

Timescape 771

Chapter 771: Stolen Dawning Suns!

The phoenix palace went absolutely silent. Numerous gazes locked onto Xu Qing. Meanwhile, Princess Anhai's expression flickered.

The imperial bells almost never rang nine times. But just now, they had, indicating that something momentous had happened. There would obviously be major repercussions. Then, at almost exactly the same moment, a contingent of imperial guards showed up and told Xu Qing to come with them to the imperial palace. Though it seemed like an invitation, the somber and desolate aura of the guards made it clear it was more than that.

Most importantly in this maelstrom of events was that, though it might seem far-fetched, a lack of caution could lead to death. It didn't matter that Xu Qing had a shocking background and also controlled one-and-a-half regions. If something very dramatic happened that related to the survival of humankind as a whole, then there was no question about which of the two the emperor would view as more important.

At first, Princess Anhai looked confused. But then her eyes filled with determination. Rising to her feet, she coldly said, "How impudent!"

The golden-armored imperial guards didn't so much as twitch in response to her words. They kept looking at Xu Qing. However, one of them stepped forward, faced Princess Anhai, and bowed.

"Your Majesty, these are orders from the emperor."

Frowning, Princess Anhai said, "What happened that requires Region Lord Xu to go to the imperial palace?"

She was hoping to get some more information for Xu Qing about why this was happening. That was about all she could do. If he knew the reason, then at least he could prepare himself for what was to come.

The guard who had stepped out hesitated, looked around, and then shifted his gaze back to the frowning Princess Anhai. Taking a few steps forward, he projected a message to her that no one else could hear. In response, Princess Anhai gasped and shivered. Her face fell, and she looked at Xu Qing with a complicated expression.

When Xu Qing saw that, he wondered more than ever what had gone wrong. Although he had no idea, he kept his expression neutral as he rose and walked over to the imperial guards.

They quickly got into formation around him. Although it looked like they were providing a respectful escort, there was also something about it that made it seem like they were arresting him.

Just as he was about to step out of the hall, Princess Anhai gritted her teeth and projected a message to him.

"The guard didn't tell me much. Just that... the Creation Division has been locked down. It seems there might have been something stolen from there!"

Xu Qing stopped in place, turned, and clasped hands respectfully to her. Then he left her mansion and went in the direction of the imperial palace.

It was night, and it was still raining. Thunder crashed overhead. Under normal circumstances, few people would go out in such inclement weather. But this night was different.

Xu Qing saw imperial guards hurrying around everywhere. They all seemed to be going in different directions, such that an ordinary person wouldn't have any idea what they were up to. But Xu Qing got his start in the Violent Crimes Division, so he could pick up on the clues.

They're expanding the range of the lockdown. Are they locking down the entire imperial capital?

Thinking back to the message from Princess Anhai, Xu Qing immediately thought about his Eldest Brother. Given everything he knew about the Captain, it seemed entirely possible that he might have tried to steal something from the Creation Division. However, if that was true, the Captain would definitely have been careful not to leave behind any clues that point to Xu Qing. As such, Xu Qing eliminated that as a possibility.

With that possibility out of the way, I have to wonder what exactly was stolen that would cause the emperor to summon me for an audience.

The only thing connecting him to the Creation Division were the Dawning Suns. Except, he had explained that situation already, so it didn't seem likely that was why he was being summoned.

Could it be because of someone else I'm connected to?

Unfortunately, he had too few clues to work with to get him anywhere close to an explanation.

As Xu Qing pondered the situation, lightning crashed around them. Eventually, they crossed the rainbow ridge and reached the imperial palace. In the illumination provided by the lightning, Xu Qing's pupils constricted as he realized there was another person being escorted into the palace.

It was Ningyan. That caused everything to click. Ningyan was somehow connected to the Creation Division. And the item that had been stolen was almost certainly a Dawning Sun.

Yet there were things that didn't add up. First of all, Xu Qing knew for certain that Ningyan had been spending all his time lately working on cultivation. Second, Ningyan's cultivation base was too low for him to do something so dramatic and somehow escape.

What was more, it seemed almost preposterous that a Dawning Sun could have been stolen. The Dawning Suns were prized treasures of humankind, and weren't things that could be easily lost. They would definitely be under tight guard. And it didn't seem necessary to store them at the Creation Division itself.

As he pondered such matters, his gaze turned grim. Walking into the imperial palace, he soon reached the Immortal Reception Plaza in front of the main palace hall. There were golden-armored cultivators everywhere, all of them pulsing with killing intent. It created a very stifling atmosphere. That, coupled with the crash of thunder, created a pressure that caused even the raindrops to tremble.

Ningyan was also trembling. Two guards clamped their hands onto his shoulders and forced him into a kneeling position in the plaza. Rain poured down, soaking him. He was nervous and also

confused. He had no idea what was happening, as he had been working on his cultivation in his mother's shrine hall when the guard burst in and dragged him away.

He wasn't the only one present. There were others. All were cultivators from the Creation Division, a total of a few dozen people.

Also present was Ninth Prince, who had likewise been forced into a kneeling position by two imperial guards. His head was bowed, and his expression was one of pure bitterness.

When Xu Qing arrived, the gazes of numerous imperial guards locked onto him as he was escorted over to the other 'guests.'

When Ningyan saw Xu Qing, his eyes glittered with both hope and surprise.

Xu Qing looked at him and nodded. Not saying anything, he stood to the side.

The guards behind him were about to put their hands on his shoulders when he looked over his shoulder at them, his gaze calm. That gaze caused the guards to clasp hands and step back.

Xu Qing was now the only new arrival left standing. The rain didn't touch him.

Time passed, and the thunder grew louder.

Occasionally, people would hurry into the palace and enter the hall. Inside the hall, lamplight indicated that some ceremony was underway. The imperial capital's grand spell formation was fully activated, covering the entire city so that it was possible to enter, but not leave.

Xu Qing closed his eyes and pondered the matter further, trying to inwardly confirm whether his speculations were correct.

Eventually, when the sky turned bright, an old man emerged from the palace hall. It was the chief minister. He looked down at the plaza and all the kneeling figures in it.

"Earlier in the night," he said in a grim voice, "the Creation Division was robbed. A Dawning Sun, which had been placed in a special spell formation here for research purposes, was lost. All of you here are suspects in the preliminary investigation. And that's especially true of Twelfth Prince."

His last sentence coincided with a loud crash of thunder that shook everything.

Ningyan shivered, his expression one of disbelief. "That's impossible! I've never even been to the Creation Division. I—"

He was interrupted by a cold harrumph from inside the palace hall. It was even louder than the thunder, shaking the plaza and causing the minds of everyone present to spin.

"Chief Minister, show the evidence to this unfilial son of mine!"

The chief minister waved his right hand, causing a jade slip to fly out. As it hovered in midair, it projected an image for all to see. The image depicted some top secret location. Most of it was blurry, but there was a person, visible clearly from behind. That person looked very much like Ningyan. In fact, just as the recorded image was about to end, that person slowly turned, revealing the side of his face.

He looked exactly like Ningyan! Then the image vanished. Next, the chief minister performed an incantation gesture, causing a stream of energy to appear. It was Ningyan's energy.

“That image was extracted from the past by the use of a heavenly king divination magic. It shows exactly what happened in the Creation Division. The energy was collected by the imperial capital's grand spell formation, also extracted from the past of the Creation Division. The emperor himself bore witness to the process.”

After the chief minister was done speaking, the emperor spoke again in a cold voice. “What do you have to say for yourself, you unfilial son?”

The stunned Ningyan was at a loss for words. He hadn't done anything, but that image and that energy really did point to him as the culprit.

Far off on the horizon, the sun was rising. Though there were still a lot of clouds, as well as rain, the light of the sun still spread, eventually reaching the Immortal Reception Plaza. Even as darkness and light transposed, a bell appeared in midair above the plaza. It was the Immortal Questioning Bell.

If Ningyan wished to speak, he could do so in the presence of the Immortal Questioning Bell. However, the evidence against him was so overwhelming that all he could do was smile bitterly.

Xu Qing looked up at the palace hall. He had seen the image from earlier, but still felt that something suspicious was going on. He refused to believe that the emperor would be careless enough to overlook important evidence. So he walked forward until he was next to Ningyan.

Before Xu Qing could speak, however, Ningyan tightly grabbed the hem of his own robe. He slowly looked up, his expression twisted and his eyes full of disappointment and also fury at this outrageous situation.

“Father, I know you don't like me,” he said loudly. “I know that in your heart, you think of your twelfth son as dispensable. I don't have much natural aptitude. I'm not eloquent. I'm not charming and charismatic. Nobody wants to get too close to me. Well, I don't care about all that!”

Ningyan's emotions stirred as he slowly rose from a kneeling position until he was on his feet! His action of standing was profoundly meaningful. It showed that he had suppressed any sense of fear or reverence he had for his father. He had crushed his tendency to be a yes-man, and as the rain poured down, he gave voice to the pressure that had existed in his heart for years.

“Father,” he said loudly, “you exist high above everyone else, like the clouds in the sky. To you, I'm like a useless nobody. I might as well be mud. But... so what? This place is my home, but at the same time, it's not. I actually like Sea-Sealing County a lot better. I know all imperial princes have the surname Guyue, but I prefer to be just plain old Ningyan!”

“If you hadn't forced me to come back, I never would have come! Therefore, if you want to baselessly pin this crime on me... well I won't stand for it! I, Ningyan, didn't have anything to do with it! And I'll prove it with the Immortal Questioning Bell!”

Ningyan jumped up and viciously rapped his knuckles on the bell. The bell tolled, deep and resonant. It could confirm the truth of words, and it could verify the condition of the heart.

Chapter 772: The Other Side's Turn

The Immortal Questioning Bell could be used to assess the heart. When truth was expressed from the heart, the bell would toll, as it had just now in response to Ningyan's declaration.

Ningyan's act of standing was part of the process of an internal transformation. Then he struck the bell. As it tolled, his soul experienced a baptism. It was a brutal baptism, like that of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. Blood oozed out all over him. His five yin organs and six yang organs trembled, and it was only with great effort that he managed to look up in the direction of the palace hall. He could just barely see the emperor seated inside, his face completely expressionless.

"I didn't do it," Ningyan said hoarsely. As everyone looked on, he slumped and then passed out.

Xu Qing grabbed him before he fell and gently lowered him to the ground. Xu Qing's heart was pounding. Despite whatever evidence pointed to Ningyan as the culprit, Xu Qing didn't believe that Ningyan was responsible. Unfortunately, he didn't have the ability or opportunity to prove that. He felt certain that the emperor wouldn't overlook important evidence, and yet... the emperor's actions were clear.

That said, based on everything Xu Qing had experienced in life, he felt certain that in most situations, there was more than met the eye. And that was definitely the case with the emperor's actions here. Xu Qing then recalled the imperial edict sent to Ningyan after the death of King Heaventide. Although that edict had seemed harsh, there was actually deep meaning in it. What was more, the emperor had used the words 'stubborn and mischievous.' [1]

What if this is the emperor's way of protecting Ningyan?

Xu Qing thought back to some things his Master had told him about how to analyze things. By putting himself in the emperor's shoes, he could evaluate the situation from a different perspective.

If I was the emperor, and the evidence implicated my son, what would I do...? The emperor is not just an emperor to a single person. He's the emperor of all humankind. Nor is he simply a father...

There's something else to consider. When the chief minister came out, it happened to be exactly at sunrise, when the Immortal Questioning Bell appeared. Was that done on purpose, to hint to Ningyan to use the bell? Were they intentionally provoking Ningyan into being decisive?

Of course, there's another possibility. Maybe it's true that the emperor thinks of Ningyan as being dispensable. The evidence points one way, so the emperor focuses on that. Maybe Ningyan is being framed, but that doesn't exculpate him from involvement. And maybe there are more clues pointing toward him or people he knows. Perhaps that's why I was summoned as well. There's also the possibility that something else entirely is going on, and I just haven't thought of it.

No amount of pondering on Xu Qing's part would reveal what the emperor was actually thinking.

As the sound of the bell dissipated, the chief minister stood in front of the palace hall with his head bowed as he waited for an imperial edict. He didn't have to wait long. Moments later, the emperor spoke in an emotionless voice.

“Everyone connected to the Creation Division incident will be imprisoned in the Celestial Earthly Prison. Guyue Bixuan and Guyue Ningyan will be imprisoned in the palace’s Heavenly Prison.

“The imperial capital will remain on strict lockdown. Keep all the spell formations active at the highest level. Shut down all teleportation portals. Impose a curfew starting tonight. Everyone from the Five Greater Celestial Divisions will perform independent investigations. In twenty hours, I want full reports from everyone. Find out who stole the Dawning Sun!”

The Celestial Earthly Prison was located outside of the imperial palace, and was operated by the Swordsage Division. Normally speaking, only the most violent and dangerous criminals were locked up there. The palace’s Heavenly Prison was very different from the Celestial Earthly Prison, as it was designed for members of the imperial clan.

As the imperial edict was uttered, thunder crashed, and the imperial guards sprang into action to take Ningyan and everyone else away.

Xu Qing couldn’t stop that. Nor did he have any reason to. He watched Ningyan being led away, and came to the conclusion that the pessimistic take would be to say that this was going to be a deadly catastrophe for Ningyan. But if he was being optimistic, then... it was a protection.

As people were being led away, the chief minister suddenly said, “Region Lord Xu, His Majesty would like you to enter the hall.”

Face expressionless, Xu Qing walked over to the stairs. Stopping in front of the chief minister, he clasped hands and bowed.

The chief minister nodded, then turned and led him up the stairs and into the hall. The people who had previously come into the hall now left, and even the chief minister backed up several paces, waved his hand, and sealed the hall.

In the blink of an eye, the only people present inside were Xu Qing and the emperor.

Looking at the emperor, Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed at the waist. “Well met, Your Majesty.”

The emperor sat on the ninth step, emanating a powerful pressure that caused the air to ripple and distort. That made the emperor impossible to see clearly, except for his eyes, which shone like bright pearls. They were as cold as winter, such that anyone he looked at would feel the urge to shiver.

“Xu Qing, take out that Emperor’s Sword from your secret trove and use it to attack me!”

As the emperor’s voice echoed in the hall, Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed. He would never have been able to guess that the emperor would summon him for a private audience and then say something like that. He looked at the emperor’s eyes.

A moment later, he called out to the Emperor’s Sword from his secret trove. The sword... didn’t respond.

The emperor sat in place just like before, his energy fluctuations the same as before. Without any change to his gaze, he calmly said, “Do you know why the Emperor’s Sword won’t respond?”

Xu Qing shook his head.

“Because I have a clear conscience when it comes to humankind, and I have a clear conscience when it comes to the Grand Emperor. You and I are not enemies!”

After that, the emperor closed his eyes. He was done chatting with Xu Qing.

A moment passed, and then Xu Qing bowed again. He turned to leave, and just before he was about to push open the door, the emperor said one more thing from behind him.

“Ningyan chose you. So going forward, I’m putting him in your hands.”

The door opened.

Xu Qing stood there for a few breaths of time, then nodded. He walked out of the hall and into the plaza. Standing beneath the huge statues that formed the entrance, he looked back at the palace hall.

Just what kind of person is the emperor really?

There was no answer to the question.

Xu Qing looked away from the palace hall and walked out into the rain. He didn’t return to the mansion. Instead, he went to the Swordsage Division to offer his help with the investigation into the disappearance of the Dawning Sun.

The Swordsage Division accepted his help. Their investigation was carried out with lightning swiftness. And the first place they focused on was the ancestral cemetery! Specifically, they went to the ancestral cemetery, not the ancestral graveyard! The latter was where emperors were interred after death. The former was where other members of the imperial clan were buried.

That was where the Swordsage Division checked on one specific tomb. It was... the tomb of Eleventh Prince, who was Ningyan’s twin brother! [2]

After all, the only hard evidence in play was the image of Ningyan and his energy which had been extracted from the past. Then Ningyan used the Immortal Questioning Bell to prove the truth of his words. That meant there was only one other possibility. And that was that the person who had appeared in the Creation Division was someone who looked like Ningyan and had the same energy as him, but wasn’t Ningyan.

There were magical techniques and other ways of altering one’s physical appearance and aura. Even mortals could do things like that. But in Revered Ancient, only someone with an astounding cultivation base could possibly fool the magical technique of a heavenly king, plus the imperial capital’s grand spell formation. There was little need to mention that the emperor had personally observed the time magic being used.

As a result, Ningyan's twin brother was first on the list to be investigated. They needed to find out if that specific imperial prince had actually died. Although the death of Ningyan's brother was an old case, they still had to dig up the details.

The result came in quickly enough. By means of a variety of techniques, they were able to confirm that Eleventh Prince really had died, and was interred in his tomb.

One of the Swordsage Division investigators suggested that they look into Eleventh Prince's original cause of death, thinking that it might provide them with some new clues. However, the division lord prohibited it.

"It relates to secrets of the imperial family," he said gravely. "And it has nothing to do with this case. Unless the emperor himself gives orders, we don't want to get near that."

As one of the investigators, Xu Qing looked closely at Eleventh Prince's tomb and thought back to what Ningyan had told him about his older brother and mother dying. It related to secrets of the imperial family, which meant that getting more details was going to be difficult. That line of investigation came to an end.

But there were other angles to explore. Next, the Swordsage Division investigation focused on Ninth Prince and the Creation Division itself. The division lord himself went to the Heavenly Prison to interrogate Ninth Prince.

Meanwhile, other divisions were carrying out their own investigations. In some cases, the investigations overlapped. In some cases they didn't. Regardless, the results needed to be reported to the emperor, who would make the final judgment. There were ups and downs to that method of running the investigation. But in the end, the downsides weren't very numerous. The most important thing was that it made it almost impossible for anyone to practice favoritism and engage in cronyism. Every detail needed to be investigated.

Ten hours passed.

During that time, the entire imperial capital was locked down tight. Imperial guards and members of the Five Greater Celestial Divisions looked closely into everything. One clue after another started accumulating.

"Three months ago, Second Prince went to the Creation Division looking to strengthen his personal taboo treasure. He wanted to borrow the power of a Dawning Sun, except his petitions were all rejected. He expressed anger on numerous occasions. According to our investigation, his taboo treasure can inflict large-scale casualties."

"Grand Prince left the city in a rush yesterday on a diplomatic mission to the Firemoon Darkheaven people. The Firemoon Darkheavens have repeatedly requested that we humans give them a Dawning Sun as tribute. The fact that Grand Prince left when he did is something that should be taken into consideration."

“People from Seventh Prince’s mansion have repeatedly been seen in the vicinity of the Creation Division over the course of the last month. What’s more, he’s secretly been in correspondence with Fifth Prince, who is currently with the heavenly king securing the border region....”

“The aura of a Dawning Sun was recently detected in the mansion of Tenth Prince.”

“Seven days ago, some nonhumans approached Eighth Prince and proposed a secret deal to acquire a Dawning Sun. We’re not sure of the final result.”

“Ten days ago, Third Prince paid a secret visit to the Creation Division and had an hour-long discussion with Ninth Prince.”

The clues might have seemed benign individually, but when looked at more closely, they revealed some shocking truths. There was a lot going on behind the scenes! Questions started to rise up in the minds of Xu Qing and everyone else involved in the investigation. Other than Fourth Prince and the playboy Sixth Prince, all the other imperial princes were connected to the case in some way or another. It couldn’t be explained away as a coincidence.

It seems like someone is manipulating things from behind the scenes, as if using this investigation to reveal a lot of previously private matters.

Xu Qing found himself thinking back to the day he’d first come to the imperial palace and seen the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan. Someone had made a move on the Go board, and now... the other party was about to make a move.

In the end, the division lord of the Swordsage Division shook his head. “A war of succession is being carried out in secret. But now the details are being forced into the open. And someone is using us to do it. His Majesty is being forced to make a choice. If he doesn’t... then everything will blow up in his face. Maybe someone is trying to push Twelfth Prince into the limelight. Or maybe they’re using him as a threat.” The division lord looked at Xu Qing. “Xu Qing, do you want to go pay a visit to Ningyan?”

Chapter 773: Crown Prince Incense

The investigation into the missing Dawning Sun entered its twelfth hour. It was dark. There was no rosy evening glow, only dark, oppressive clouds that made it hard to tell if the sun had already set or not. Rain still fell, and thunder rumbled. That, coupled with the oppressive atmosphere created by the imperial guards, made the entire imperial capital seem somber and desolate. It was destined to be a sleepless night for most.

The investigation being carried out by the Five Greater Celestial Divisions continued to broaden. The scope went beyond the imperial princes and to the people closely connected to them. More than half of those people had already been arrested.

Some were in cultivation facilities. Some were in their sects. Some were at home. All were people who had no choice but to bow their heads to show respect for the emperor. Any who fought back were killed on the spot.

Blood mixed with rainwater, until the entire city seemed to reek of gore.

Xu Qing was clad in his swordmage uniform as he headed in the direction of the Heavenly Prison. Given his mood and the situation, it was no wonder he was in a hurry. After participating in the Swordmage Division's investigation, and seeing all the clues and evidence, he could sense that there was a lot going on behind the scenes with the imperial princes.

Something doesn't add up.

He looked through the rain at the imperial palace off in the distance. The Heavenly Prison was in the imperial palace, but it wasn't accessed by means of the rainbow bridge. Instead, there was a side door that led to it.

These imperial princes are all extraordinary in their own ways. There's no way that they would leave behind such obvious evidence. Unless... there's somebody manipulating everything. The imperial preceptor perhaps? The emperor was also unusually quick to issue orders.

Xu Qing frowned. Ever since arriving in the imperial capital, he'd had the feeling that there was a missing piece to the puzzle.

I wonder if there are more than two people playing Go....

Xu Qing stopped in place just as a lightning bolt snaked through the sky, illuminating both the imperial palace and the thoughtful look on his face. He closed his eyes.

When he opened them a moment later, his expression was as placid as ever. He continued toward the side entrance to the imperial palace. With his Swordmage Division documentation, he quickly passed through the inspection. Then, three imperial guards in black armor led him into the dungeon beneath the imperial palace. The air around him felt sinister and cold. Every floor tile had warding spells or magical symbols on them. Xu Qing could tell that this was the most secure location in the imperial capital.

Even with his official documentation, he still had to go through numerous detailed inspections. Only after he was cleared over and over again was he let into the presence of Ningyan.

The imperial palace's Heavenly Prison had nine levels. The further down you went, the more important were the people locked up, and the more mysterious they were. Everything after the sixth level was locked down tightly.

Ningyan was detained on the third level. He was bound with shackles that had sealing marks built into them that made him almost like a mortal. There was no way he could possibly escape. A complicated facial expression could be seen on his face as he sat in the middle of his cell.

Sensing Xu Qing's arrival, he looked up. "Biggest Bro...."

Xu Qing sat down cross-legged and looked around. "It's not bad in here," he said. "Definitely not as dirty as I'd expected."

Ningyan smiled wryly.

"It's quiet, too," Xu Qing continued. "A good place to think clearly."

Ningyan said nothing.

“If you think clearly, you might be able to remember some things you forgot to mention before.” Xu Qing didn’t say anything after that. He just looked at Ningyan.

Ningyan had already been nervous to begin with; to have Xu Qing looking at him that way left him with the urge to avert his gaze. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn.

Ningyan’s head remained bowed. Xu Qing’s eyes were closed. Everything was quiet.

After another incense stick’s worth of time passed, Xu Qing stood. “If you have nothing you want to tell me, I’ll leave.”

He turned.

Ningyan watched him walking away, the hesitation and confusion in his heart intensifying. After Xu Qing took five steps, Ningyan gritted his teeth.

“Biggest Bro.”

Xu Qing stopped walking.

“Although it’s possible someone was just impersonating me, I think it’s more likely that... it was my older brother. Eleventh Prince.”

Xu Qing turned around and looked through the warding spell barrier at Ningyan. “Eleventh Prince’s tomb has already been checked. He’s dead.”

Ningyan’s expression became more complicated. Rubbing the floor of the cell, he spoke in a very quiet voice. “Biggest Bro... me and my older brother used to play a game together.”

Xu Qing’s gaze hardened.

“We would play hide-and-seek. Every time we played, he would find me right away. It didn’t matter where I hid, he would know where I was. I was never sure why that was. I asked him once, and he told me that I would understand after I grew up. Except, we were twins, and he was only born a few moments before I was. It was only today, after I was sent here—” Ning Yan looked up at Xu Qing “—that I understood. He and I have a special connection, and that’s why he was always able to find me. Right now, I can sense that connection.” He pointed down at the floor. “My brother’s aura is down there.”

Xu Qing’s heart suddenly started racing.

“His aura is unusual. I’m not sure how to explain it. I just know that... it’s familiar, but at the same time unfamiliar. And gruish. I tried calling out, but didn’t get any answer.”

Ningyan felt bitterness, pain, and other complex feelings. This day had been a big blow to him. That was especially true after he had come to sense his brother’s aura. He almost couldn’t think straight.

After all, he very clearly remembered how his brother and mother died. Yet here in the Heavenly Prison, he could sense his brother's aura. He had no idea how or why it was happening. However, he wasn't a child anymore. He knew... that there was obviously some monumental secret at play.

Xu Qing looked down at the ground quietly. They were on the third level, which meant there were six more levels beneath them.

This place was the Heavenly Prison in the imperial palace, which meant that only orders from the emperor himself would result in someone being locked up here.

There's a dead person who apparently isn't dead after all. Yet he's here in the Heavenly Prison, where only the emperor could send him.... And it seems like this Eleventh Prince, who really isn't dead, is the one who stole the Dawning Sun. His motivations are unknown. It's uncertain whether he's really dead or not.

Xu Qing rubbed the bridge of his nose. All of a sudden, he found himself thinking about the portrait of Ningyan's mother. From the look of it, everything was somehow connected to her death.

The emperor was keeping a big secret. So was the imperial preceptor.

Eventually, Xu Qing left the prison and went back to the Swordsage Division. He didn't tell anyone what he had learned.

Because talking to Ningyan didn't yield any results, the investigation couldn't proceed any further. Sixteen hours after the investigation began, in the middle of the night, the Swordsage Division submitted its results. The other four divisions followed suit one after another.

As the emperor went through the various reports, which all analyzed the situation from different angles, thunder crashed above. The emperor seemed about ready to erupt with fury. But in the end, the fury never came. He closed his eyes for a few breaths of time. When he opened them, he somehow looked older. That said, his gaze seemed matchlessly domineering. The emperor seemed more majestic than ever, and more determined. At that point, he issued a shocking imperial edict.

Twelve sticks of 'crown prince incense' were erected outside the imperial palace. Each of them was 299 meters tall, and there were roughly 30 meters between each of them. They were all crimson.

Princesses Anran and Anbei were left out. But soul blood from the other twelve imperial children, including Princess Anhai, was infused into one of the sticks of incense to mark it as their own.

"The lot of you want a succession struggle, and even want so far as to secretly hatch plots that caused chaos in the capital. Better to do things openly.

"Starting today, these twelve incense sticks will be lit. They will burn based on the performance of the imperial princes and princess. Good performance will cause the incense to burn slowly. Poor performance will cause the incense to burn faster. In one year, the person with the most incense left... will be the crown prince!"

The imperial edict was quite a shock to the city. People and organizations everywhere were deeply moved. The emperor was truly being decisive when it came to the matter of the crown prince. By

doing so, he put an end to all the secret subterfuge, and instead made the succession struggle a public affair.

The incense sticks were there for all to see. Whoever wanted to be the crown prince had to make sure their incense stick burned the most slowly. That was the way to achieve greatness. Doing nothing wasn't an option, as the incense would burn no matter what went on.

Instantly, the imperial children who had been paying such close attention to the Dawning Sun investigation now had bright light shining in their eyes. The imperial edict effectively put an end to the matter of the lost Dawning Sun. No one would bring it up again.

Ningyan and Ninth Prince were set free. The imperial palace closed its doors. Court wouldn't be held for seven days.

Back at the mansion, Ningyan, whose personality had changed after the events, locked himself in the shrine hall.

Xu Qing could tell that Ningyan needed to be alone. As he looked at the shrine hall, he thought back to everything that happened in the past day. He had come to his own conclusions about what everything meant.

One of the people playing Go came out on top of this interchange.

After the imperial palace was sealed tight, the capital was opened up, and everyone reeled in shock about the crown prince incense.

A strong wind blew through the Heavenspan Pavilion in the imperial palace. The emperor stood there, his hands clasped behind his back as he looked at the massive Planet Ancient Emperor.

The air behind him rippled, and the imperial preceptor materialized. Clasping hands to the emperor, he smiled.

“Congratulations, Your Majesty. You finally made a decision and severed the last fetters.”

The emperor's eyes glittered. Not bothering to turn his head, he said, “You might be the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan, but you haven't fully recovered yet. Considering the strategic position I occupy, if I wanted to kill you, it wouldn't be very difficult.”

The imperial preceptor's expression was mild as he replied, “I'm just helping you fulfill your dream, Your Majesty. Besides, you know full well that I was just pushing things along. There's someone else operating behind the scenes. As for who it is, I think you know, Your Majesty.”

The emperor's facial expression didn't change.

“Your Majesty, there are already gods paying attention to this affair. You need to hurry up. After all, this deal... is without parallel in history.”

The imperial preceptor smiled and disappeared into the wind.

The Heavenspan Pavilion fell silent. Only the sound of the wind could be heard.

As the wind blew, the emperor's gaze pierced through the clouds and into the depths of Planet Ancient Emperor....

Chapter 774: Someone We've Waited Thousands of Years For

It rained for three days straight in the imperial capital. On the fourth day, the rain turned to snow. Winter came, just like that. As the snow fell, everything started to get cold. Just about overnight, a layer of shimmering silver came to cover the city. Ice caked the eaves of the buildings.

As Xu Qing looked at the snowflakes falling from the sky, and felt the cold wind, he thought back to Sea-Sealing County and South Phoenix. He thought back to his early life.

He had reached a point in his cultivation where he didn't really feel the sensation of cold. He was essentially inoculated to mortal feelings like that. Yet right now, he did feel a touch of coldness. It came from his memories. The experiences of his childhood had become part of his soul, and would be with him for his whole life.

As he walked toward the Imperial University, he tugged his garments a bit tighter around him to protect against the wind. Eventually, he made it through the university entrance.

The investigation into the missing Dawning Sun had been dropped. The Dawning Sun's actual whereabouts were unknown. You would think something like that would weigh on the hearts of the various organizations in the capital, but... nobody seemed to care much.

Xu Qing could imagine why.

It's because of the emperor.

To the human species, the emperor was a person who 'propped up heaven.' He could calm people down.

Xu Qing still wasn't really sure what to make of the emperor. Upon first arriving at the capital, the emperor had been little more than a concept for him. A symbol. A blank slate with no information on it. But after some time, and after learning a bit more about the emperor, that slate was starting to get some color on it. Unfortunately... there were actually too many colors, resulting in a blurry image.

Xu Qing shook his head. He did what he usually did when he didn't understand something. He put it in the back of his mind to analyze over time. Hopefully, as time went by, more clues and evidence would become available to make the picture clearer. Once he had enough clues, the truth would reveal itself in his heart. All Xu Qing knew for the moment was that the most important thing for him to focus on was cultivation base.

I'm going to pay another visit to the Xeno-Immortal School!

The moment he entered the Imperial University, the cold and wind were cut off. It was winter on the outside of the university, but on the inside it was the same as before. There were still bustling crowds and the sound of talking and discussion.

Considering how many times he had visited the university in the past month, Xu Qing was used to the surroundings. He hurried through the crowd, attracting as little attention as a water drop in the

ocean. Soon he was in front of the white tower in the east of the university that was the Xeno-Immortal School.

Back at Princess Anhai's banquet, that fellow Mu Nan from the Church of Departure showed an image of Chen Daoze from the Xeno-Immortal School. That image looked very similar to me when I'm in one of my god states. Is the soul-weaving of the Xeno-Immortal School a different method with the same final result?

Xu Qing was excited to learn more. His god states were the result of his own luck and destined opportunities, and he had never seen anyone else with anything like them. Not even Grandpa Ninth had been familiar with the specifics of them. Ever since then he had been hoping to find out more about how to further his cultivation in terms of his god states.

If using the second-level god state required wasting some of Crimson Mother's flesh every single time... that would be untenable in the long term. And that wasn't even taking his third-level god state into consideration.

My first state can unleash power comparable to the great circle of Spirit Trove or possibly the first stage of Void Returning. You could consider that a very big power up. The second state is more like second-stage Void Returning.... Maybe not exactly at that level, but close enough. The third state....

Xu Qing thought back to the demonstration for Grandpa Ninth, and then compared that to the powerful experts he had encountered. That gave him a general idea of the level of power involved.

Battle prowess comparable to third-stage Void Returning! In other words, the focus of my cultivation should be to get control of the third-level god state. That, and finish my fifth secret trove.

Xu Qing thought about all that as he strolled through the white towers. Eventually, about an hour later, he reached the Xeno-Immortal School. It was busy on the street outside, but was very quiet inside. Virtually deserted. No one was inside asking questions. It was as if this place had been eliminated from favor by the sands of time.

There weren't three students in the tower this time, there was only one. He sat there, yawning as the schoolmaster berated him.

"Look outside! See how many people there are out there? Why not go drag some in here? If things keep going the way they are, we won't have enough people to staff this place. See how many ancient records there are? Don't you know how much time I spend every day organizing things?"

"I know our Xeno-Immortal School isn't in a good spot now, but we can restore our glory! All you people do is sniff around for gossip to put in that silly tabloid of yours! What the hell good is that going to do?"

Looking annoyed, the berated student waved his hand. "Enough! If you keep yelling at me I won't come back tomorrow. The whole reason we put out the tabloid is to make money. It's not like you're helping us out financially. Besides, all we do is report the latest gossip. What's that got to do

with you? Maybe you should try to earn some money for some things. For instance, you could charge a fee to those idiots who come to study our ancient records.”

“You!!” the schoolmaster snapped angrily, and nearly went into another tirade, except in the end, he really was worried about the student not returning. His chest heaved as he tried to decide what to say next. That was when Xu Qing arrived. Snorting coldly, the schoolmaster turned to Xu Qing.

The berated student also looked up at him. “Welcome to the Xeno-Immortal School. We charge 100 spirit stones per jade slip that you want to study.”

Given that everyone wore the same outfits, this student clearly didn’t realize that Xu Qing had been here before. The reality was that unless you interacted with someone multiple times in the Imperial University, you generally wouldn’t be able to recognize them.

Xu Qing looked around and was about to say something when the schoolmaster looked him up and down with surprise in his eyes.

“What are you doing back here?”

When the student heard that, he started and then looked more closely at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing was also a bit surprised. Clapping hands to the schoolmaster, he said, “Teacher, I want to know more about the Xeno-Immortal School.”

“Sure thing!” The schoolmaster’s eyes glittered, and he couldn’t hold back from excitedly rubbing his hands together. Grabbing Xu Qing by the arm, he dragged him into the tower, as if he were afraid he might run off.

Xu Qing felt a bit out of sorts. As for the other student, he simply sighed and looked away.

“You’re an intelligent person,” the schoolmaster said. He sighed. “I sensed that the first time you showed up. If you choose the Xeno-Immortal School, it’ll be like the call of destiny. The inevitable furtherance of fate. You know, if my speculations are correct, you’re probably new to the Imperial University. Am I right?”

As the schoolmaster thought, he made some calculations with the fingers on his left hand. Then a gleam of shock appeared on his face. He looked at Xu Qing a bit more closely.

Xu Qing looked back at him. These were the kinds of tricks the Captain tried to pull, and Xu Qing had long since grown used to them.

After seeing that Xu Qing wasn’t going to rise to the bait, the schoolmaster cleared his throat.

“Anyway, back in the heyday of the Xeno-Immortal School, our founder looked out into the world and saw a vision of the future. Afterward, he uttered a prophecy. According to that prophecy, a student will come to us one day to join the Xeno-Immortal School, and that student will lead us to prominence.

“Last time when I laid eyes on you, I felt a strong sensation in my heart, though I wasn’t sure exactly what it was. On this second occasion of seeing you, I’ve suddenly found myself thinking about that prophecy. Now I realize that it’s highly likely you are the person the Xeno-Immortal School has been waiting thousands of years for!”

The other student pursed his lips beneath his mask. He had heard this kind of speech before. In fact, it was the same speech the schoolmaster had given him when he first showed up. And it was the same with the other two students who had been here last time Xu Qing came.

Couldn’t he at least change up his wording?

That said, the student also realized that if they could sucker someone else into joining them, it wouldn’t be such a bad thing. Therefore, he made sure to look at Xu Qing with very wide eyes as he let loose a hoarse exclamation of astonishment.

“Oh my god!” he said loudly.

When Xu Qing witnessed this exaggerated behavior, he started to wonder if the Xeno-Immortal School was actually a good fit for him....

The schoolmaster was very pleased to see his student cooperating. Whipping out a jade slip, he put it in Xu Qing’s hand.

“Child, pour your divine will into that jade slip. It’ll make you a conclave student of the Xeno-Immortal School. After that, everything will be opened up to you, and the future of the Xeno-Immortal School will be in your hands!

“Our techniques are very unique, and were authorized by the emperor back in the day. That said, the emperor also allowed us to decide how the techniques are passed on. Therefore, our founder made the rule that only conclave disciples can learn them. Come, join us! Open a new door in your life!”

The schoolmaster only seemed to be getting more worked up.

Xu Qing looked at the jade slip. The reality was that he had already made his decision before coming here, therefore, he unhesitatingly put his mark on the slip.

The jade slip glittered, and Xu Qing officially became a conclave student of the Xeno-Immortal School.

“Hahaha! Welcome to the Xeno-Immortal School!” The schoolmaster was clearly very excited. The other student was as well. In fact, the two of them exchanged a glance, and they could both see how thrilled they were to have snagged another student into their fold.

The former thought of it as a way of strengthening his school of thought. The other was just glad to have someone to share the workload with.

Xu Qing didn't really care about any of that. Clapping hands, he asked, "Schoolmaster, can I take a look at the Xeno-Immortal School's techniques?"

"No problem." Chuckling heartily, the schoolmaster grabbed about a dozen jade slips from the piles around him and pressed them into Xu Qing's hands. "All of our techniques are in there. Take your time looking through them. There's no hurry."

Xu Qing nodded and started looking through the jade slips. Beneath his mask, his eyes glittered thoughtfully. The jade slips were full of a wealth of information. All of the Xeno-Immortal School's cultivation methods were explained in great detail.

Generally speaking, all of this school of thought's techniques had cultivation requirements. For one thing, the cultivator needed to have impressive soul power. Only someone like that could generate the amount of soul threads needed to, theoretically speaking, be able to weave a complete godly entity. Without enough soul power, it was possible that the weaving process could result in one's spiritual and physical souls all dispersing. What was more, it required one to visualize the totem of a godly entity and use the soul threads to make it complete. The process went differently for different people, but in most cases, it went slowly.

As Xu Qing studied the new information, the schoolmaster continued introducing the school.

"The main point of our school is to visualize a godly entity. All the possibilities are in there. Over the years, members of our school have picked from countless godly entities and found the ones most suitable to the Xeno-Immortal School. You'll find details in there about how many soul threads are required, and the associated technique. That's really the quintessence of our school.

"That said, make sure not to bite off more than you can chew. If you're not able to make enough soul threads, don't try to force the visualization."

As the schoolmaster gave his warnings, Xu Qing studied the jade slip with the godly entities and found that there were indeed thousands of them. The depictions were very lifelike.

The soul thread requirement was listed plainly for all of them. The largest number of threads he saw was 100,000. The lowest was around 50,000.

He decided to test out the cultivation method. Immediately, his mind went hazy, and his eyes fogged with confusion.

When the schoolmaster saw that, he shook his head. Then, given that this was a brand new member, he decided to give some advice.

"Cultivating the techniques of the Xeno-Immortal School requires deep focus. You need to be in a spell formation that cuts off the outside world and leaves you in complete peace and quiet. It's no surprise to see you fail right here and now.

"Normally speaking, it takes about a month to squeeze out one soul thread. If you have good talent, you might get three. Even the most amazing chosen might get ten or more. That's more on the patriarch level!"

Xu Qing hesitated, as he saw that in his sea of consciousness... there were about 10,000 soul threads slowly spreading out.

Chapter 775: Xeno-Immortal Body

The schoolmaster of the Xeno-Immortal School was still giving a steady stream of details about their cultivation methods. He was clearly very passionate about it. It seemed as if he had imagined moments like these many times, but had rarely had a chance to make them reality. Now, with Xu Qing here, he could be a real teacher again.

“Years ago,” the schoolmaster continued proudly, “Patriarch Li Xuanfeng was the type of chosen that only comes along once in a thousand years. In only one month, he gained enlightenment of 13 soul threads! He’s the one that truly set the standard for the Xeno-Immortal School!”

The other student was, very uncharacteristically, not contradicting anything the schoolmaster said, and instead just offered a few sighs now and then. Clearly, though he had been tricked into joining the Xeno-Immortal School in its time of decline, he clearly approved and cared for the school.

“And then there was Patriarch Chen Daoze, who was also incredible. A few thousand years ago, he was a very rare and elite expert. In one month, he gained enlightenment of 19 soul threads!” Sounding very sincere, the schoolmaster looked at Xu Qing and continued, “Therefore, you need to work hard. Focus on your cultivation. If you can make at least 10 soul threads in a month, then you could well be the future schoolmaster of the Xeno-Immortal School!”

With that, the schoolmaster clasped Xu Qing on the shoulder, then took out some more jade slips and stuffed them into his hands. Then the schoolmaster left to organize some of the other jade slips piled up in the tower.

Xu Qing stood there feeling a bit hesitant. He could see that there were definitely about 10,000 soul threads in his sea of consciousness. Given what the schoolmaster had just told him, he got the feeling something unusual was going on.

When the other student saw Xu Qing just standing there, he walked over. Sighing, he said, “What’s wrong? Did his speech get you all riled up? You listen to me. Ignore his nonsense. When me and the other two students joined, he said the same thing. Every single word. The same. I tried to warn you last time, but you just wouldn’t listen to me. Well, what’s done is done. You’re a conclave student now.... And that means you’re thoroughly tied to the Xeno-Immortal School going forward.”

The student’s eyes glittered with sympathy. “But now that you’re here, there’s no room for regrets. Going forward, stick with me. With you on board, we can finally start putting out our tabloid more often.”

Xu Qing looked at the student. Being curious, he asked, “What tabloid?”

“As you know, there are a lot of schools of thought in the Imperial University. And there are always things going on. Understanding all of that can be very time-consuming, so tabloids have become a common thing here.

“They usually talk about decisions made by the schools of thought, the things their well-known students are up to, et cetera. Because the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer* is one of the oldest tabloids, and also because we’re in a good location in the university, we actually have a very large distribution, even though we don’t have a great reputation. Because we mostly report on gossip and things like that, we’re actually quite popular.”

The student was obviously very proud of the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer*.

“It’s just a little business run by me and the bros. Now, come with me, I’ll show you the ropes.”

With that, he dragged Xu Qing further into the white tower, to a location filled with a lot of blank jade slips. Those jade slips were the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer*. The business basically involved putting sensational news into the jade slips and then selling them. The stories, of course, all came from anonymous sources.

Xu Qing picked up one of the completed *Xeno-Immortal Enquirers* and scanned it.

“Last night people heard screaming coming from inside the God-Merging School. If you want to know who was making a demon in the middle of the night there, pick up the latest copy of the Xeno-Immortal Enquirer!”

“She is the schoolmaster of the Plants and Vegetation School!”

“Do you want to know the true identity of Dustcloud from the Myriad Magics School? Years of reporting have finally uncovered the truth!”

“Xu Qing from the Holytide Region has joined the Imperial University! Do you want to know which school he picked? Read all the details of our undercover reporting!”

Xu Qing said nothing as he looked through the jade slip.

The student chuckled. “What do you think? Is the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer* interesting or what?”

“It’s great,” Xu Qing replied calmly. The reality was that he didn’t have any negative feelings at all about this place. As the saying went, *when you enter a village, follow local customs*. Since he was a member of the Xeno-Immortal School now, he had no reason not to help this new Elder Brother to get his tabloids ready. And thus, they got to work imprinting the latest edition.

The schoolmaster came to check on them a few times. Seeing that Xu Qing was already involved with the tabloid caused him to sigh. However, he didn’t interfere or say anything.

Time passed. Around evening time, Xu Qing left the Xeno-Immortal School.

Snow was still falling outside as he made his way back to the mansion, all while thinking about the new techniques. Once he was back, he sat down cross-legged to meditate.

The techniques of the Xeno-Immortal School involve extracting soul power and then using a special spell formation to make soul threads. The soul requirements are high. If you extract too much, you could destroy your soul. These techniques are virtually suicidal.

That's one reason why they take so long to cultivate. On the one hand, you have to do the cultivation, but at the same time, you have to nourish your soul. And then there's the soul thread count....

Xu Qing took out the jade slip with the information about godly entities and looked through it. As far as he was concerned, the godly entities in the jade slip were mostly average. After all, he had seen more than his fair share of actual gods, let alone just godly entities.

The reason why he had been able to instantly form 10,000 soul threads became clear to Xu Qing during the day when he was working on the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer*.

I have godsource. The Xeno-Immortal School's techniques are, in the final analysis, an imitation of godsource techniques. And it's also an imitation to use one's soul threads to weave the image of a godly entity.

This type of method actually adds the characteristics of godsource to the soul. Then, you manifest it almost like a suit of armor... With a single thought, you can change everything about your body. That's why they have the saying: the Summer Immortal's lone thought brings the immortal body into play.

If I cultivate this to the limit, then theoretically speaking, it should be possible to, bit by bit, take a godly entity and weave an actual god.... I already have godsource, so I don't need to imitate it. With a single thought, I can produce a whole bunch of soul threads. And every single one is a manifestation of godsource.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he realized that his previous speculations were correct. His god states and the Xeno-Immortal School techniques really were different methods that led to the same result. That said, the body formed by the Xeno-Immortal School was fundamentally the manifestation of cultivator energy. And if you looked closely, you would see the evidence of the soul threads. When in a god state, the pressure emanated by his godliness, though it seemed integrated, was actually something illusory turned corporeal. He could sense that very obvious difference.

What was more, there were all sorts of cultivation techniques among humans. When you added in the countless years that gods had been around, it was a given that there had been a lot of research done into godly entities and how to use them. Therefore, it was no surprise something had come along that was very similar to Xu Qing's god states.

That said, deeper research would reveal some big differences on a substructural level with most of them. It was only the Xeno-Immortal School... that was similar substructurally.

In that case, these Xeno-Immortal School techniques should be able to improve my control over my god states.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered brightly.

In the past, my god states are manifested by means of my god troves. But if I could empty the godsource from my third god trove and turn it into soul threads, then use the Xeno-Immortal School's soul-weaving techniques, I could probably complete my third-level god state....

Theoretically, I could bypass whatever deficiencies exist for my god states, especially the third one.... And the reason is that I wouldn't be supporting them with the god troves, but rather, the weaved godsource.

At the same time, I wouldn't be limited to a third state. I could possibly weave a fourth state. As long as I have enough soul threads, a mere thought could lead to unlimited results!

Xu Qing closed his eyes, performed a double-handed incantation gesture, and then used the Xeno-Immortal School techniques to start making soul threads. In the blink of an eye, his first god trove appeared behind him. Threads of godsource emerged, flying into Xu Qing's sea of consciousness, where they began to amass.

Before long, there were about 100,000 of them.

Gotta keep going!

Xu Qing's second god trove appeared, and the threads of godsource emerged.

130,000. 180,000. 250,000.... Ultimately, a total of 300,000 soul threads appeared.

It took effort for Xu Qing to manipulate so many godsource soul threads, but he knew that it was because he still wasn't very good at using the Xeno-Immortal School's weaving techniques.

At a certain point, he stopped to consult the information from the Xeno-Immortal School. Then he started again.

Although he still needed a lot of practice, his godsource soul threads were so numerous that a succession of terrifying figures that pulsed with godliness appeared around him. If the students from the Xeno-Immortal School were here to see what was happening, they would be stunned. After all, as far as they were concerned, being able to form godly entities was something completely theoretical. Yet Xu Qing was actually doing it.

Every single one was extremely realistic, and emanated terrifying pressure that surpassed what should have been possible for godly entities.

But Xu Qing wasn't content. As far as he was concerned, this was just good practice. He continued to use the soul threads to form godly entities for a time. Then he sent out a single thought that caused them all to collapse. They turned back into 300,000 soul threads, which converged back inside him.

Then Xu Qing thought about his first-level god state and tried to form it.

Given his understanding of it, and his current level of familiarity with the soul-weaving techniques, he quickly entered the first-level god state. As he stood in the private chamber, terrifying pressure rolled out. However, the pressure was different from when he used his first-level god state in the usual way.

It contained the feeling of a god, but also, the characteristics of the Xeno-Immortal School. Most importantly, Xu Qing found that he could ignite it with a single thought. By turning it into a blast of

power, he could break through shackles and obstacles, and thus further his cultivation base. That realization caused him to breathe heavily as his eyes snapped open.

The Xeno-Immortal School really does have unusual techniques compared to everyone else! Although they seem to be about weaving soul threads or godliness, that's only the surface. In reality, they're even more terrifying....

They can take the essence of a god and use it to break through to higher levels! By igniting the image of a god in a timely fashion, it can be turned into a shocking power that can blast through the obstacles that severed the path of immortals. This is a brand new path that borrows from gods to reach immortal ascension. So this is what a Xeno-Immortal is.

It was around that time that Xu Qing heard someone knocking on his private meditation chamber.

“What are you up to, little Junior Brother? It's a windy, snowy night. Very cold. In that case... it's perfect for a little activity I have planned. I need someone to help me keep an eye on the wind. Any chance you're available?”

Chapter 776: Fellow Daoist Ergou, You Frightened Me!

The Captain had clearly learned some unusual technique that allowed him to figure out where Xu Qing was and what he was doing; the door to the private chamber swung open, and the Captain strolled in looking very pleased with himself.

“What do you think, little Ah Qing? This technique is specifically designed to open the doors of private chambers sealed with warding spells and spell formations. Very amazing! I actually learned it from a good friend of mine that I made after arriving here in the imperial capital. *She* taught it to me.”

Xu Qing looked at the Captain and then the door of the private chamber. He had to admit he was intrigued. After all, the private chamber was sealed, not only with a powerful warding spell, but also, some of Xu Qing's own methods. Although it couldn't be considered completely flawless, it still wasn't supposed to be easy to open the door. Yet the Captain had opened it with seemingly no effort at all.

“What technique is it?” Xu Qing asked.

The Captain seemed very pleased to hear such a question. “I, your Eldest Brother, have been going out every day since we got to the imperial capital. I wasn't just fishing for information. I actually assumed a secret identity, then went and made a bunch of friends. And one of them is extremely mysterious.

“Of course, you know me. How could I possibly be the kind of person just anyone becomes friends with? Therefore, I initially refused her. However, she was so anxious to become my friend that she taught me the technique. But, enough of that. You're done with your cultivation, right? Come with me.”

With a face full of anticipation, the Captain grabbed Xu Qing's arm. There wasn't much Xu Qing could do. There weren't many people in the world who he couldn't refuse, but the Captain was one of them.

“What are you up to this time?” he asked as he rose to his feet.

Pushing Xu Qing toward the door, the Captain answered, “I need you to come with me to the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect. To steal something.”

Xu Qing stopped in place. “Count me out.”

He had no choice but to refuse. After all, he wasn’t looking to get killed.

The Captain cleared his throat. “It’s one of their branch sects. Not the main headquarters. Look, it’s no big deal. The strongest person there is a Void Returning expert. As long as we don’t make a big scene and attract the attention of their main headquarters, we can be in and out before anyone realizes it.”

Xu Qing thought about it briefly, then agreed.

It was dark outside, and there was a strong breeze. Waves rippled across the surface of Ningyan’s pond. Xu Qing and the Captain sped out of the mansion.

“I already set the time and place with this mysterious friend of mine. Tonight, we’re going to a restricted area in the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect branch sect to get that item.” The Captain took out a mask and tossed it to Xu Qing. “Put that on. I liberated it from the old man’s stockpile before we came to the imperial capital. It can conceal your identity. As long as you keep your aura reined in, you can temporarily prevent anyone from recognizing you.

“After all, I’m not really sure who this mysterious friend of mine is. She’s probably just using me to keep her true identity secret. And she probably has other motives as well. But in the end, it doesn’t matter, as I really have to get into that restricted area. I need something from there for our next big job.

“Incidentally, I’m not worried about her at all. I’m pretty sure she has no idea who I really am. But just to be safe, I’m bringing you along to watch my back. If it turns out she’s planning to betray me, you need to put her to death immediately! What’s more, after she and I go in, if she comes out alone, then you need to stop her. I’m worried that she might try to sell me out.”

Xu Qing nodded and put on the mask. The mask’s special construction ensured that it fit comfortably onto Xu Qing’s face immediately. He rubbed it as he sped along with the Captain. This wasn’t his first time doing things like this with the Captain. As he continued on his way, he thought more about the Xeno-Immortal School’s techniques, and how to use the different weaving methods.

Theoretically speaking, my godsource soul threads should be able to weave my second-level god state. That said, my control over the soul threads isn’t at that level yet. I need more practice with the weaving techniques. But with additional training, I’ll be able to do it.

Of course, the first state is actually very simple. I have enough soul threads, and I can weave it almost instantly. I can even transform into that state.... This is actually perfect for the imperial capital, as there are some situations in which I want to hide my identity.

Xu Qing did some weaving in his sea of consciousness, causing his aura to transform. The Captain noticed what was happening and looked over in surprise, although he didn't ask any questions.

And thus, the two of them sped through the night in full concealment. About two hours later, they reached the northwestern part of the capital. It was a relatively remote mountainous area that was currently choked with snow. One of the mountains in the mountain range seemed capable of absorbing starlight. It glittered brightly, and created a seven-colored glow in the snowflakes. This was the location of a branch sect of the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect. It obviously contained a different dimension, and this was the entrance.

“Finally here.” As the Captain looked at the dazzling mountain, he squatted, licked his lips, and looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing closed his eyes and continued working on the weaving in his sea of consciousness. His aura was now completely different from before.

Sensing that transformation, the Captain couldn't help but ask, “What are you up to, little Ah Qing? I told you to rein in your aura, not completely change it! How are you doing that anyway? That change to your aura is so dramatic that, with the mask on, I really can't tell it's you....”

“It's just a technique I learned recently,” Xu Qing said, opening his eyes. He gave no further explanation.

The Captain was very curious and was about to ask some follow-up questions when a faint whistling sound reached them. The Captain and Xu Qing both looked up.

A young woman approached, her facial features average, her clothing a black robe. Striding through the wind and snow, she reached the Captain and Xu Qing. After looking Xu Qing up and down, she said, “Who's this, Chen Daqing?”

Upon hearing the name, Xu Qing looked over at the Captain. Clearly, ‘Chen Daqing’ was the Captain's assumed name. [1]

The Captain blinked a few times and said, “This is my good friend Ergou. He was worried about me doing this alone, so he came along.”[2]

The young woman said nothing further on that subject. With a final glance at Xu Qing, she shifted her attention to the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect. “Well then, shall we begin as agreed?”

“Let's go!” The Captain took a deep breath, gave a final glance to Xu Qing, and then flew into the air.

The young woman followed, and together, the two of them approached the dazzling mountain.

Xu Qing watched as they got closer and closer until they blurred and disappeared. That wasn't surprising. Given what the Captain was capable of, if he said someone was mysterious, that person had to be extraordinary. What was more, considering they were targeting the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect, there was no doubt this person was at least somewhat trustworthy.

Then again, considering the Captain's suicidal personality, Xu Qing was actually slightly concerned. With that, he flew over to another nearby mountain to wait.

Time passed. Things seemed quiet in the Star Emperor Preeminence's branch sect. About two hours later, the air outside the dazzling mountain rippled, and the young woman appeared. Without any hesitation, she burst into motion. However, she'd hardly moved when Xu Qing appeared in front of her, blocking her path.

"Why are you in such a hurry to leave, Fellow Daoist?" Xu Qing said calmly. "I think the safest thing would be to wait until Daqing comes out."

The woman frowned and her eyes turned cold. "Screw off!"

She waved her hand, releasing a dangerous energy that converged in front of her to make a mirror. The mirror swept over Xu Qing, then shattered. Meanwhile, the woman unhesitatingly continued on her way. However, only a moment later, her pupils constricted as Xu Qing materialized in front of her again.

"Stop right there," he said.

Her pupils constricted again. After looking him up and down again, she lifted her right hand and pushed out in front of her. The falling snow slowed, then transformed into a host of ice needles that shot toward Xu Qing.

His face remained expressionless as he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand. Instantly, black fire erupted around him and shot toward the woman. They clashed, exchanging magical techniques back and forth over the space of several breaths of time. It didn't take very long for them to exchange over a hundred blows.

That said, both were being careful not to make too much noise or release any big fluctuations that might attract attention.

After ten breaths of time, the woman was starting to get anxious. Looking impatient, she said, "I don't know what happened to Chen Daqing after we went inside. There's no point in you stopping me. If you don't buzz off... I'll kill you!"

"You can leave once he comes out," Xu Qing said quietly.

"Looking to die!?" the woman snapped, her eyes turning ice-cold. Suddenly, her forehead split open, and a white needle shot out, looking both graceful and extremely fast as it closed in on Xu Qing. The aura was different from what you would expect from cultivators. It was more like the pressure of a god. That said, it wasn't exactly that of a god. However, the domineering nature of it was shocking to say the least. It was the type of force that, on a substructural level, was superior to everything else.

Xu Qing's pupils constricted as he sensed sudden danger. Without any hesitation, he unleashed 310,000 soul threads from his sea of consciousness, which swept out to form a vicious projection around him. It looked like a huge beetle, pulsing with fluctuations of godliness that seemed very close to that of an actual god. This was the 'earthchild' that he had learned from the information from the Xeno-Immortal School. Earthchildren never got higher than the Spirit Trove level in their cultivation. But this one was actually in Void Returning, simply because it was formed from Xu

Qing's soul threads. As soon as it appeared, the conglomeration of 310,000 soul threads slammed into the incoming needle.

The woman's eyes went wide, and she backed up. "Stop! Fellow Daoist Ergou, things will turn bad if we keep fighting. I can already see weaknesses in the warding spells I set up in the area. Let's stop fighting. I'll wait here with you!"

Even as she spoke, she nervously waved her hand to recall the white needle.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. Waving his hand, he dispelled the earthchild and concealed his soul threads. That said, he could call them back at a moment's notice if necessary.

Snow continued to fall on the two of them as they stood there quietly.

After about a dozen breaths of time passed, the woman looked at Xu Qing. Not attempting to conceal her surprise, she took a deep breath and cautiously said, "Fellow Daoist Ergou, were you just using the techniques of the Xeno-Immortal School? Those tens of thousands of soul threads... were very frightening.... I can't believe someone advanced Xeno-Immortal School cultivation techniques to that level. Can I ask... who are you?"

Chapter 777: The Xeno-Immortal School Is About to Get Popular

This young woman that the Captain had called 'mysterious,' was currently breathing heavily as she looked at Xu Qing as if he were some sort of freak. The reality was that she had planned from the beginning to sell out 'Chen Daqing' and make him the scapegoat. She had been very careful to keep her own identity secret, so there was no way her accomplice could betray her or seek revenge later.

But right now, her heart was racing like mad. She was familiar with the Xeno-Immortal School. In fact, the truth was that she knew about all the schools in the Imperial University. That was partly because of her status as a student, and also because of her background. She knew about the schools in the university, and she was also more familiar with the superpower sects than most other people. And yet, it was that very understanding which left her deeply shaken right now.

Hundreds of thousands of soul threads...? Neither Li Xuanfeng nor Chen Daoze were able to do that! Supposedly, Li Xuanfeng reached a total of about 50,000 soul threads, and though Chen Daoze had slightly more, it couldn't have been more than 70,000.

What if... the two of them didn't actually die? If they were still alive, maybe one of them could pull this off....

But that's impossible. Li Xuanfeng lived 8,000 years ago. Only Smoldering Gods with heavenly daos and natural laws might be able to live that long. Wait, could it be possible... that this person is Chen Daoze? Word on the street is that Chen Daoze turned into a godly entity and couldn't transform back. Later, he passed away into meditation and became a specimen for study. But is that story true?

The woman was deeply shocked by what she had seen today. It subverted her understanding in a major way. Hundreds of thousands of souls threads really were frightening. Because of her shock, the expression on her average-looking face didn't match her tone of voice. Her face seemed stiff and rigid, which seemed to provide further proof that she was wearing a mask to disguise herself. She was currently keeping a close eye on Xu Qing in the hopes of getting some more clues to lend weight to her speculations.

Xu Qing's expression remained unchanging as he looked at the young woman.

He didn't care that she was surprised. They were *strangers who had met by chance, like patches of drifting duckweed*. As such, he didn't owe her any sort of explanation. In fact, he finally looked away from her and back at the branch sect off in the distance. He sent some divine sense out to lock onto the young woman; if she tried to do something underhanded, he would be ready.

At the same time, he began to analyze what he had accomplished using Xeno-Immortal School techniques. It was his first time using the techniques during a fight. The soul-weaving methods didn't necessarily seem to make him a lot stronger, but they did a great job of transforming his aura.

And it was very easy to use it to summon his first-level god state. Most importantly, he could break through barriers if he had enough soul threads.

The upper limit was previously based on the state itself. The first-level god state would normally require millions of ordinary soul threads. After all, the Xeno-Immortal School's soul threads are imitations of godsource. In contrast, my soul threads are made from godsource, so for me, 200,000 is enough.

But my second-level god state is far stronger than the first level. And that makes things more complicated. Based on what I can tell, I would probably need 500,000 soul threads to do the weaving. That's why I usually have to use Crimson Mother's flesh to reach the second-level god state.

Xu Qing was currently using the Xeno-Immortal School techniques and his own god states to comprehend new things, and deepen his current understanding.

I don't have nearly enough soul threads.... After I get back tonight, I'm going to try absorbing some of Crimson Mother's flesh and see if I can combine it with the Xeno-Immortal techniques to make more soul threads!

Meanwhile, the young woman was coming to the conclusion that Xu Qing was a lot more enigmatic than she'd realized. He was currently focused on his thoughts, and wasn't saying a thing, which only added to the effect. That just made Xu Qing seem more mysterious to her.

Time passed quietly.

About an hour later, as the pre-dawn sky turned even darker, a frown slowly appeared on Xu Qing's face as he looked at the branch sect. Based on what he knew about the Captain, he usually didn't like delays. Most of the time, he acted quickly and decisively. But things were really taking a long time today.

Seeing that dawn was coming, the woman hesitated, then said, "I think something might have happened to your friend...."

But even as she said that, the dazzling mountain flared, and a figure shot out.

It was none other than the Captain. He was in bad shape, covered with huge wounds that gushed large amounts of blood. That said, he looked excited.

He gave Xu Qing a look that Xu Qing immediately understood. Without any hesitation, Xu Qing waved his hand, causing 310,000 soul threads to surge out into the form of the godly earthchild. He held nothing back.

The huge beetle emanated a terrifying pressure, along with godly fluctuations on the outside and cultivator power on the inside. With a loud roar, it sent immense pressure toward the mountain behind the Captain.

A moment later, intense rumbling sounds emanated from the dazzling mountain. Dozens of people shot out, their expressions full of rage and killing intent. However, the moment they appeared, Xu Qing's earthchild of soul threads descended and slammed into them. A huge boom echoed out.

Even more shocking, Xu Qing sent out another thought, and the soul threads assumed a different shape. This was another godly entity, specifically, a shade fiend.

Shade fiends were a type of godly entity native to the western parts of the Revered Ancient mainland. They resembled spiders, except they had long, thin bodies similar to centipedes. To some extent, they were like a combination between a spider and a centipede. As soon as the shade fiend appeared, it opened its mouth and spat out numerous streams of black silk, which turned into a web that settled down on the dazzling mountain. As a result, the pursuers were blocked.

With that accomplished, Xu Qing didn't hesitate to smash a teleportation jade slip, causing him to disappear. With the time Xu Qing had bought, the Captain made his escape. He also crushed a teleportation jade slip and vanished.

There weren't any words spoken between the two of them. All it took was a single shared glance....

The young woman hadn't planned things out, but she also reacted quickly, and faded away into invisibility. But then, only a moment later, blinding blue light erupted from her, making her plainly visible in the night.

Her expression flickered. There was no need for her to analyze the situation. She immediately came to the conclusion that it was the handiwork of either Chen Daqing or Ergou, with Chen Daqing being the most likely suspect.

"Dammit!" she blurted. She tried to go invisible again, but the blue light kept shining brightly. Starting to get nervous, she tapped into a secret magic, spitting out some blood that finally managed to suppress the light.

Meanwhile, the dazzling mountain flared with light as a powerful expert inside smashed through the sealing barriers, causing the soul threads to dissipate.

A white-haired old man emerged. He wore a robe depicting a starry sky. His face was ashen with fury. Looking at the spot where the woman and the blue light had disappeared, he spoke in a voice that thrummed with killing intent.

"Check the whole area. Find any and all clues. That's especially true of that area with the blue light. Also, report the matter to headquarters. We have to find the thieves!"

The group of roughly a dozen disciples looked at each other awkwardly, then voiced their assent and started searching the area. The majority of them focused on the area where the young woman had disappeared.

The old man only seemed to be getting more angry. Looking back at the mountain, he noted the lingering traces of the magical techniques that had been used, and gradually started to look more and more suspicious. He was getting the vague sensation that he had seen traces of a magical technique like this before. Waving his hand, he pulled some of them toward him, causing a handful of Xu Qing's soul threads to fly into his hand. After looking at them closely, his expression became one of incredulity. Now he knew where that familiar sensation came from.

“Xeno-Immortal School soul threads?” he murmured.

The Xeno-Immortal School had once been the number one school in the Imperial University. It was now in decline, but was still very well-known. What was more, from ancient times until now, many people had studied Xeno-Immortal techniques.

As a result, most top experts in the imperial capital were familiar with them. Though nobody special had come out of the Xeno-Immortal School in years, and few people did more than dabble in their techniques. That was why it took some time for the old man to realize what he was looking at. Now that he was thinking about the Xeno-Immortal School, the old man thought back to the earthchild and the shadefiend, as well as the godly entity fluctuations that they had released. All of a sudden, his heart started pounding.

Someone achieved major success in the Xeno-Immortal School!

He turned to look off into the distance, then took out a jade slip and sent a message to his headquarters, informing them about the involvement of the Xeno-Immortal School. When the response message came in, his confusion built. Then he thought back to the two godly entities he had seen, and then the information in the response, and his mind started spinning.

50,000 soul threads is the threshold of major success. 100,000 soul threads is the peak of major success... But based on the fluctuations, the godly entities that appeared here weren't limited to 100,000 soul threads. They were made of hundreds of thousands! This....

The old man burst into motion to head toward his sect headquarters.

The sun rose, and the darkness of night slowly disappeared from the sky.

Back at Ningyan's mansion, Xu Qing was back, but the Captain was nowhere to be seen.

Xu Qing was used to that sort of thing, so it didn't surprise him. The Captain had definitely teleported safely away.

As for what the Captain had stolen, Xu Qing wasn't particularly curious. Right now, he was mainly focused on the Xeno-Immortal School techniques.

This was the first time I used the Xeno-Immortal School arts in combat, so it doesn't seem likely I blew my cover. Right now, the most important thing to do is see if absorbing more of Crimson Mother's flesh can make more soul threads.

Xu Qing went into his private chamber, sealed the area to conceal his aura, then took off the ancient sun and had it hover overhead to lock down the area further. At that point, he sat down cross-legged and took out a piece of Crimson Mother's flesh. Fluctuations of godliness immediately rolled out.

Eyes narrowing, Xu Qing started working.

Time passed.

It was dawn outside, and it was still snowing. The imperial capital looked very calm and quiet. However, as the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect continued with its investigation, word of the event started to spread.

And that meant that a big tempest was about to strike the Imperial University.

Chapter 778: I'm Standing in Front of You

“The Star Emperor branch sect got robbed!”

“I heard they lost a bunch of stuff, including a stone book that was in a restricted area. The book is ordinary in nature most of the time. But during nighttime thunderstorms, it produces a blurry projection.”

“The Star Emperor Preeminence Sect has been studying that thing for a long time. Eventually, they determined that it was carved off an ordinary photosensitive rock. The blurry projection inside is that of an ancient Core Formation cultivator. Other than a bit of archaeological value, it's worthless.”

“Honestly, who cares if the stone book went missing? The other things that were stolen are what really seem outrageous.... I heard that one area had thirty percent of the trees, floor tiles, and buildings all cleared out. In some areas, everything was scraped clean down three inches, almost as if a storm of locusts passed through....”

“What's even more unbelievable is that among the stolen items was some clothing!”

“What's the deal...? Why steal things like that?”

This branch sect of the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect wasn't very big. But in the end, it was part of one of the top ten superpower sects of humankind. Therefore, it was under constant scrutiny, so there was little wonder a robbery incident related to them would be such a hot topic.

And of course, the things that had been stolen were strange to say the least. Rumors swirled the next morning about the robbery. More and more people were talking about the situation, and every single one of them was bewildered.

Gradually, back-channel information eventually made it out to the public. And when that news hit, it was as explosive as a drop of cold water hitting some boiling oil.

“One of the thieves used a highly-developed technique from the Xeno-Immortal School!”

“Based on the analysis of the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect, this person had hundreds of thousands of soul threads! That’s completely unprecedented! That’s more than either of the past two patriarchs of the Xeno-Immortal School!”

“That’s not possible. I did my research into the Xeno-Immortal School, and their cultivation methods are extremely slow. If you wanted to get hundreds of thousands of soul threads... forget about the question of whether or not the soul could handle that. Just the process alone could take something like 10,000 years!!”

“That’s preposterous!”

By late morning, the news had become a tempest spreading through the entire imperial capital. And of course, word began to spread in the Imperial University.

Since the Xeno-Immortal School was at the heart of all the rumors, by noontime, there were entire crowds of students looking dubiously at the school and whispering to each other about it. And that was because a representative from the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect had already gone inside, and had been there for a while. After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, the representative walked out with a scowl on his face. He hurried off without a word to anyone.

He had been escorted out by the Xeno-Immortal School’s schoolmaster and three students. The masks also concealed their emotional fluctuations. But when the four of them exchanged glances, they could see that all of them were shaken, but still calm. Inside, they had complicated emotions including astonishment, stupefaction, excitement, and zeal.

They had heard about the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect situation earlier, but hadn’t paid much attention to it. But when the news broke about the enigmatic Xeno-Immortal School master, they were shocked.

Then the representative came from the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect. He gave more details about the situation, and asked for details about everyone who practiced Xeno-Immortal School techniques. That was when they realized that the situation was very serious. They couldn’t have been more shaken up at the moment.

The Star Emperor Preeminence Sect’s investigation didn’t lead anywhere. For many years, there had never been more than four conclave students of the Xeno-Immortal School. That said, the Xeno-Immortal School’s techniques were public knowledge.

After all, the entire point of the Imperial University was to combat sectarianism and make it easier for people to gain knowledge. Therefore, even though the Xeno-Immortal School had a rule limiting their techniques to conclave students, the reality was that they ignored that rule a lot of the time. From ancient times until modern, there had been a lot of people who learned about Xeno-Immortal School techniques. In fact, identifying one of them in particular would be as difficult as *fishing a needle from the sea*.

Analyzing the situation critically would lead just about anyone to the conclusion that it was highly likely the person who had mastered the school’s techniques was the schoolmaster. However, the

enigmatic cultivator in question... could also be someone who had been in hiding for thousands of years and was only now appearing publicly.

As for who that person could be, opinions differed. That included the four longtime members of the Xeno-Immortal School and outsiders as well.

As the schoolmaster stood outside of the white tower, his heart pounding, he tried to remain calm as he looked over the three students present. Inside, he was sighing endlessly.

For years, the Xeno-Immortal School has been ignored. There have never been so many people watching us....

He was very excited about the prospect of some enigmatic person having mastered the Xeno-Immortal School techniques. He also felt proud. Raising his voice, he called, "I have no idea why the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect provoked some Senior member of our school of thought, and thus forced that Senior to mete out a bit of punishment. Regardless, the Xeno-Immortal School will take responsibility!

"From ancient times until now, there have been a lot of people who studied Xeno-Immortal School techniques. They've been passed down from generation to generation. As a result, it's fair to say that humankind has a lot of Xeno-Immortal School experts.

"Previously, I didn't want to make this fact known publicly, as our school likes to keep a low profile. We prefer to stay out of mundane conflicts, and hold back from dealing with the outside world as representatives of our school of thought. But today... a Senior member of our school had no choice but to take action. Therefore, we won't hide the truth any longer.

"The rumors are true! The person in question is a top expert of our school of thought!"

The schoolmaster's words provoked an immediate buzz of conversation among the surrounding students. Amidst the clamor, the schoolmaster clasped his hands behind his back and strode back into the white tower with his head raised high. The three students excitedly followed him. After they were inside, the door shut behind them, whereupon they couldn't suppress their excitement any longer, and started talking to the schoolmaster in trembling voices.

"Teacher, what's going on here?"

"Teacher, does our Xeno-Immortal School really have a bunch of top experts as members?"

"Hundreds of thousands of soul threads...? How is that even possible?"

The schoolmaster looked up and coolly said, "Imbecile!"

Normally speaking, the three students would talk back. After all, the schoolmaster never dared to talk to them in this way for fear of them leaving and never coming back. But today, the three of them were acting very obediently. One of them hurried forward to massage the schoolmaster's

shoulders. Another fanned him, while the third went over to start organizing the jade slips. All were looking at the schoolmaster with fawning expressions.

The schoolmaster was feeling wonderful, as he had actually never been treated in this way before.

“Ah, whatever,” he said. “The three of you have made a few mistakes here and there over the years, but you’ve never truly screwed up. In that respect, you pass muster. Therefore, I don’t mind telling you a few things.”

The three students’ ears perked up, and their hearts started pounding. Seeing that caused the schoolmaster to feel even more pleased. From that point on, he started bragging even more.

“I’m naturally aware of the identity of this Senior member of our school. Everything I said out there just now was true. Our school of thought used to be very glorious. The center of attention. And that wasn’t very conducive to cultivation. So our patriarch left secret instructions for later generations of students to keep a low profile, and act like normal people when outside the school. In other words, our school of thought *intentionally* fell into decline.

“The reality is... that the Xeno-Immortal School went from bright to dark on purpose. We actually have many members with hundreds of thousands of soul threads. In fact, there’s even one with 1,000,000! Remember, this is top secret. You can’t tell anyone! Now, hurry up and sort those ancient records! Organize them by category and put them all together neatly!”

The schoolmaster gave a cold snort.

The three students all sighed and nodded. Inside, they were very incredulous. However, their attitudes were already changing, and therefore, they were quick to do whatever the schoolmaster asked them to do....

And thus, as the Xeno-Immortal School took responsibility for the incident, the storm of rumors about them continued to spread in the Imperial University and the capital itself.

An entire day passed.

The next morning, Xu Qing opened his eyes in his private chamber. During the night that had passed, he had been experimenting with using Xeno-Immortal School techniques to absorb the flesh of Crimson Mother. Most of his efforts had failed, but in the end, he did achieve a small measure of success.

The conversion rate is pretty low....

Xu Qing frowned. Based on what he could sense, he had about 500,000 soul threads in his sea of consciousness now. The additional several hundred thousand came from absorbing about fifty pieces of Crimson Mother’s flesh. Truth be told, one chunk of Crimson Mother’s flesh was enough for him to activate his second-level god state. Because of that, Xu Qing could tell that the conversion rate of flesh to soul threads was far too low.

Thankfully, when he absorbed a piece of flesh, the flesh itself didn't disappear. It shriveled up. However, some of the godsource remained behind even when that happened. Crimson Mother's flesh was simply too densely structured for the Xeno-Immortal School's techniques to fully drain them.

It's worth it! he thought, his eyes shining. At this point, he could control the soul threads to form the second-level god state without using any of the power of Crimson Mother's flesh.

I still have about a hundred chunks of flesh.... I need a higher level of Xeno-Immortal School technique to fully utilize them. After all, the third-level god state requires a lot of godsource soul threads.... A million probably won't be enough.

After some thought, Xu Qing got to his feet and walked out of the mansion into the dawn light as he headed toward the Imperial University.

The Captain still hadn't returned. Xu Qing wasn't worried about that. He hurried on his way, and before long, had teleported into the Imperial University. Once inside, he was clad in the unique robe and mask that all students wore.

Things inside were a lot more lively than usual.

After getting his bearings, he started walking in the direction of the Xeno-Immortal School. Along the way, he heard a lot of chatter, most of it people debating the identity of the enigmatic cultivator from the Xeno-Immortal School. Xu Qing wasn't surprised.

He slipped through the crowds until he saw the Xeno-Immortal School some distance ahead. The area looked very different than before. There were now dozens of students making polite inquiries about the school's techniques.

The schoolmaster stood in the front, looking very much like the center of attention. The other three students proudly answered questions. When the schoolmaster saw Xu Qing approaching, he gave him a slight nod. The other three students quickly called him over.

"Why didn't you come yesterday? Did you hear about the huge thing that happened in our Xeno-Immortal School?"

"Let me tell you, our Xeno-Immortal School has been hiding its strength this entire time. We're actually incredibly powerful! And that Senior member with the hundreds of thousands of soul threads is indeed one of our patriarchs!"

The students were about to keep gushing when the schoolmaster cleared his throat.

"Sir Dark-Thunder, it looks like we have a new group of inquiring students. You go receive them."

Xu Qing clasped hands respectfully. The student who had been talking moments ago closed his mouth briefly, then said, "There are going to be questions you can't answer considering you're so new. Just do your best. Remember, we... are truly awesome!"

Xu Qing blinked a few times. Truth be told, he had been expecting something like this to happen. Trying to look excited, he nodded and looked over to the entrance, where a group of about eight students had just entered.

Xu Qing walked over to them. “How can I help you? If you want to know about the Xeno-Immortal School, I’d be happy to give you some information.”

Because of how things worked in the Imperial University, all of these students looked exactly the same. However, Xu Qing noticed that one of them looked a bit more cautious. While Xu Qing was talking, that student was sizing up everyone else, including Xu Qing. Eventually, that student’s gaze came to focus on the schoolmaster.

People are saying that the enigmatic Xeno-Immortal School cultivator in question is an old fellow that’s thousands of years old. But when I clashed with him on that day, he didn’t seem like an old person at all. What’s more, he didn’t talk much, which hints that he’s somewhat introverted. I wonder if that Ergou... is actually the schoolmaster!

Having reached this point in his train of thought, the student casually looked at Xu Qing and said, “I’m interested in joining the Xeno-Immortal School, and would like to know more about it. For example, your schoolmaster seems like something of an introvert. At the same time, he doesn’t seem very old....”

Hearing that, Xu Qing looked over, a sense of caution rising up within him.

Chapter 779: 1,000,000 Transformation

Unfortunately, the students in the university all wore the same outfit and type of mask. Their auras and magical technique fluctuations were changed. Even their voice and general physical stature was altered so that one’s identity was completely secret. It wasn’t even possible to identify gender differences.

Therefore, though Xu Qing felt the need to be on guard, he actually had no idea who this person could be. After all... after this big development for the Xeno-Immortal School, there were a lot more people paying attention to them. And there were obviously going to be multiple people digging for information.

Looking at the student who had asked the question, Xu Qing said, “I’m a new member, so there’s a lot I don’t understand. But now that you mention it, I guess our schoolmaster is like that.”

The student looked thoughtfully at the schoolmaster, then back at Xu Qing. Although this was her first time looking at Xu Qing up close, given how few people were actually members of the Xeno-Immortal School, she had long since dug up a bit of information about all of them. Although she didn’t know the true identities of any of the members, she did know how long they had been members and what they were known for accomplishing within the university grounds. In fact, that was common knowledge by this point.

And of course, her information mentioned this new student who called himself Sir Dark-Thunder. She knew that he had just joined this school of thought, and though she had some suspicions regarding his identity, she put them aside. Based on her personal experience from that day, she was certain that the enigmatic master everyone was wondering about couldn’t be a brand new member.

Beyond that, she wasn’t interested in who Sir Dark-Thunder really was. Right now, she was thinking about the handful of words she had exchanged with that master from the Xeno-Immortal School. Taking a few steps forward, she faced the schoolmaster, who was sitting there with his eyes closed. Clapping hands, she bowed at the waist.

“Schoolmaster, I would like to join the Xeno-Immortal School.”

Everyone else in the tower looked over. Although a lot of students had come to ask about the school recently, this was the first who had actually asked to join.

Beneath his mask, Xu Qing’s eyebrows shot up, and the vigilance in his heart grew more intense. It made sense that so many people had come around seeking information. But for someone to suddenly ask to join was unusual.

Even the schoolmaster seemed surprised as he opened his eyes and looked at the group of students.

He looked dignified, but at the same time, extremely happy. That said, he sounded very relaxed as he said, “Our school of thought has a rule. Only conclave students can learn our techniques!”

Eyes flashing with determination, the young woman said, “That’s fine! But I have three questions that I’m hoping you can clear up for me, schoolmaster.”

The schoolmaster looked closely at the group of students to identify the one who was asking the questions. He smiled.

“Go ahead.”

“My first question is about souls. I heard that your school of thought teaches a technique to make soul threads. And that requires the constant improvement of the soul. So, does the Xeno-Immortal School have any unique or unusual soul-nourishing techniques?”

As she spoke, she kept her attention focused closely on the schoolmaster’s eyes.

His eyes remained completely calm as he answered, “*The Summer Immortal’s lone thought brings the immortal body into play. This concept becomes as deep as the sea, the soul will reach fruition.*”

Everyone in the tower hesitated. In the past, most people would have scoffed at such words, as they were seemingly nothing more than jibber-jabber. But considering that a true master had emerged from the Xeno-Immortal School, someone with hundreds of thousands of soul threads, people were now paying close attention to such things. Even the three conclave students all seemed to be committing the words to memory.

Only Xu Qing reacted, blinking a few times.

The young woman frowned under her mask, thought for a moment, then asked her second question.

“Schoolmaster, is it true what people are saying, that it takes a really, really long time to make soul threads?”

That was the question most inquiring students were most keenly interested in. Even the three existing conclave students were interested to hear the answer to this question.

The schoolmaster lifted his chin arrogantly. Sounding completely confident, he said, “A thousand years ago, our school of thought changed our techniques. We now have private and public versions. According to the rules laid forth by our patriarch, conclave disciples who study for a certain number

of years will be taught the private technique. The public version is indeed very slow. But the private technique is incredibly fast!”

The listeners stirred. Although most of them still weren't fully convinced, when they thought about that secret master with the hundreds of thousands of soul threads, they hesitated.

It was the same with the young woman, who was now frowning with even deeper anxiety than before. She was starting to get the feeling that this schoolmaster was no slouch. The answers he gave were given in such a way that he revealed no pertinent information.

After some more thought, she decided not to ask her third question. Instead, she bowed.

“I have no further questions, and I sincerely want to become a conclave disciple of the Xeno-Immortal School.”

The schoolmaster nodded, all while thinking, *So, you're here probing for information about the enigmatic master, huh?*

The reality was that, as the schoolmaster, he had quickly seen through her two questions. He wasn't alarmed. Not even he knew the identity of the enigmatic master. But that didn't curtail his desire to use this event to increase the prestige of the Xeno-Immortal School. After all, that enigmatic master really did use the soul threads of the Xeno-Immortal School. That was enough for him. As for the enigmatic master, he would surely reveal his identity when it was appropriate. He also wasn't concerned that this person had angered the Star Emperor Preeminence Sect by stealing from them. The schools of thought from the Imperial University were incredibly important.

With such thoughts on his mind, he waved his hand, sending a jade slip flying over to the new student.

She caught it and put her mark on it.

“Go stand with your Elder Brothers,” the schoolmaster said. He closed his eyes.

Seeing all this happen caused Xu Qing's guard to go up to the highest level.

Based on this person's questions, either they're really interested in the Xeno-Immortal School, or they might have ulterior motives. It's hard to say. The one explanation that would cover everything, and is most logical, is that this person... is the same one I clashed with. But who exactly is she?

Xu Qing looked at the student with narrowed eyes.

Just like that, a day went by.

Xu Qing, the new student, and the other three students met with hundreds of inquirers. The young woman kept an eye on Xu Qing and the others, and occasionally asked some questions. However, for the most part, she seemed to be focusing mostly on the schoolmaster.

She was watching the schoolmaster. Xu Qing was watching her.

As time went by, Xu Qing became more convinced that his suspicions were true. There was probably a fifty to sixty percent probability that she was the person he had fought with that night. He was also convinced that, as time went by, that probability would increase as he got more information. After all, though this person was clearly clever... so was he.

That night, he bid farewell to the schoolmaster, left the white tower, and went back to the mansion. After thinking back to everything that had happened, he closed his eyes, took out a piece of Crimson Mother's flesh, and began a session of cultivation.

Half a month flashed by.

The identity of the enigmatic master from the Xeno-Immortal School continued to be the subject of a tempest of rumors. However, because no further incidents occurred, the schoolmaster's proud announcements of a revival of the school turned out to be empty words.

After all, any kind of excitement will die down after the passage of enough time. At first, hundreds of students a day were visiting the school to ask for information. But soon that number dwindled to dozens.

Even still, the school was dramatically busier than before. Nine more students joined, bringing the total student population up to thirteen. The students were a very mixed lot that came from a variety of backgrounds. At first, they asked a lot of vague questions, but eventually their questions became more direct. Xu Qing and the other four students stuck close to the new arrivals and had a lot of discussions with them.

Half a month of observation had convinced Xu Qing that the fifth student to join... was definitely the mysterious young woman he had fought. He remembered her aura when she attacked. It had seemed like part-cultivator, part-god. It was almost a different type of power that was as domineering as a cultivator and as aggressive as a god.

What am I dealing with here? In all of the research he had done in the various schools of thought in the Imperial University, he hadn't found any clues that might explain the situation. Eventually, he put the matter aside.

His cultivation of soul threads reached an even higher level. The Xeno-Immortal School actually did have a higher-level method of soul cultivation that went a lot faster than the ordinary method. In order to prove that he was telling the truth, the schoolmaster demonstrated the technique, although only to Xu Qing and the other four conclave students.

He was careful to explain that it was a transitional technique, and wasn't the actual private technique. He said he would explain the real technique later based on the age and qualifications of the students.

His words seemed effective. As a result, the spies from the various other organizations gained a renewed interest in the subject.

The technique was definitely more effective, but in the end, didn't provide a very significant boost. To the other three conclave students, it might result in an extra one or two soul threads in an entire month.

But things were different for Xu Qing. By using the higher-level technique with Crimson Mother's flesh, he was able to significantly increase the production of soul threads.

As a result, during the half month that passed, he absorbed almost everything possible from Crimson Mother's flesh. The result was that he was very close to 1,000,000 soul threads.

He only needed three more. That night, he had planned to go all out to make those final threads.

At the moment, he was thoughtfully contemplating the nearly complete set of godsource soul threads. They weren't active like they had been in the past. It was as if they took themselves more seriously. What was more, they were pulsing with an aura of transformation.

Xu Qing pondered the situation. He got the feeling that if he reached 1,000,000 soul threads, a dramatic transformation would occur. He wasn't sure of the details, and there wasn't any information in the technique description. From ancient times until now, no one in the Xeno-Immortal School had ever accumulated such a terrifying level of soul threads. In fact, not even the creator of the technique had ever cultivated it to that level.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as the sensation of transformation became stronger.

What's going to happen...?

Focusing on the techniques, he continued with his cultivation.

After an incense stick of time passed, a soul thread appeared in his sea of consciousness, glittering brightly. When it appeared, all of the other soul threads vibrated. The aura of transformation grew stronger.

Xu Qing kept working. About an hour later, a second soul thread appeared, and Xu Qing's sea of consciousness vibrated loudly. Two hours later, the final soul thread appeared. He had a complete set of 1,000,000 soul threads!

And that was when a transformation without parallel in history began in his sea of consciousness!

Chapter 780: Xeno-Immortal Soul Seed

1,000,000 soul threads erupted in Xu Qing's sea of consciousness, spreading to fill his mind, soul, and body. Ultimately, a rumbling vortex came into being in his sea of consciousness.

At the same time, thunder crashed in the sky over the imperial capital. Bolts of lightning formed, snaking across the sky. It seemed as if some forbidden thing was coming into existence, drawing the attention of the heavenly daos. However, that only lasted for a short time before things went back to normal. It was as if the heavenly daos weren't sure what this thing was, and thus stopped paying attention to it. In fact, it almost seemed as if they were covering it up, as the thunder transformed into snow.

That said, the lingering glow of the lightning illuminated the night.

People meditating in private chambers were shocked. People on the street stopped walking and looked up in surprise. People in the Imperial University stopped talking. People in big buildings suddenly looked very serious, and there were even people in the imperial palace who looked into the sky.

But in the end, the heavenly dao seemed to cover over all traces of what was happening. Other than a few people who were still paying attention, most people just went back to what they were doing, whether that was meditating or doing something else.

One important person in the Imperial University did just the same, retracting his senses and focusing on the group of 39 students seated in front of him.

“Schoolmaster, what just happened?” one of the students asked.

“I just had a sudden strange feeling, that’s all. It’s fine. Continue, all of you.” The schoolmaster wore a hemp robe and had the standard mask that concealed his cultivation base and everything else about him.

This particular white tower belonged to the God-Merging School.

The students nodded in response, then continued with the conversation topic at hand, which was a discussion of the things that had been happening recently with the Xeno-Immortal School.

If it was some other school of thought, then given the current status of the God-Merging School, they wouldn’t have paid much attention. But the Xeno-Immortal School was different.

Fundamentally speaking... the Xeno-Immortal School and the God-Merging School were as opposed as fire and water. One of them weaved the image of a god in the mind, and emphasized completeness. The other replaced the fleshly body and slowly got rid of all vestiges of humanity other than the mind. Ultimately, one had the goal of becoming a Xeno-Immortal, the other was about transforming into a human god.

They were two fundamentally opposed viewpoints, which meant that, in the end, only one of the schools of thought could thrive. That was one of the reasons the Xeno-Immortal School had fallen into decline. Forgetting about their internal issues, the rise of the God-Merging School had just hastened their weakening. It was little surprise, then, that when an enigmatic master appeared who had hundreds of thousands of soul threads, it defied common understanding, and attracted the attention of the God-Merging School.

Though only half a month had passed, the Xeno-Immortal School had already become incredibly popular. However, the enigmatic master never made a second appearance. If he did, it was only possible to imagine how much more popular the Xeno-Immortal School would become. If that happened, it would be completely possible for the Xeno-Immortal School to truly rise to prominence again.

That was the subject currently being discussed at this meeting in the God-Merging School. All of the highest ranking students were in attendance. Some seemed nervous, while others discounted all the rumors. There were a lot of different opinions being expressed.

In the end, the schoolmaster raised his hand, causing silence to prevail in the tower. All of the high-ranking students turned to look at him. The respect in their eyes was clear.

“Don’t worry about the situation with the Xeno-Immortal School. Today... a very esteemed individual will be publicly joining the God-Merging School. With that person as a member, it will be *adding flowers to the brocade* of our school of thought. Everyone, start getting ready. Our new arrival will be coming in three days.”

The schoolmaster’s placid words left the high-level students with no choice but to calmly nod.

The meeting ended.

Outside, the thunder had ceased. Back in Ningyan's mansion, Xu Qing opened his eyes in his private chamber. His eyes gleamed with suspicion and confusion. He frowned.

What is this...?

Xu Qing lifted his hand, and a violet snowflake emerged from his palm to float in front of him. The vortex of 1,000,000 soul threads in his sea of consciousness continued to spin without end. As it spun, a frigid coldness emerged, causing more snowflakes to dance around. There weren't many snowflakes, only 100. Exactly 100.

Upon sensing what was going on in his sea of consciousness, Xu Qing retracted his divine will and focused on the snowflake in front of him. After some contemplation, he took out a transmission jade slip and messaged some swordsages he knew. Before long, a vicious wolf-like creature was delivered to him.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing waved his hand, sending the snowflake flying toward the beast's forehead. It pierced into the beast, which shivered and unleashed a bloodcurdling scream.

The snowflake almost seemed to possess life force. It soon integrated into the beast's flesh and blood, completely disappearing from sight.

Gruishly, the wound in the beast's forehead quickly healed until there was no indication it had ever been there. The wolf beast closed its eyes and stopped moving, making it look dead. However, its aura was still there. After a short time passed, its eyes opened and it looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's heart leapt in his chest. Based on what he could sense, he was now connected to the wolf beast. And the basis of that connection was the violet snowflake. It hadn't actually disappeared. It was actually inside the wolf beast. It had merged with its flesh and blood, becoming part of it.

Xu Qing's eyes shone with a strange light. Reaching out, he made a grasping gesture, pulling the beast over to him. After probing it with divine sense, his expression flickered. He could sense soul threads inside of the beast....

“Well, isn't this interesting.”

Next, he ripped the wolf beast's body open and inspected its flesh. Before long, the violet snowflake emerged from the body of the beast and floated in front of Xu Qing.

Xu Qing thought for a moment, then called for ten more beasts. He performed the same snowflake experiment on all of them. After doing numerous such experiments through the night, he emerged from his private chamber in the morning with a much deeper understanding of the 100 snowflakes that had been formed by his 1,000,000 soul threads. There had been a price to pay to get that understanding. The private chamber now reeked of gore, and was filled with the dismembered bodies of numerous wolf beasts....

Xu Qing wasn't worried about that. His eyes currently gleamed with understanding as he made his way to the Imperial University and simultaneously analyzed the 100 violet snowflakes within him.

Those 100 snowflakes constitute seeds! Putting a snowflake into a wolf beast doesn't do anything. The beast is still normal afterward. It doesn't even seem uncomfortable, and its life force isn't affected. But it starts producing soul threads.

Those soul threads are made from its soul. The big side-effect is that, if the soul in question isn't strong enough, it withers and dies.

The snowflakes... seem soft and gentle, but are actually very domineering. They can be sent out like weapons, to devour the soul of the enemy... and turn them into soul threads for me. At the same time, they can act like parasites. If someone who cultivates the Xeno-Immortal School techniques merges with a seed like that, then theoretically speaking, their cultivation speed should increase dramatically. The prerequisite is having sufficient soul power.

However, I'm in complete control. With a mere thought, I could extract the seed. Although it won't affect the target's life force, they'll lose all the soul threads they made in that way. I still don't understand the snowflakes completely enough. It's going to take more experimentation to get a deeper understanding.

Until he knew a lot more about them, he resolved not to casually use them. Upon entering the Imperial University, he settled his thoughts and went to the Xeno-Immortal School.

There were nine more students present. The place was a lot livelier than before, to the point where the schoolmaster didn't have to do any of the daily chores. The students all did that to earn credit.

Xu Qing and the original three students were in a similar position. With so many new students showing up, they didn't have as much to do. Therefore, they started working hard on the next edition of the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer*.

Three days passed. Every day, Xu Qing went back to the mansion in the evening to experiment with the snowflakes. On the fourth day, a new rumor was spreading in the Imperial University.

Seventh Prince had publicly announced that he was going to join the God-Merging School. In fact, on that very afternoon, he was going to formally visit the God-Merging School's tower and pay respects to the schoolmaster there. It wasn't permitted to reveal one's identity inside the Imperial University. But those rules didn't govern what happened outside with imperial princes.

The situation was especially noteworthy considering the twelve sticks of 'crown prince incense' on the rainbow bridge. This was the first time any of the imperial princes had done anything noteworthy since the incense was set up, so the development was noticed by a lot of people. It caused a lot of heated debate in the Imperial University, and it caused a lot of excitement among the students of the God-Merging School. After all, this was the first time in the history of the Imperial University that something like this happened. In the past, no one ever revealed their true identity, so even if an imperial prince did join a specific school of thought, no one would ever know.

But Seventh Prince was making a big deal of it. Clearly, there was something unique to this situation. And it was obvious that Seventh Prince was tying himself deeply to the God-Merging School.

Sure enough, that afternoon, Seventh Prince entered the Imperial University and, escorted by a host of excited students, walked in the direction of the God-Merging School. Along the way, they passed the Xeno-Immortal School.

Xu Qing looked at the students clustered around Seventh Prince. Despite how he wore the ordinary student clothing, Xu Qing couldn't help but think about how Seventh Prince looked when he and

his force of saviors had entered the capital of Sea-Sealing County. Back then, Xu Qing had been watching from afar. It was very similar to now. Xu Qing's eyes looked the same as ever, but his heart was as cold as ice.[1]

The other conclave students of the Xeno-Immortal School were in the white tower looking out thoughtfully at the commotion. The three students who had joined before Xu Qing didn't seem to think much of it. They quickly went back to working on the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer*. Before long, they dragged Xu Qing over to participate.

Meanwhile, the schoolmaster of the Xeno-Immortal School was starting to get very anxious. It felt to him like the Xeno-Immortal School had a good opportunity to rise to prominence, yet nothing he did seemed to be making that happen. He had done a lot of work to try to figure out who the enigmatic master was, but hadn't had any success.

This isn't going to work long-term. I shouldered a lot of the responsibility for this Senior's actions. Logically speaking, he should come offer formal greetings at some point...

As the schoolmaster, he had put together a lot of clues to reach the conclusion that this enigmatic master must have some methods that no one else knew about. Otherwise, it didn't seem possible for him to have hundreds of thousands of soul threads.

If nothing else, I just hope this Senior can explain how he cultivated hundreds of thousands of soul threads. If he does, the Xeno-Immortal School will definitely rise to prominence! If we could have a few dozen masters with hundreds of thousands of soul threads each... or even just a handful, then Xeno-Immortal techniques would become incredibly famous, and our theories would be proved correct!

As he stewed in anxiety about the enigmatic master, he helped the students produce copies of the *Xeno-Immortal Enquirer*.

“Shocking secret! As it turns out, Seventh Prince joined the God-Merging School because of HER!”

“Unexpectedly, the schoolmaster of the Plants and Vegetation School has a secret relationship with the head student there!”

“Is this crisis with the head student at the God-Merging School a matter of twisted humanity or degraded morality? For more information, check out the late night edition of the Xeno-Immortal Enquirer, and the article entitled: Where Did My Baby Go?”