatal

Due to the matter of the killer, all of the divine moonrace within the city had become really sensitive to battles that occurred within its bounds. After all, there were proper places for duels between disciples to be carried out. The Shiyu Compound was within the residential area, so combat was usually forbidden there. As such, the commotion had attracted quite a lot of spectators even though it only took a short time, and they witnessed the samsaran Tianming completely defeating Huiye Yin, the daughter of the clan leader, and that was with Ying Huo not fighting beside him.

"He's only seventeen! That's godly!"

"Huiye Yin's at least twice his age."

"Word is that he came from Soulwell Mountain. Despite the lack of cultivation resources there, he truly turned out to be a miracle."

"This can't be the descendant of some big shot from Orderia that somehow ended up in our Divine Moon Realm, can it?"

Many people of all ages and genders were shocked and awed.

"Isn't it to our benefit that he married into our Huiyue Clan?"

"I really wonder what kind of miracles he'll bring about in another ten years."

That was generally the consensus the divine moonrace had of Tianming now.

"Why'd Huiye Yin get into a fight with him?"

"I don't know. But it's hardly surprising, considering how rambunctious she usually is. The clan leader also spoils her too much. Something about Li Tianming must've ticked her off."

"Given where they were fighting, it's clear who the aggressor was."

"However, Huiye Yin is the clan leader's daughter, yet Li Tianming defeated and humiliated her. Given his low status, I believe those of the clan leader's direct line will have an issue with this."

As they were talking, a man suddenly charged into Shiyu Compound and lashed out at Tianming. Moments before, Tianming had defeated Huiye Yin and was going to get her to release the Moonsoul Blooddragon. However, she still couldn't let go of her pride and snapped at him, completely ignoring his demand.

Now that Tianming wasn't on his home turf, he had to control his temper if he wanted to live a long life. So, he brought his sword to Feiling. The bloody chains were wrapped around her, burning. Had it not been for the white jade wall patterns that appeared on her skin, she would have been completely charred. Even so, it still hurt a lot, though she endured it and tried to make it not show to make sure Tianming didn't lose his cool. All Tianming had to back him up was Huiye Shi, and he would always be considered an outsider. He was only trying to buy time to make as much progress as he can.

"I'll see if I can get it off with the Grand-Orient Sword. Just endure for a bit," Tianming said, a little troubled.

"I can take it, Big Brother," Feiling said.

Tianming raised the sword and slashed at the chains with all his power. At that moment, he heard shocked cries from all over and sensed danger immediately, so he turned back and slashed behind him. Within a split second, he saw the one who tried to attack him. It was the white-haired blood-eyed man with six red teardrops under his eyes. His gaze was cold and his palms were fast as haze. As he attacked, the countless albi within his body unleashed astralforce to suppress Tianming. He was undoubtedly far stronger than the Trisource Sky Huiye Yin—in a completely different league, in fact!

Huiye Yin's power had been only akin to a small lake for Tianming, but this new assailant's astralforce felt like a raging sea. Conventional wisdom dictated that there was a substantial difference between the four lower skies, four center skies, and four higher skies. It was very likely this person was at a level in the four center skies. The first level of the four center skies would be the fifth level of the Ascension stage, Pentarcenic Sky. Anyone under fifty that reached that level would be considered a peak genius among the divine moonrace, and that was Huiyue Jie.

It was completely shocking for someone of his level to mount a surprise attack. It was the first time Tianming had felt the extent of domination a true elite ascendant should have over a sambaran. The only reason Huiye Yin and her gang couldn't defeat him was due to their relative immaturity at the Ascension stage. However, Huiyue Jie was the real overwhelming deal.

Huiyue Jie's palm seemed like an illusion. In almost an instant, he appeared right in front of Tianming, grabbing his sword with hands that shone with a bloody light. The sheer force of his grip snapped the fingers of Tianming's hand. He snatched the Grand-Orient Sword and slammed Tianming in the face with boundless astralforce. With a snap, Tianming was sent crashing into the debris.

Given the sound of the slap, it almost seemed like Tianming's head would be caved in on the spot, resulting in his immediate death. What they didn't expect was that he would climb out of the rubble the next moment and spit out a mouthful of black blood. He covered his face with his palm and hid the healing from the sight of others. Soon, his caved face and fingers returned to normal.

"Did you not eat? How are you so weak?" Huiyue Jie mocked.

Tianming's eyes were bloodshot. It had been a long time since he'd been truly humiliated. The enemy hadn't shown any mercy to him at all. If it weren't for the Greenspark Tower, this wouldn't have ended with just some minor pain. He felt his rage simmering over, but having come to this point, he wouldn't lose his reason over literally getting face-slapped or having his sword taken away.

A true elite wasn't someone who never suffered from trouble, it was someone who would pay back their trouble ten times over. That was how Huiyue Yin had ended up becoming Tianming's ticket to the Divine Moon Realm. Despite his rage, he wanted to grow stronger and truly overcome his foe.

This turn of events had been something nobody could ever have predicted. Huiyue Jie's status on the Divine Moon Realm far superseded that of his little sister, so nobody even so much as thought of stopping him.

He didn't seem the least bit perturbed before the crowd, merely toying with the heavy sword and feeling out the patterns on the blade. "I heard your talent is decent, and I've seen it with my own eyes. You have a good future, but don't think for a moment that Huiyue City will revolve around you. Joining the ranks of the divine moonrace means respecting our customs. To think that you dared to humiliate the daughter of the clan leader... do you think you can act so lawlessly?"

"Brother, don't bother wasting your words on him. He dared to hit me even though he's just come to Huiyue City. He must think his talent makes him stand out above everyone else. He's only seventeen now, and if we don't give him a lesson, who knows what he'll be up to when he gets far more arrogant?!" Huiye Yin said.

The onlookers exchanged glances, with some thinking that her argument made sense.

"He's an outsider, and a young one at that. Someone has to show him his place."

"True. He did deserve a slap to be reminded of how things work in our clan."

"Huiyue Jie truly did him a favor there."

"Yeah. He's going to go to Divine Moon Skycity soon enough. By then, there'll be nobody among the younger generation remaining who can take on Li Tianming."

Chapter 997 - Oath of a Year

Those words were laughable to say the least. Huiye Yin was the one who had been bullying others. Though, the divine moonrace cared more about status than the truth at this point. Might makes right, no matter how badly they treated the weak.

"Li Tianming, this slap is to teach you the proper way to behave. You can hate me for that if you want, but as long as you're weaker than me, you have no right to be arrogant. I am not afraid of your vengeance. I'll give you one year. Let's make an oath. If you can defeat me in a year, I'll return this sword to you and you may slap me as many times as you wish." Huiyue Jie kept Tianming's Grand-Orient Sword in his spatial ring.

"A year, eh?" Tianming wanted to say he didn't even need a year, but he knew nothing he said would matter now. Without power or status, he would have to endure. Even so, the beauty of this world was that everyone was allowed to make progress. Nobody would stay at the top forever. "Alright. I'll come looking for you then. You're the one who said I can slap you as many times as I want, so you'd better not hide behind your status as the clan leader's children when the time comes."

"Hehe, don't even think about it. You have no right. How could a quadbane who uses blood pact lifebound beasts possibly compete? Your potential is limited, and there's no saying whether you'll even reach the Ascension stage. For all we know, you might just have used it all up within the first seventeen years of your life."

That was the thing that concerned the divine moonrace most, and Tianming had to prove himself.

"Li Tianming's talent is far too mystical. Some say that he's the first person to ever come to Huiyue City and displease Huiyue Jie. The fact that he humiliated his sister doesn't help."

"Well, Huiyue Jie is at least charitable. He only slapped him once. I doubt it was even that hard of a slap. He even gave Tianming a year before he would challenge him again. As expected of a peak genius of the divine moonrace. How gracious of him."

"He must be trying to set Li Tianming on the right path as a senior, even if it makes Li Tianming hate him."

Huiyue Jie was satisfied to hear them come to those conclusions. What he wanted was for the oath of a year to be established under reasonable circumstances. That way, even if Tianming ended up defeating him, it wouldn't look the least bit like he had intentionally allowed it to happen. Even though he would be stomped on and crushed in this story, he would at least get to live! There was another genius who would rise, but he would take Huiyue Jie's place to head to the nightmarish palace. Tianming didn't know any of that. In fact, less than three people in the whole city did. Everyone envied Huiyue Jie for gaining their empress's favor.

While Tianming had lost his sword, he wasn't in a rush. He would remember what had been done to him. In fact, he was more concerned about the Moonsoul Blooddragon. "One year it is. I will come to fulfill my end of the deal when the time comes."

"I'll be waiting, then."

"This is your weapon, right? She is innocent and not involved in this. Let her go."

"Oh? Why do I feel like that girl is really important to you? Even more than Huiye Shi? You can't be cheating on her, can you?"

Now that Feiling's Dreamdemon Arcana disguise had been dispelled, her beauty had attracted a lot of attention.

"What are you talking about?! She's Tianming's elder sister!" Huiye Shi said, the oily green spirit herb paste still lathered across her scalp.

"Sister?" Huiye Jie smiled. "Very well. To give you some pressure and remind you of our customs, I'll have your sister endure your punishment. She shall be burned like this for a year."

"Aren't you too underhanded? If you have a problem with me, settle it with me alone." Tianming hadn't been that angry before, but this almost pushed him over the edge.

"Who said that? Haven't you heard of collective punishment? I'm doing this for your own good. Without experiencing any hardships, you'll never grow into anything substantial," Huiyue Jie said. He waved and glared at Tianming. "Remember! You have one year! Don't expect to get anything from the divine moonrace during this time. Think not of what the divine moonrace can do for you, but what you can do for the divine moonrace instead! We'll see what extent your talent extends to in a year."

After that, he left with the gleeful Huiye Yin. The onlookers made way for him. Once he left the crowd, he closed his eyes.

"Brother, you really were amazing today. To think that you're the same nice and obedient brother from before... I didn't think you'd go so far as to discipline someone! You're so cool!" Huiye Yin said.

Huiyue Jie ignored her and merely looked at the man and old woman in the distance. "Dad, Granny, don't blame me for being cruel. I'm only trying to ensure my own survival."

He deeply yearned for Tianming to surpass him within the following year. When the time came, even if he wouldn't lose, he would have to fake it. When he was utterly humiliated by Tianming, Tianming would take his place in the Xi Palace. Even if many people would come to see him as a pitiful man who lost his chance of a lifetime for hubris, few would know that he was the true mastermind behind all that.

"I hope Li Tianming doesn't disappoint me. I only have a year left."

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"Disperse, all of you!"

Shiyu Compound was left in a dilapidated state. The onlookers quickly went their own ways.

"Why do I feel like Jie is going a little too far?"

"That's right. Huiye Yin was the one who bullied Huiye Shi first. Li Tianming was only standing up for his spouse. He wasn't going overboard in the least."

"I feel like this will only make Li Tianming hate the divine moonrace. If it turns out that he's truly talented, that would be a huge shame."

"I didn't think Huiyue Jie would be susceptible to envy as well."

"That's right. He took his weapon and slapped him hard. Not to mention, he also chose to torture Li Tianming's sister for a year. It's inhumane."

"Enough. He's a genius that has the favor of Sovereign Xi. He can definitely get away with a little thing like this."

The crowd chattered on, expressing nothing but distant pity for Tianming.

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Huiye Shi remained seated on the ground, completely panicking. "I'm sorry... I don't know how it came to this..."

Tianming stood before Feiling, having tried many of his other weapons. However, he wasn't able to break the Moonsoul Blooddragon at all. The weapon was rather sharp and had embedded itself into her skin, despite the white jade wall patterns. While it didn't draw blood, it was hard to deal with.

"How do you feel?" Tianming asked, giving it a tug. The only thing he could do was have Ying Huo absorb the bloodfire. At the very least, Feiling would no longer be burned.

"Not too good. While it doesn't hurt much anymore, my limbs are all bound and I can't move. It feels rather bad," Feiling said.

That was the fate of those who were at the mercy of others. From the very beginning, the divine moonrace had left a bad impression on Tianming. Now, Feiling's suffering was fueling his rage. Apart from Huiye Shi, he seemed to regard everyone else like her brother, Huiyue Yin. In fact, he wanted to kill Huiyue Jie even more than the former.

"What can I do? If this takes a year, Feiling will have to suffer everyday. I... I'll look for Granny Yuehe! She'll set things right!" Huiye Shi said, then asked Tianming to wait and left.

Chapter 998 - A Loving Family

"Do you think she'll succeed?" Feiling asked.

"Not really," Tianming said.

"Why? Isn't that granny a good person?"

"I no longer have anything good to say about the divine moonrace. It can't hurt to be pessimistic. The more hopeful you are, the heavier your disappointment will be."

"Big Brother, we're now in a difficult time. The fate of the humans of the Flameyellow Continent is still uncertain. We still have to be wary of Bodhi. Not to mention, we don't even know if Feng is even still alive. It's a little difficult for us to rely on the divine moonrace to grow, but we have no choice. You aren't wrong to think that the people here only want to make use of us without really caring about us."

"It's fine. This is better, in fact. I won't feel indebted to them for cultivating here," he said with a sigh. "Ling'er, if Granny Yuehe doesn't agree to remove this, you'll have to endure this for a bit. Ten months or so might be enough. He's underestimating me by giving me a year. If I can reach the Ascension stage, I'll retrieve my sword and we'll leave this place. I don't believe that we won't be able to achieve anything without their help."

"Alright. I'll be fine, it's just being tied up. That doesn't stop you from kissing me, right?" she teased, trying to make him relax.

"Ling'er..." He stroked her cheeks, though his rage flared once more when he touched the chains. It was the rage of a sovereign. "I'm sorry for putting you through trouble time and again since leaving the Vermillion Bird Kingdom."

"Big Brother, don't say that. You weren't the one that took me out. I was the one who chose to follow, understand? Not to mention, we have no backing and have to rely on ourselves for everything. We had to overcome the limits of our lifespans to reach the peak and challenge clans with millions of years of legacy. It's only natural for us to run into trouble. But as long as we're alive, there's hope for the future. I'm not a weak person. As long as you're with me, I'm not even afraid of death. This is just a little chain. It can't stop us," she said with a fervent gaze. Tianming was often surprised at how strong she was.

"Alright. We'll just take out whoever causes trouble for us. I'm thankful for Huiyue Jie. Now, I'm a hundred times more motivated to reach the Ascension stage." It was either that or sit helplessly and watch his lover remain bound for life.

"Good, you two. As long as we overcome this obstacle, we'll soar through the skies," Ying Huo said, putting its wing on Feiling's hand. Meow Meow also stretched out its little paw and put it on the wing, followed by Xian Xian's spiritform's little fingers."

"Me too!" Lan Huang quickly stretched out a claw, but it was far too big and had nowhere to rest but on Tianming's head. Though the claw was so huge it blocked out its own line of sight. "Umm... is it over? How much longer do I have to keep my claw up? My leg is tiring out!"

"Tortoise Bro, there's a year left," Meow Meow lazily said.

Lan Huang began panicking, much to everyone else's amusement.

Touched, Feiling looked at them and smiled. "Being able to meet you all has made my life worth living. Thank you."

Lastly, Tianming held all of their 'hands' with his own. The fingers of his right hand were warm, while his black left arm was cold. However, the blood that flowed within him boiled. "Ling'er, you're wrong. That's far from enough. There's more brothers and sisters who will join us on our journey soon enough. Nobody will be able to dominate us. We're a strong and loving family," Tianming said.

As if hearing his words, the little grey egg popped out of the lifebound space and landed on Tianming's palm, snuggling tight. It seemed curious as to why all of them were holding hands all of a sudden. There was no predicting when and why this egg would appear.

"Buzz off. I don't want to be lovey-dovey with you, Tianming. I want my own harem," Ying Huo said.

"It's not that bad. All that lovey-dovey time is just more time for me to nap, right?" Meow Meow said with a yawn.

"I don't want to be lovey-dovey with little Li either. I want Ling'er! She smells nice! Little Li smells bad!" Xian Xian said, rolling its eyes as the rest laughed.

Tianming realized that there would always be people he unconditionally loved in his life. Perhaps that was all he needed. Otherwise, what would be the point of living in a world as chaotic as this? Was there a difference in existing and not existing?

As they were talking, Lan Huang tried its best to squeeze itself smaller and nestled down with them, its claw still shivering on Tianming's head. "Hey, is it over? My claw's going to fall off!"

"Hahahaha!"

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An hour later, Huiye Shi returned with her eyes red and puffy.

"How'd it go?" Tianming asked, holding her by her arms.

"Waaaah! It's ridiculous!" Huiye Shi said, crying nonstop.

"So? What did they say?"

"Granny didn't even want to see me!"

"Is that so surprising? She saw her own granddaughter beaten up and shaved bald, not to mention the marks on her face. Why would she speak to us?"

"Hmph! Word is that the others are saying that now that I got a good husband, I began looking down on Huiye Yin. They think they're teaching us a lesson we deserve! They say you're too young and they want to set you right on the right path and even said I was responsible! What a bunch of bastards!"

"So, are you still Huiyue Jie's loyal fangirl?"

"No way! I stopped stanning him long ago. Now, I stan you."

"Very well. Take care of Ling'er for me."

"Will do. You must hurry up and settle this within a year. Ling'er is too pitiful, I feel really bad for her."

"Since the Shiyu Compound is destroyed, should we move back to Duyue Mansion?"

"That works."

Duyue Mansion was rather huge, so Lan Huang could finally come out to play in the yard. Tianming left all four of his lifebound beasts there to protect Feiling. He would be going to the divine moon hall to

cultivate his heavenly will, so he wouldn't need them by his side. He would only need to be with them at night when they absorbed the stellunar source together.

"One year, huh..." Tianming looked at the divine moon hall that shone like a bright moon. Every time he recalled the chains around his beloved, his body burned. He didn't care how others managed to ascend, all he cared about was that he would do it fueled by anger!

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The city lord's mansion was the largest mansion in all of Huiyue City and occupied a huge area. It was the source of the stellunar source, after all. Within the estate was a yard planted full with cherry trees and a lake so clear its bottom was plainly visible. In the middle of the lake was a colorful pavilion, within which were three people of varying ages, sitting at the east, west and north of the round stone table respectively.

The old person was Granny Yuehe, the young one was Huiyue Jie, and the middle-aged man was the leader of the Huiyue Clan, Huiyue Tianyu. His long hair was tied up in a ponytail and he wore a long white robe. His beard gave him the air of an elegant gentleman. He had been inspecting Tianming's sword and handed it back to Huiyue Jie. "It isn't anything that good. It won't allow you to channel much potential. You overestimated it."

"I'd thought this was part of the reason he could fight someone above his level," Huiyue Jie said. He had been pondering it for some time. Even though the sword was heavy, it looked average at best when compared to the divine artifacts of the Divine Moon Realm. He casually put it away.

"There's two matters at hand. The first is the appearance of a seventeen-year-old genius that can fight people three levels above him. Not only that, he looks decent and is of the rootbeast race. Second, this genius is now entangled in a conflict with the top genius of Huiyue City—you, Huiyue Jie. You couldn't tolerate how Li Tianming didn't follow our customs and taught him a lesson, even making an oath to fight him in a year. I've intentionally had people spread word about this. In time, Sovereign Xi will hear about it," Huiyue Tianyu said.

"Thank you, Father!" Huiyue Jie was endlessly grateful. If it weren't for the fact that he had already kowtowed a few times, he would be kneeling now.

"Child, you've had it hard. If this really works, the heavens might've just spared you," Huiyue Tianyu said.

"Dad... you'll finally acknowledge it? Xi Palace is hell, right?" Huiyue Jie said, tears flowing from his eyes. Just yesterday, Huiyue Tianyu was still telling him of the divine paradise Xi Palace was supposed to be. A place where true geniuses belonged.

"Shut up. Don't say anything from now on. Play your role as the rival for the protagonist. Once you lose, you'll fall from grace. From that moment on, live a lowly life and never stand out anymore." Huiyue Tianyu stood up and patted his son on the shoulder, heaving a great sigh.

"Understood!" Huiyue Jie took a deep breath.

"This is your last hope. Let's hope the protagonist does his best within this final year," Yuehe said, finishing her moon tea.

Chapter 999 - Obstacles and Chains Shall Fall by the Sword

Feiling and Huiye Shi no longer left Duyue Mansion, due to all the commotion going on outside. Nowadays, the place was relatively quiet, with the servants and guards from before having left. Xian Xian's main body took root at the center of the mansion, guarding Feiling with its other siblings.

Within the courtyard, Feiling leaned against the huge tree in its shade. As she could barely move, this was the only pose she could easily maintain. Xian Xian's spiritform was nestled in her bosom, looking pitifully at her.

Huiye Shi sat on a huge rock not far away. Given the recent happenings, she felt a little frustrated and asked, "Does it feel bad?"

Before, Feiling would smile and shake her head. But nobody answered the question this time around. A little shocked, she quickly went to where Feiling was and saw her leaning against the tree with her head lowered. The entire time, Xian Xian was blankly looking in her eyes.

"Ling'er?" Huiye Shi called out. Worried that something had happened to her, she quickly approached, only for Feiling to abruptly look up with a searing white gaze that was so bright and piercing that Huiye Shi shrieked. Stunned, she quickly backed off and rolled on the ground.

"What... what's going on with you?" she said blankly. When she calmed down, she noticed that Feiling hadn't been paying her any heed at all. Instead, she was slightly shuddering, and even glowing. Her aura had noticeably changed and the Moonsoul Blooddragon chain that bound her also shook and made a wailing sound.

That instant, Ying Huo descended from the tree and asked, "What's going on with Ling'er? Does she feel bad?"

However, Feiling didn't seem to hear it. Instead, she looked akin to the time when she had suppressed the Archaionfiend at Xuanyuan Lake—angry, frustrated and cold. It was a chilling sight to behold. Lan Huang and Meow Meow also came to see.

"Try yelling at her," Ying Huo said.

"Okay!" Lan Huang roared loudly, causing the tree to shake and shed many leaves. After the resounding blast of sound, they saw that Feiling's gaze had returned to normal and the terrifying aura around her was no more.

A little later, she shook her head and looked at them. "Why are you all surrounding me? Don't worry, I'm fine." Though she tried to squeeze out a smile, the fact remained that being bound still felt really uncomfortable.

"Are you really okay?" Huiye Shi asked, still inspecting her. "You look normal now, but you seemed scary just now."

"Really?" Feiling knew better than anyone. Ever since Fang Qingli had tried to kill her, she had entered that state a number of times. While it had saved her time and again, she didn't know what it meant. Was

the consciousness of Xuanyuan Xi still alive, or was the city lord of Perpetia manifesting in her? It might not necessarily be a good thing.

"It's just like last time," Ying Huo said with a solemn look.

"I'm fine. There's no need to worry," Feiling said.

"Let's tell him when he comes back later tonight."

"Okay."

For now, that was the end of the matter. However, none of them noticed that part of the Moonsoul Blooddragon was cracked.

"Shishi, my back's a little itchy. Can you take a look and see if the chains are the cause?" Feiling asked.

"Alright." Huiye Shi went to her back and confirmed the location with Feiling. "The chain isn't there."

"How could that be? Look closer," Feiling said with a furrowed brow. Not only did it feel itchy, it also hurt a little.

"Okay." Huiye Shi undid part of Feiling's blue dress, revealing her pristine back and feeling the spot up.

"Ling'er, your back's really smooth. There isn't any wound or anything."

"Is there anything weird about it?"

"Umm, only these two spots. They seem a little raised, but not by much. It could be natural."

"Alright. I'm fine now."

"Good to hear." Huiye Shi didn't ask too much. She didn't notice how Feiling lowered her head with worry.

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It had been roughly twenty days since Huiyue Jie attacked them. Ten days ago, Tianming had reached the death phase of the twelfth level, where Dugu Jin used to be. After breaking through one final time, he would reach the Ascension stage and become a 'god', as the common folk believed. Little did they know that this was only the very beginning of godhood. The only difference was that they would be able to leave the Welkin plane and head for the stars, but the astralscape was boundless in scope.

Once reaching the twelfth-level death phase, as long as one's heavenly will was mature, it would transform into divine will, allowing one to take the final step at any time. As such, Tianming had spent the past few days with Ying Huo and the rest, trying to make the final push.

Huiyue City had been peaceful in the past few days. Even the matter of the killer had faded into obscurity. However, Tianming knew that if the killer really was Bodhi, it was merely the calm before the storm.

"Ying Huo, Ling'er entered that state eight times in total over the past few days, right?" Even as Tianming was surrounded by tens of thousands of caeli, he was still concerned about Feiling.

"Yeah. But it's been getting less frequent," Ying Huo said.

Even though he was doing his best to make progress, he still couldn't shake his worry for her while she was bound by the chain. At the very least, the fact that she entered that state worried him even more. "Looks like we have more and more things to worry about."

Tianming forced himself to put that aside, knowing that excessive worry would be a detriment to making actual progress. He immersed himself in the experiences of the caeli as they made their way toward the Ascension stage. However, he noticed that none of their paths matched him very well. His Imperial Will represented his path as a sovereign; it was different from the normal laws of the world. The best he could do was gain a frame of reference from those experiences without actually using them for himself.

"These days, the more I suppress my anger and keep my cool, the worse I feel," Tianming said.

"Then don't suppress it. I don't get it. Focusing solely on cultivation and ignoring everything else feels pointless. What's the point of growing stronger if you don't care about anything? There's nothing inherently good about unfeeling tranquility. Where would you get your drive for growing stronger? I know many people say a clear mind is the key to greater insight, but that might not necessarily be what you need," Ying Huo said.

"You're right. I've only been suppressing it. I can't forget it at all. The Moonsoul Blooddragon is the heart of my worries. It has also bound my Imperial Will and stopped me from progressing. Even if I forget about it, that doesn't mean it's gone. It's still stopping me from moving forward. Since my heavenly will takes the shape of a sharp sword, I should face my rage directly and let it fuel my power. I will crush those chains!"

He began feeling like forgetting his worries in favor of tranquility was a mistake. "Any obstacle or chain in my path shall fall by my sword! That's always been my style! It makes no sense for me to play the role of a good boy all of a sudden before reaching the Ascension stage!"

It was only the beginning of his new path, not the end. "I can only feel out my path in the universe with divine will. Only then will I be able to use the will of the heavens and earth to control the power in my body."

The flames of passion burned brightly within him. He opened his blazing eyes and used his fists to send the caeli around him flying, making space for himself.

"They helped me make up the holes in my knowledge, allowing me to learn about countless different cultivation styles. However, they can't help me take my final step. After all, they're merely subjects of my heavenly will."

Some scenes kept replaying in his mind, such as the time he killed Ghoulish King Xue Yi in the Kilostar Domain and killing Fang Taiqing, Dugu Jin, Di Zang, and Jiang Wuxin at Taiji Peak Lake, as well as the crisis humanity was facing from the specter threat and the indifference of the Divine Moon Realm. He had inherited the will of his forebears and was treading a path of bloodshed with his lover and family. And now he had to deal with the remnant specters, the bullying of the divine moonrace, and the fact that he didn't even know if his sworn brother was still alive. Fortunately, he had formed his own dynasty and become the emperor of humanity across all of the Flameyellow Continent.

"What is the goal of being a sovereign? It's to set one's heart for their realm, use one's life for their subjects, and gain mastery and dominion over knowledge and wisdom to usher in an era of world

peace." Those words stilled his mind, making his body seemingly synchronize with the Flameyellow Continent. It was as if he was staring at the countless stars in the sky from the world below, uttering a primordial, guttural roar.

Within the realm of order, elites reigned supreme above the world below, passing down their legacies and strengthening their descendants generation by generation, while the weak remained beneath them with no hope of growing truly powerful. The weak needed someone that could overturn the status quo and soar to the skies, representing their wills. That person had to head to the Divine Moon Realm and announce to the world that even the weakest of life had the right to live on. They would not and should not be ignored.

The rage of life, of the humans living on the precarious Flameyellow Continent, and of the chained-up Feiling all needed to be addressed by Tianming. He would have to be the one to strive for their survival and safety. Did it make sense that he should still his mind to ascend to godhood like the millions of divine moonrace, who had the privilege of living in a peaceful realm, did? He simply couldn't! The truth was clear to him now.

"What I want is domination!" The humans of the Flameyellow Continent needed to change their fates and obtain the right to survive. Ever since the Tianming Dynasty was formed, Tianming's mind had been linked with the billions of his subjects' through the will of the sovereign. "I need all of you!"

Chapter 1000 - Dance of the Astral Discs

Tianming needed to continue advancing if he were to truly protect his home from the threat of the specters, as well as the potential aggression of the Divine Moon Realm. After the battle of the Kilostar Domain, Tianming City, and Taiji Peak Lake, he had become like a god in the hearts of those on the Flameyellow Continent, and in order to truly ascend to godhood, he needed their help. That was the true essence of the path of Imperial Will.

"The power of the heart is the most mystical, being able to ignore the restrictions of space and time. It allows me to feel your presence..."

Tianming opened his arms wide and closed his eyes amidst the countless caeli, waiting. Feiling's predicament was the key event that had allowed him to think it through. He would give up on the caeli of the divine moonrace, understanding that what he needed wasn't to learn, but to dominate. With the change in his train of thought and the foundation he had built on the Flameyellow Continent, when he yelled, the power of the heart he'd been waiting for finally came out of nowhere.

Perhaps everyone on the Flameyellow Continent had just looked at the moon or thought about their emperor. Eventually, billions of these intents flowed toward Tianming as divine power. The true foundation of his Imperial Will was his subjects. A sovereign without Omnisentient Will was merely a powerless, empty husk. That was the reason Tianming couldn't find his answer in the divine moon hall no matter how many ascension experiences he had accumulated. What he truly needed were the subjects of his dynasty giving him the final push through the clouds to change the fate of all humanity. When the boundless heavenly will gathered upon his Imperial Will, his will exploded in growth along with his rising rage and passion.

"Go! Let them see the power of my Tianming Dynasty!" The formation of the dynasty was only the start. He would bring them all with him on his journey to grow stronger. His sea of consciousness began howling as the Grand-Orient Sword-shaped heavenly will absorbed the power of the billions of strands of Omniscient Will and reached an apex, after which it began transforming from heavenly will to divine will. That event was the key to the changes that were to come.

The change in the 'Grand-Orient Sword' felt like a supernova that ushered in a chain reaction of explosions. Tianming felt every fiber of his being transforming. When his heavenly will finally finished converting into divine will, he felt a clear change in his sense of being relative to the universe. Back then, he had merely been an infant who had just learned to speak, but now he was a full adult. The universe, on the other hand, was akin to a giant that held boundless knowledge and power. With the knowledge Tianming had now, he would trade with the giant for even more power.

The sword within his sea of consciousness rapidly grew stronger. The figurative 'Moonsoul Blooddragon' that had been binding it had long since shattered. When his divine will grew to a certain extent, he clearly felt the millions of caeli around him seemingly coming to life, shuddering and moaning in submission. That was why it had been so hard for him to ascend.

"After I overcome this bottleneck, everything else will be smooth sailing! Nothing can stop me!"

The first step was converting heavenly will to divine will. Next, the divine will would split up into countless fragments and fuse into the countless albi in his body, but he didn't have to worry about it. The moment the transformation was complete, the gigantic sword in his sea of consciousness automatically split up and began the infusion process. Finally, his will had left his sea of consciousness, leaving only his vita behind within it and marking the beginning of a new phase in his life.

When the billions of divine will fragments entered his albi, Tianming noticed that his control over his power had increased to a terrifying degree. Divine will was like a new organ, similar to an internal mind's eye. He could clearly see each and every albus in his body, and there was a Grand-Orient Sword within each of them as the core of their power. They were far smaller than a saint palace, but they were as boundless as a universe.

"The third step!" To truly reach the Ascension stage, his saint palace would have to be destroyed, unleashing the samsara rings and allowing them to be converted into astral discs within the albi, providing the initial reserves of power within. Tianming was prepared for that step. When his heavenly will turned into divine will, the same happened for Ying Huo and the rest. Right after their divine will infused into their albi, they activated their respective codex techniques.

That aside, Tianming was curious about whether the Purple Tower would stop him from making changes to his saint palace. Based on his previous experience, it protected his saint palace from being destroyed. However, it didn't make sense that the Prime Tower would stop him from making progress.

Surprisingly, as the four codex techniques channeled the power to his saint palace, the Purple Tower suddenly vanished, allowing Tianming to easily make changes. Within his saint palace were four pairs of saint springs corresponding to each of his lifebound beasts, a life and a death for each, each of which had twelve samsara rings. Tianming only had to circulate those four techniques in reverse to shatter the saint springs and rupture his saint palace. The process wasn't dangerous at all, for the divine will within his body afforded him precise control over the chaotic energies. He siphoned them into his albi, which

seemed parched for energy. Step by step, the samsara rings shattered. It was a slow, gradual process rather than an instantaneous one.

"The saint springs have reached their limit. The Samsara stage is considered by the divine moonrace to be the last Saint stage, after all. With no destruction, there can be no creation. Only by bringing down the old can the new rise up."

This was a brand new paradigm of cultivation, one that relied on divine will and albi. Each albus had a fragment of divine will at its center, causing the vortex-like astral discs to form. Once that happened, Tianming's body glowed with astral brilliance. Through his divine will, he could clearly see each astral disc; they resembled spiraling galaxies filled with clouds of stars. It was all too similar to the power of the universe.

Ying Huo's infernaldisc was a beautiful orange. Meow Meow's genesisdisc looked like black lightning, much like its Misty Hellthunder. Lan Huang's primordialdisc resembled Taiji Peak Lake with its clear separation of mountain and sea, like a taiji diagram with a brown and blue fish. Xian Xian's radixdisc had three colors: red, white, and black, and was shaped like a flower.

As for Tianming, there were four layers of astral discs under each of his divine will fragments. Even though each layer was smaller than that of his beasts, the combined power of all four made him much stronger than them.

By the time the power of his saint springs had finished scattering, the albi in his entire body all had astral discs. They now had astral physiques, or in other words, divine bodies. However, that didn't mean that Tianming was an ascendant now, for his power was still the tribulation force of the Samsara stage.

"Now we need to absorb the stellunar source!" He did that in the divine moon hall itself. The five of them seemed like vortices that sucked in all the stellunar source in the vicinity, infusing its power into their astral discs and rapidly growing in power. It wouldn't end even after they reached full saturation, for there were still other changes occurring within Tianming's body.

The Purple Tower used to defend his saint palace, which was the core of his power. However, Tianming no longer had a single core where all his power was concentrated after the change, so he was curious how the Purple Tower would adapt. As the power of the saint springs spread throughout his body into the astral discs, the solid Purple Tower actually divided into countless fragments much like his Imperial Will, turning into purple beams of light that infused into his albi. The light formed a purple barrier around each albus. Unquestionably, it was defensive in nature. When all of his albi were defended by the purple barrier, even his skin glowed slightly purple. He also felt his physical defense rise.

"While the Purple Tower is no longer as powerful as before it scattered, it can now protect my whole body. In other words, not only do I have astralforce now, I also have the double protection of the Purple and Greenspark Towers. One for defense and the other for recovery."

The defense provided by the Purple Tower wasn't like strengthening the physical body, so it couldn't boost his physical attacks. However, his body was now as tough as a lifebound beast's. With his divine body formed, he shone brightly with starlight within the divine moon hall. His aura was much more elevated than before. He clenched his fists tight and continued strengthening his astral discs. All of the

four-layered astral discs circulated and grew broader, making Tianming a microcosmic universe in his own right. After the formation of his divine body, another change began; one that concerned his soul.