

Read Beyond the Timescape Chapter 941: Is That All?

Chapter 941: Is That All?

The words had come right out of Ningyan's mouth! As they echoed out, they became a tempest in the hearts of everyone who could hear.

Xu Qing looked at Ningyan and sighed inwardly. Given how well he knew Ningyan, he could already see the clues pointing to who this person really was.

No wonder he's been spending all his time in seclusion....

'Ningyan' took a step forward, his eyes flashing like blades as he looked at the emperor.

"Did I say something incorrect, father?"

All of a sudden, the bloodline fluctuations of the imperial clan surged out of him, rising into the air and sweeping the destiny aura of humankind with it into a seething maelstrom. He took another step, and as he did, a black band of silk swirled out around him, circling around a few times before flying up into the air.

"On this day, I have three gifts I want to offer as sacrifices to you!"

As his words rang out, the silk band spread out into the sky like a black dragon, growing larger and larger until... it was a scroll! Countless images could be seen within the scroll, and all of them depicted the pain and grief of humankind!

It was possible to see people resorting to cannibalism in times of famine, corpses that had frozen in winter, mortals burning to death in fires, and even children wracked by the pain of mutation. There was pillaging, murder, and rape. The weak were the prey of the strong, and as chaos filled the mortal world, all living beings suffered. It was endless.

People starved to death. People died to become living treasures. Children were killed to be offered as sacrifices. There were good people whose kind deeds got them killed. There were evil people who were brutally killed by people even more evil than themselves. There were brutes who wreaked havoc. There was insane laughter echoing into the sky.

Every single image... was appalling and horrid.

Xu Qing looked at the images and saw things that he himself had experienced as a child. Back then, he had been confused and numb, wondering why people were like this, and why the world was this way.

Why did people look out and see only evil and more evil? Why had mere survival become his own dream in life? Where was the light...?

Xu Qing didn't say anything. Everyone was quiet. The entire world was quiet.

Except for 'Ningyan.' His eyes were bloodshot as he stared at the emperor, his teeth gritted as he said, "This is the Painting of Grievances, and it depicts the grief and suffering of all the humans who have lived during your reign. Their weeping. Their pain. Their confusion. Today... the time has come for you to listen well, emperor!"

"This is the result of your being emperor!! This is the result of your pompous sacrifices to the ancestors!! This is the result of how you shamelessly take credit for everything!! On this day, I say NO. And all of the citizens who have died over the past 3,000 years also say NO!"

'Ningyan' waved his hand, and the canopy of heaven rumbled as the Painting of Grievances collapsed, turning into countless black dots that entered the surrounding destiny aura. The destiny aura seethed furiously, transforming into a vortex that spun above the Temple of Heaven. Intense fluctuations rolled out into heaven and earth.

"You, Dark War, actually dare to say that you will live up to the dreams of your ancestors and fulfill the desires of your offspring? Does the Map of Humankind you sacrificed describe the suffering of the people? Does the Register of Heroic Spirits record the brutality inflicted on their children? Does the Wind and Rain really bring good harvests and general prosperity? If so, where are they?"

The voice of 'Ningyan' was mournful as it echoed out, shaking the planet and causing the Temple of Heaven to tremble. Then, immense pressure erupted from the black spots that were the remnants of the Painting of Grievances.

And yet, up to this point, the emperor hadn't said a single word in response. Nor had his facial expression changed. He was just looking calmly at 'Ningyan.'

Seeing that, the eyes of 'Ningyan' grew even more bloodshot as he took another step forward.

"Since you aren't willing to say anything, then as your son, I'm going to offer you the second gift!"

Another scroll appeared in 'Ningyan's' hand, and then it flew up into the air. It was crimson, and as it unfurled, it also revealed innumerable images. Astonishingly, they were... government officials of all ranks and descriptions, and they were engaged in countless acts of greed, crime, and murder! The emperor ruled over clans that had committed unending criminal acts for the sake of personal profit, differing opinions, and conflicting purposes. Some of the images were so shocking that they made people bristle with anger.

This was the Mural of Corrupt Officials!

The sight of it caused many of the officials in the crowd to react with flickering expressions, pounding hearts, and open shock. Uneasy feelings began to rise up in many of them.

“Is this the country you govern, Dark War? Is this the society you oversee?”

‘Ningyan’ suddenly laughed harshly as the long, crimson scroll collapsed, becoming a host of black spots that rushed into the destiny aura. The destiny churned more violently, until it seemed to reach a peak level. It was like an ancient giant, roaring toward the Temple of Heaven. And it seemed to be asking a question.

Yet the emperor still seemed completely calm, and had not yet spoken. He was just looking at ‘Ningyan.’

Seeing that, Ningyan took a deep breath and produced his third gift. It was a blood-red bone! And it was human. From the look of it, it wasn’t the bone of an adult, but rather, a child. It had blood on it that apparently had been converged in life, only to wither in death and stain the bone red.

Gripping the bone, ‘Ningyan’ looked at the emperor. Grinding his teeth together, he said, “I doubt you recognize this bone, Dark War. But that doesn’t matter. I’ll explain exactly what it is.”

‘Ningyan’s’ gaze swept the crowd, passing over Xu Qing, taking in Planet Ancient Emperor, and then coming to rest on the vortex of destiny aura.

“Let all the ancestors and forefathers bear witness. Let the destiny aura of humankind bear witness. And let all of the people bear witness! Do you know how Emperor Dark War managed to reach the level of Imperial Sovereign?”

A surge of curiosity swept through the crowd. After all, the emperor had become an Imperial Sovereign before he succeeded as the emperor....

“Most people probably think that Dark War’s bloodline is how he broke through from Smoldering God to Imperial Sovereign. But the truth is... that he secretly sacrificed nine counties from foreign regions to achieve the breakthrough. Maybe that wouldn’t be a big deal if they were all nonhumans, right? But those sacrificed from those nine counties weren’t just nonhumans. There were also human citizens as well!

“Dark War is the emperor, and that means he’s the emperor of all humans! Even citizens living in foreign regions are still citizens! Yet he didn’t even care that his own citizens were killed! An affair as cruel and brutal as this deserves outrage both in heaven and among men!

“He reached the Imperial Sovereign level with the blood of my people! With the souls of my people!”

The voice of 'Ningyan' echoed as deafeningly as thunder through the imperial capital. Then he threw the blood-colored bone up into the sky, where it merged into the vortex of destiny aura.

"And now, destiny aura of humankind, please judge this matter!"

As the bone vanished, all eyes instinctively focused on the vortex. An instant later, a dragon of destiny aura flew out of the vortex, faced the emperor, and howled. It was a profoundly mournful howl.

Everyone was shaken, both mentally and physically.

As the dragon howled, the black and red vortex began to spin faster, sending out rumbling sounds that could shake heaven and earth. It was as if the vortex was being stimulated by the mournful howl, and as the saying goes *while the waters may keep the boat afloat, they may also sink it*.

As the thunderous booms grew louder, black and red chains swept out of the vortex and then slashed down. There were no less than a thousand of them. They shot directly toward the emperor atop the Temple of Heaven, and the emperor did nothing to stop them. Loud clanking sounds could be heard as they wrapped around him and then dragged him up into the air. Next, more chains came out of the destiny aura vortex, ratcheting up the pressure and the punishment from the destiny aura!

As 'Ningyan' watched that happen, he glared at the emperor.

"You didn't deign to open your mouth earlier, but what about now? Are you struck speechless?"

The emperor's expression remained calm. He was suppressed by the pressure of the destiny aura and was wrapped up in chains. It was as if all he could do was look at 'Ningyan' and wait for what was to come next.

The gathered officials were paying very close attention to everything that was happening. As for 'Ningyan,' his heart was starting to sink. But he had made a lot of preparations for this moment and was fully confident. He was like a nocked arrow that had to be shot!

Eyes turning even more bloodshot, he shouted, "Why aren't you doing anything?"

Those words clearly weren't being directed at the emperor.

What happened in response caused Xu Qing to gasp. King Firecrusher, who was standing next to him... suddenly vanished.

Then a rift appeared in the dome of heaven. King Firecrusher stepped out of it, his face expressionless. The power of an eight-world Smoldering God erupted from him, creating massive pressure. He stepped forward, lifted a saber in his hand, and... chopped it toward the emperor! That saber strike was backed by the power of eight major worlds. It caused the cosmos to shake, and its blade light was strong enough to destroy the heavens and extinguish the earth.

All of this happened so quickly that no one on Planet Ancient Emperor had any time to react. For King Firecrusher to suddenly turn traitor and try to kill the emperor was something no one could have possibly predicted would happen.

It was theoretically possible for anyone to turn traitor. But in the minds of everyone, King Firecrusher was someone who had championed humankind for countless years. He had worked himself to the bone to serve humanity. How could he possibly betray the emperor? And yet... that seemingly impossible development was playing out in front of everyone.

He was 'Ningyan's' secret weapon.

Everyone was overwhelmed with astonishment, and there wasn't time to sit around contemplating the situation. Cultivators both on Planet Ancient Emperor and off it saw that the emperor was about to be assassinated, and they immediately leaped into action to try to stop it.

The first to appear in front of the emperor was an old man dressed in the clothing of a court eunuch. It was almost as if he had been there the whole time, as he appeared in the blink of an eye. And he immediately reached out toward the descending saber of King Firecrusher.[1]

The power of a nine-world Smoldering God cultivation base erupted from the old eunuch. Astonishingly, this person was a powerful expert that had been hiding in humankind, and was thus an unknown to everyone!

His action caused heaven and earth to rumble as he directly blocked King Firecrusher's saber. And yet, even with nine-world power, he still staggered backward and coughed up a mouthful of blood. That went to show how amazing King Firecrusher was!

More cultivators began to arrive from beyond Planet Ancient Emperor. Unfortunately for them, the spell formation was preventing them from entering. The planet was not just open to anyone! It kept out the uninvited. Some who were on the planet also took action, but King Firecrusher's saber shoved them all back.

However, King Firecrusher was now incapable of doing anything further, as he had a nine-world expert to deal with.

Xu Qing watched all of this happen and then looked at 'Ningyan.'

'Ningyan's' eyes glittered with killing intent as he shot toward the restrained emperor. As he flew forth, a long spear appeared in his hands.

But then, the emperor shifted in place, and a rumbling boom echoed out as one of the chains collapsed. Next, as the emperor's energy rose to terrifying levels, the chains could no longer hold tight, and began to snap one after another. The emperor looked up expressionlessly at 'Ningyan,' and for the first time, he spoke.

"Is that all, Little Eleventh?"

1. As I've mentioned in relation to other outfits described in the story, it's often hard to determine what exact type of clothing the author is thinking about. Clothing was very important in the history of China, and it was generally easy to identify who someone was by the clothing they wore, be they an emperor, government official, soldier etc. It's the same with the court eunuchs. However, fashion changed from dynasty to dynasty, and with a history of thousands of years, there is no one specific outfit eunuchs wore throughout time. If you [check this link](#), you can see a few pictures I compiled of different eunuch outfits from varying time periods. In my imagination, this court eunuch looks like the first image in the set, but again, the author doesn't give much information about the specifics of the fashion. 📷

Chapter 942: Checkmate!

The words echoed like thunder in the dome of heaven, instantly reaching the crowds gathered both on and off Planet Ancient Emperor.

That said, people weren't struck to the core. All of the things that had already happened today were already shocking enough. First there was the sudden betrayal by 'Ningyan,' then his sacrifice of three gifts. Even more shocking was how the destiny aura of humankind created a punishment, forming chains that bound the emperor. To see destiny aura behave in that way indicated... that what 'Ningyan' said was true.

The most unbelievable thing of all, however, was that saber attack by King Firecrusher. People could hardly believe it. No one could ever have predicted that the cautious and conscientious King Firecrusher, who had served in the human armed forces for so long, would actually turn traitor. It seemed completely and utterly illogical.

No one could even guess what reason King Firecrusher could possibly have to try to kill the emperor! After all, King Firecrusher had reached such incredible heights that few people in existence could do anything to him. And there was no doubting that he had truly fought hard for the sake of humankind, especially in recent years. He had very nearly died on numerous occasions, and had been seriously wounded multiple times. He had also killed plenty of nonhumans, and that... was something that couldn't be faked. He was a towering, noble soul, someone who became a heavenly king and served humankind, and yet... he had clearly tried to kill the emperor with his saber. It was truly flabbergasting to everyone.

But considering that he was standing with 'Ningyan,' his true status and identity weren't even important. In fact, there were some longtime government officials who already realized what was going on. There were still people who had very clear memories of everything that happened not so long ago when Ningyan was investigated. However, the matter of Ningyan's older brother, who was actually Eleventh Prince, had been made a taboo subject by the emperor. Few people would willingly talk about it.

As the chains snapped and crumbled, the emperor spoke in a voice that echoed across Planet Ancient Emperor.

"Your presence here today is no surprise to me. But what was a shock was King Firecrusher's actions. King Firecrusher, do you have an explanation for all this?"

The emperor looked at King Firecrusher, who was locked in combat with the court eunuch.

King Firecrusher didn't say anything as he fought. Booms rang out and saber light flashed through heaven and earth.

The person to provide the answer to the emperor was Ningyan's older brother, Eleventh Prince.

"He chose to execute you for the sake of humankind! For the sake of justice! Father, as the emperor, you are a malignant tumor to humankind. You don't deserve to be the emperor! It's been a very long time since I heard you call me Little Eleventh. Back in the day, that form of address made me feel warm inside. But now... for you to say those words is the epitome of hypocrisy!"

Eleventh Prince's face was distorted with rage, and his bloodshot eyes exuded hatred. He didn't seem surprised at all when the emperor called out his true identity. In his opinion, identity and status didn't matter. All he cared about... was killing the emperor! To achieve this goal, he had worked and prepared for many years.

The emperor looked away from King Firecrusher and to Eleventh Prince. His face was still expressionless, and there was no hint of sarcasm as he said, "When did you possess Ningyan?"

Eleventh Prince roared with laughter, his expression slowly becoming one of pure madness. He was normally dour and aloof, not full of emotion. But today he was different. He had been keeping things hidden for too long, and prepared too thoroughly. Today was the day when everything would explode and he would get his revenge.

"Well, exalted father, it was obvious when you put that idiotic little brother of mine into Heavenly Prison. In order to make that happen, I intentionally left that image of myself to be found as evidence.

“That was the only way I could get Ningyan implicated. I even guessed that Ningyan would use the Immortal Questioning Bell to prove his innocence, but that you would be too wrapped up in personal matters to pay attention to that. Locking him up was your only option. And then I was able to use our clan’s Heavenly Prison to successfully possess him with my will.”

Xu Qing listened thoughtfully. *The mysterious cloaked figure in that room... really was Eleventh Prince.*

Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed. Back when he was soul-searching people during his investigation of the Xeno-Immortal School situation, clues took him to a certain building. In the room in that building, he encountered a figure in a black cloak. That very night, he found himself thinking about what Ningyan had told him in the prison, about sensing familiar fluctuations beneath him.... [1]

It made perfect sense why Eleventh Prince wanted to possess Ningyan. As Eleventh Prince, he had to remain in hiding, but as Ningyan, he could openly get close to the emperor. Furthermore, killing the emperor in the capital itself would have been incomparably difficult. In order to achieve success, and needed to be in a location where outsiders couldn’t interfere.

The best battlefield imaginable was Planet Ancient Emperor during the ancestral sacrifices. At that time, no outsider could enter without the right qualifications. And the qualifications could only be given by the emperor using destiny aura. At the moment, the destiny aura had been used to create chains to bind the emperor. Without extracting himself from that situation, the emperor couldn’t draw on destiny aura for help.

Clearly, Eleventh Prince had put a lot of thought and effort into his plan. And he had been waiting for the ancestral sacrifices.

Perhaps before Ningyan returned, Eleventh Prince had other plans that didn’t involve the ancestral sacrifices and Planet Ancient Emperor. But once Ningyan returned, possessing him became an obvious choice. Or perhaps it was best to say that possessing Ningyan was just one option. And after Xu Qing rose to prominence among the Firemoons, it was the best option. It was by means of Xu Qing’s recommendation that Eleventh Prince got ‘Ningyan’ onto Planet Ancient Emperor, where he was able to stand right behind the emperor.

However, Xu Qing still had questions.

Was Ningyan aware of all this? And more importantly... did he go along with it? Also, as an Imperial Sovereign and the peak will in all humankind, was the emperor really unaware of what was going on? Or... did he know all along?

Xu Qing remained calm and collected. After everything he had experienced in life, he knew that there was no such thing as only pure good and pure evil among humans.

Human nature was a complicated thing, and it often shifted based on the circumstances.

What was very strange was that the emperor still seemed extremely calm, and there was even a meaningful smile on his face.

“It seems you have quite a deep connection with your little brother. Everything you’ve said so far was carefully worded to create distance between the two of you. Are you worried about dragging him into the situation? I won’t cause problems for Ningyan, so there’s no reason to be worried about me misunderstanding. The reason you made your debut in this manner, and the reason you’ve been talking so much, is that you’re trying to buy time.

“Whatever it is you’re waiting for, there’s clearly more you want to say. So I’ll give you the time it takes an incense stick to burn to speak your mind. After all, it takes a good explanation to justify patricide and regicide.”

From beginning to end, the emperor didn’t sound surprised at all when he talked.

Eleventh Prince was scowling, yet he was still confident in his preparation and his backing. His facial expression quickly returned to normal as he stared at the emperor.

“Good explanation? Don’t you understand already why I’m doing this? I was there the day you gave the orders for my mother to be killed. I watched her heart break before she died! Dark War, you and I are enemies who cannot live under the same sky!

“I have a hatred for you that eats away at me every moment of every day. I knew all along that you knew I was alive. And I know why you spared me! You wanted to use me as bait. Right? When the right time came, you wanted to use me to see who you could hook!

“Well I’ll fulfill your desire! If I don’t kill you, then I’ll never be able to think clearly. If I don’t kill you, then I’m an unworthy son. And if I don’t kill you, I don’t deserve to live!”

Eleventh Prince’s words echoed out for all to hear.

A flash of reminiscence appeared in the emperor’s eyes. Clearly, what Eleventh Prince had just said caused him to think of that event, and the beautiful portrait that he had spent time every day looking at afterward. It turned into a sigh. The sigh contained all the emotions of the past, and it restored the emperor’s heart to a state of calm.

“You must have other tricks up your sleeve, right? Go ahead and continue.”

“As you wish!” Eleventh Prince said, and he looked down at Planet Ancient Emperor with a cold look in his eyes. freewebnovel.com

All of a sudden, muffled rumbling could be heard from below. Something dramatic was obviously happening on the planet below. This was obviously why Eleventh Prince had been trying to buy time. Next, something happened that no one on or off Planet Ancient Emperor could ever have predicted, and it struck them all to the core.

As thunderous rumbling echoed out from the planet, the misty depths of the planet surged with heaven-shaking, earth-shattering fluctuations. As they reached a fever pitch... a pentagonal altar was dragged out of the depths of Planet Ancient Emperor by some immense force!

The altar was what shocked everyone so deeply.

And that was because there were five huge coffins on the altar. Every single one of the coffins pulsed with a terrifying, apex-level imperial energy. There was also a shrine by each coffin. There were no statues in the shrines, only spirit tablets. Each tablet had something different written on it: Eastglory; Sageheaven; Mirrorcloud; Dao Life.... The last one read: Dark War.

It was a mysterious ceremony that could rock Revered Ancient to the core.

In the middle of the five coffins was a lamp. It was made of violet stone, and had a violet flower atop it, as well as a violet phoenix that was extremely lifelike.

The lamp was covered in cracks. It also spat out crimson fire that covered the coffins, experienced some unknown transformation, and then poured into the coffins. By mixing with the imperial energy, that fire changed colors. It turned golden. It hissed and popped as it burned. The aura of a god spread out from the flames.

It was godfire. Put precisely, it was godfire on the verge of being completed.

“Oh exalted father, I’m going to make you a living sacrifice for the godly ascension ceremony I’ve been secretly preparing. And everyone will see it. So... is this a good enough explanation for why I’m going to kill you?”

Eleventh Prince laughed coldly.

1. Xu Qing visited Ningyan in prison in [chapter 773](#). He encountered the black-cloaked figure in [chapter 791](#). 📖

Chapter 943: A Sword Versus an Altar

The appearance of the altar was shocking to the extreme. Outside of Planet Ancient Emperor, the officials looked on with bated breath and anxious expressions. All of them felt like they were being torn apart inside.

There was one official who looked completely and utterly thunderstruck as he blurted, "Those are the coffins of the past emperors! Th-this... this really is a godly ascension ceremony!!"

Everyone felt completely and utterly mind-blown. After all, to the numerous species that inhabited Revered Ancient, the gods were the most deadly adversaries in existence! Revered Ancient experienced endless grief and suffering thanks to the gods, and what was more, their lives were slowly being suffocated because of them.

In the countless years that had passed, there were a good number of species that agreed to bend the knee and even become slaves, all in the hope of gaining some perks and eventually becoming a top species. The Firemoon Darkheavens were a perfect example of that.

But slaves were slaves!

Humans... had conquered Revered Ancient on more than one occasion and were a proud species. From beginning to end, they had never bent the knee! For generations, the emperors had dealt with all sorts of situations, yet none of them cast aside the true heart of humankind. For generations, the emperors followed Dark Serenity's teachings, adhered to the directives of the holy lands, and stuck to the traditions of the Summer Immortals.

Of course, it was impossible to stop people from researching the gods. That was what led to things like the God-Merging School. But deep in their bones, humans felt that they could not coexist with gods.

And that was because it involved different daos! To humans, godly ascension was an unacceptable solution. Never had an emperor chosen something like that. It was about determination, principles, and bottom lines. From generation to generation, every human who grew up in the Imperial Region felt the same.

But now, the aura of godfire was unmistakable. And that was especially true considering the shrines, and the fact that the five coffins had names inscribed on them. It was no stretch of the imagination to conclude that four of the five coffins actually had the corpses of the past emperors in them.

Emperor Dark War was obviously planning to use the power of the corpses of the past emperors as kindling to achieve his own godly ascension! It was something the government officials simply couldn't accept. In the end, this was a far more unfilial form of betrayal than anything done by Eleventh Prince!

Although past emperors had their faults, they had also accomplished great things. It wasn't appropriate to disturb them after their death. Yet here, their corpses were obviously being prepared to be used like kindling to betray the human species. It was the most disgraceful behavior imaginable.

Thus, cries of anguish began to drift out from beyond Planet Ancient Emperor.

“Your Majesty, sir, you can’t do this!”

“We’re the descendants of cultivators! We walk the path of cultivation, not the route of gods!”

“If the emperor chooses godly ascension, then are we humans... even human anymore?”

“If the human emperor becomes a god, then humankind will be lost! When the holy lands in heaven find out, they’ll be bitterly disappointed....”

“Your Majesty, please reconsider!!”

“Gods have been our enemies for generations! If the human emperor turns around and becomes a god... then what’s the point of all those years of sticking to our ideals? And what would be the point of all of the secret help the holy lands have given us over the years?”

It wasn’t just the officials who voiced such anguish. Even the people who had been permitted to come onto Planet Ancient Emperor were feeling moved emotionally.

When Eleventh Prince lifted up that altar, he provoked endless waves of drama!

The only exception was Xu Qing. He didn’t care whether or not the emperor attempted godly ascension. That was because, the moment that altar rose up, he became completely and utterly focused on the lamp! At a single glance, he knew... that it was the very lamp he had come here to get.

It was Plumdark’s life essence lamp! The Plumdark Evergreen Lamp!

The lamp was now covered in cracks, and when Xu Qing sensed that, he got a very uneasy feeling. Struggling to control his breathing, he tried to wrap his mind around what it meant.

The ceremony... has already started! That lamp... is burning essence! Once the essence is exhausted, the ceremony will be a success. The lamp will shatter. And if that happens...

Xu Qing eyes glowed with light that could latch onto the soul.

Meanwhile, Eleventh Prince started talking again.

“Emperor Dark War is a deranged maniac! Instead of following the teachings of the Ancient Emperors, instead of abiding by the instructions of the holy lands, he

ensorcelled the corpses of past emperors to use as kindling for a godly ascension ceremony!

“This is a complete deviation from the dao of immortals! It’s a betrayal of humankind and an act of utmost cruelty! Dark War is disrespecting the ancestors and disturbing the commoners! The great heaven can see it. The destiny aura can sense it. This emperor... does not deserve to be an emperor!!”

Eleventh Prince’s voice shook heaven and earth. Every word struck deeply into the hearts of the officials. And then, Eleventh Prince suddenly turned to look at Xu Qing.

“King Skycrusher, I know you need that lamp! As you can see, it’s about to crack into pieces. Why not charge in there, disrupt the ceremony, and take the lamp?”

Without a word, Xu Qing took a step forward.

The court eunuch who was fighting King Firecrusher suddenly tried to lurch away and block Xu Qing’s path. King Firecrusher didn’t let him.

“King Skycrusher!” the eunuch shouted in a high-pitched voice. “There’s deep meaning in the emperor’s actions! Don’t let this traitor bewitch you! Back down!”

The only response he got was a cold glance from Xu Qing, who took another step forward. That step caused heaven and earth to rumble loudly. Xu Qing’s aura surged as tens of millions of soul threads erupted from him to form his major world. The thrum of a sword echoed out from within him, causing the sky to seethe as a huge sword projection appeared in the dome of heaven above Planet Ancient Emperor.

Upon seeing that, Eleventh Prince smiled. And yet, even as the smile broke out on his face, Xu Qing turned to look at him. His cold eyes caused Eleventh Prince’s heart to lurch. Xu Qing said nothing, and looked away a moment later.

At the moment, he didn’t have time to try to figure out how Eleventh Prince knew the details of the lamp. On the one hand, it seemed as though he had an opportunity to easily and quickly acquire the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp. However, it was also obvious that there was more going on. That said, such considerations weren’t important right now.

Xu Qing’s foot touched the ground, and he propelled himself toward the altar. He wasn’t interested in helping Eleventh Prince. Nor did he want to participate in the emperor’s affairs.

Simply put, he needed that lamp, even if it was part of the emperor’s godly ascension ceremony.

An instant later, he appeared at the edge of the altar and the flames that surrounded it. Above, The Emperor's Sword slowly inclined with the canopy of heaven. Then it slashed down toward the altar!

The court eunuch looked shocked, and clearly wanted to interfere. But he couldn't. Everyone else on Planet Ancient Emperor looked on with hesitant expressions. If this was any ceremony other than godly ascension, all of them would have tried to stop Xu Qing.

But now.... Everyone stood there silently.

They saw Xu Qing's imposing manner coupled with the image of The Emperor's Sword. Heaven-sundering, earth-rending power was unleashed, crushing everything in its path.

Eleventh Prince burst out laughing and looked at the emperor, who had remained silent from the moment the altar appeared.

"You have lost your way, father!"

The emperor still didn't say anything. As the chains continued to snap and crumble, he simply looked over at Xu Qing. It wasn't just him. Everyone else was also doing the same thing. Under the eyes of all present, The Emperor's Sword slashed through the fire surrounding the altar. The flames swept together, converging into the form of a huge face.

Unexpectedly, the face was that of Dark War! The moment it appeared, The Emperor's Sword hit it!

Deep rumbling sounds echoed through heaven and earth. The sword projection faded away. The face vanished. The fire flickered wildly, as though a great wind was blowing over it.

Without a moment of hesitation, Xu Qing took advantage of the moment to accelerate, becoming a blur of afterimages that shot toward the altar.

And yet, before he could actually reach the altar, a host of innumerable figures appeared within the fire. They included humans, nonhumans, beasts, and even gods. They were formed from the essence that the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp was burning, which came from the surplus energy in the corpses of the past emperors.

As the figures formed, they seemed to power up as they shot toward Xu Qing.

But then, the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp in the middle of the altar shivered. It was almost as if it was reacting to Xu Qing's presence. The figures charging toward Xu Qing were affected by that, and instantly slowed down.

Strange light gleamed in Xu Qing's eyes as he accelerated again. His major world of 40,000,000 soul threads gave him an inexhaustible well of power, plus he had his void soil and the glimmerings of godly authority. Black smoke spilled out around Xu Qing, accompanied by the roar of Hellfi. The violet moon appeared over his head, illuminating the world with violet light. The power of misfortune spread out in all directions. Not even the lifeless forms in the fire could avoid the effects of the spreading misfortune. The Grand Darkheaven Armor appeared, as well as the nine lanterns. As the lanterns orbited around him, draconic faces bulged out of them, howling noiselessly.

At the same time... Xu Qing's hand turned semitransparent. He plunged it into his chest, into his sea of consciousness, into his void soil, where he opened the trove gate leading to The Emperor's Sword. There, he fused with the soul of the emperor and... grabbed The Emperor's Sword! The sword rumbled loudly but didn't resist.

After Xu Qing bowed to the Grand Emperor, the words spoken by the Grand Emperor indicated that he approved of Xu Qing, and had granted him the right to wield the sword. There were no restraints in place anymore. Theoretically speaking, as long as Xu Qing was strong enough, he could use The Emperor's Sword whenever he wished.

Unfortunately, he *wasn't* that strong right now. And yet... though he couldn't take out The Emperor's Sword in its true and full form, he was able to take out a stream of sword energy.

As that sword energy emerged, it took the form of a sword projection. It looked exactly the same as the sword which had appeared in the sky earlier, except more corporeal. And sharper.

As Xu Qing gripped it, his eyes glittered with killing intent. He raced toward the figures in the flames. From a distance, Xu Qing looked like an unstoppable dragon! Intense rumbling sounds echoed out.

Wherever the sword passed, the figures collapsed. Godly authority spread out, creating massive pressure in all directions. At the same time, a vine whipped around Xu Qing.

It didn't affect any of the projected figures. Instead, it devoured the flames! As it did, it emanated emotional fluctuations of rejoicing. Little Shadow didn't want to be left out, and it flew out into the flames, as happily as a fish swimming through water.

Everyone who could see what was happening was shocked to the core.

This was Xu Qing's first time becoming the absolute center of attention in human lands! And it was his first time calling on all of his battle prowess!

Chapter 944: Grabbing the Lamp From the Fire

On Planet Ancient Emperor, all eyes were focused on the strange altar the emperor had prepared for godly ascension. As of this moment, that altar had become the center of all the dramatic events surrounding the ancestral sacrifices.

From a distance, it was possible to see the greenish-black pentagonal altar, pulsing with a sense of incomparable ancientness. Taken in as a whole, it looked like it had been extracted from ancient time, or taken from the depths of the underworld. It was covered with countless totemic designs, but of course, most prominent were the shrines and the coffins.

The ancient coffins emanated a sensation of profound imperial will. The corpses of the past emperors each represented the imperial bloodline, which went all the way back to Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. And of course, that bloodline was approved by the heavenly daos of the Revered Ancient mainland.

There couldn't be a more respected bloodline in Revered Ancient. The shrines were constructed in a very extravagant manner. Shockingly, they were crafted from the bones of gods! Naturally speaking, they could be considered reserve powers of humankind. But the emperor had taken them and used them to make five shrines. Because of the unusual construction material, the five shrines pulsed with a very prominent godly energy.

At the moment, that energy was converging on the mysterious tablets within the shrines, causing profound transformations in the area. All of it was the epitome of extravagance. Other than the imperial clan, there was no way any other cultivators could do something like this.

Godly ascension required igniting godfire. And that process required a ceremony!

Of course, there was no set requirement for exactly how the ceremony was carried out. In fact, every individual who wanted to become a god would do it differently.

Back beneath the Supreme Beginning Netherflight Pillar in Emperor-Receiving Prefecture, Xu Qing had seen a group of five-elements zombies. That was one such ceremony. Another was in Moonrite Region, when Crimson Mother's godchild set up a ceremony that spanned time itself. That was the second Xu Qing had seen. The third was in the lands of the Firemoon Darkheaven people, when the grand steward replaced the spider god.

The extraordinary setup here on Planet Ancient Emperor had been orchestrated by the human emperor as another type of godly ascension ceremony. In reality, neither the coffins nor the shrines were the focus of the ceremony. Instead, it was the violet lamp. That was the true core of it all. The aura it exuded shook heaven and earth. It was the aura of an immortal!

It created a wind of the destiny aura of a species. It used the bones of gods as a furnace, the immortal aura of the ancient lamp as the fire, the past emperors as the fuel! In that manner, it burned away both that which was immortal and that which was godly! It was a level of majesty that surpassed anything Xu Qing had ever seen before. This was how the human emperor was attempting to reach godly ascension. This was his ceremony.

Within the spreading sea of flames, the figures formed from nearly complete godfire conformed to a state that was like a mystery among mysteries. It didn't conform to immortal cultivators. It didn't conform to the gods. It was something between immortals and gods.

Though they were incomplete, and didn't have full battle prowess or cultivation bases, they did have shocking personhood that could suppress cultivators. Thanks to that pressure, and thanks to the burning godfire...

Any cultivator who entered this fire and interacted with those figures would experience an instant skyrocketing of mutagen. Then they would either die or become one of the figures.

But Xu Qing was different. He was no longer a cultivator. And he wasn't a god. His was a path no one had ever walked before. In fact, he could be considered a pioneer. He had the cultivation base of a cultivator, but the authority of a god, plus the soul threads of a xeno-immortal. What was more, he had a god body. That wasn't to mention that he had devoured the blood of the broken face, and also had more than a hundred types of godly authority in his void soil.

As for the level of his personhood, it really was comparable to that of a god. There was also the fact that the figures in the sea of flames had some sort of resonance with the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp, which kept them suppressed.

Therefore... the moment Xu Qing entered the sea of flames, a series of deafening booms echoed out, along with something like a raging tempest. Whether it was The Emperor's Sword in his hand, or Little Shadow, or the vine. All were part of the tempest.

Wherever Xu Qing went, everything was crushed. The vine whipped about joyfully, devouring the fire and sweeping up one figure after another. It was almost as if it recognized them as food. The flames were delicious, and the figures were as sweet as candy. Little Shadow didn't want to fall behind, and quickly scattered into a host of smaller shadows. If you put all of those smaller shadows together, they would form a huge tree covered with eyes, with coffins hanging down from it.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing himself charged forward with The Emperor's Sword in hand. As he sped forth, the very same hunger he had experienced in the god domain reappeared. It had been suppressed thanks to the blood of the broken face. But apparently, the surrounding godfire drew it out again.

Hunger....

The sensation caused Xu Qing's eyes to turn crimson. As he slashed left and right with The Emperor's Sword, he inhaled sharply, causing one of the approaching figures to be sucked into his mouth. His void soil shivered as the figure made of godfire turned into a rain of fire that provided nourishment, but at the same time, just made Xu Qing feel hungrier.

Tastes pretty good.

Xu Qing licked his lips and continued onward. Reaching another figure that Little Shadow had locked in place, he again inhaled deeply. The figure vanished. Little Shadow looked stunned. Xu Qing moved on, devouring as he went.

Seeing that, Little Shadow leaped up and down excitedly. In the blink of an eye, all of the versions of Little Shadow in the fire opened their mouths and began to devour the surrounding figures. The vine looked very anxious and increased its devouring efforts.

And thus, an absolutely shocking scene developed under the eyes of everyone looking at the sea of flames. Not only were the figures in the fire growing fewer in number, but also, the sea of flames itself was shrinking.

The process didn't even last for as long as it takes an incense stick to burn. By that point, all of the figures in the sea of flames were gone!

Little Shadow and the vine ended up fighting over the last one and ripping it to pieces.

The struggle resulted in some fiery emotions. Little Shadow called back all the smaller projections of itself, and in astonishing fashion, turned into a gigantic, gruish tree right in the middle of the sea of flames. The eyes on the tree were all open, and they stared with cold irritation at the vine.

The sageheaven god vine was an uncharacteristically rare object that originated in the starry sky. Its mature form could devour actual gods, so it was only natural that it wasn't a timid thing. Despite being in infant form right now, it still whipped about like a dragon, sending terrifying energy toward Little Shadow. The leaves on the vine were covered with mysterious striations that flickered constantly and even created starry sky projections. It also pulsed with an incomparably vicious aura.

Everyone who was able to see what was happening was completely taken aback.

Both Little Shadow and the sageheaven godvine could be described as very gruish. However... their brutal, gruish nature transformed into charming obedience the moment Xu Qing stepped between them.

Little Shadow swayed back and forth, its eyes opened wide in a way that made it look very cute. The vine cautiously swirled around Xu Qing, looking openly servile. That scene was nothing but a profound shock.

There was Xu Qing, surrounded by violet light, his hair swaying around him, his facial features extremely good-looking. Next to him was a cute shadowy tree and a very charming vine.

Quite a few of the cultivators in the crowd instinctively gasped. As Revered Ancient cultivators, they had all lived lives of death and killing. They knew full well what was entailed in turning brutal beings into things that were cute and charming.... It required a level of brutality that surpassed them!

This Xu Qing was quite a bit different from the one they were used to seeing. It made sense considering that, even after coming to the imperial capital, Xu Qing had kept a relatively low profile. For instance, when he killed Seventh Prince, he didn't do it in a way that revealed how brutal and ruthless he could be. But now everyone was getting a sense of what he was truly capable of. Now, people were looking at him very seriously, and some even seemed outright reverent.

Xu Qing wasn't paying attention to the reactions of the crowd. He passed in between Little Shadow and the vine, keeping his eyes fixed on the altar. The edges of the fire were surrounded by golden flames that were even more intense than the sea of flames in general. In fact, it was astonishingly hot.

After all, that fire was being fed by the corpses in the coffins. As a result, the golden fire formed a barrier that prevented passage.

Through that barrier, Xu Qing could see more cracks spreading out on the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp. It wasn't going to last for much longer. Eyes flashing, Xu Qing shot directly toward the flames surrounding the altar. But then, an instant later, the flames rumbled loudly, and Xu Qing backed away.

He was on fire, his skin drying up and melting, revealing blood and flesh beneath. Even with all of his assets, including his god body, he wasn't able to pass through those flames.

But Xu Qing wasn't ready to give up. Ignoring the pain from his burning flesh, he waved his hand to send a host of divine abilities rumbling out along with godly authority. After a dozen or so breaths of time passed, though, nothing had changed. The flames simply couldn't be touched.

Face turning very grim, Xu Qing slashed out with The Emperor's Sword. Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth as a huge sword projection appeared in the air and slashed down toward the fire. The fire shivered, and an opening appeared. However, the flames then roared with more intensity, and the sword energy dissipated.

It's really impossible to break open?

Xu Qing watched as more cracks appeared on the lamp. He was really starting to get very anxious.

Given the godly ascension ceremonies he had seen in the past, Xu Qing knew that they were impossible to disrupt unless you came at them with completely majestic and overwhelming force. The only other option was to use trickery.

Suddenly, Xu Qing's eyes shone with a crazy light, and he sent some divine will to Little Shadow and the vine. Little Shadow hesitated briefly, but the vine didn't at all. It shot directly toward the golden fire and tried to devour it. The force of devouring was so great that the fire just started flowing toward the vine. As a result, the flames in front of Xu Qing grew thinner.

However, there was a price to pay. The vine burst into flames, and immediately started withering. It obviously couldn't keep this up for very long.

Seeing all of that caused Little Shadow to throw caution to the wind. Rushing forward, it burst into flames, but at the same time, became like a black waterfall that instantly caused the flames in front of Xu Qing to weaken further.

Little Shadow shrieked in agony and writhed from the pain. Yet it didn't dare to back away. It could only ferociously endure as it felt like it would be ripped apart. Then it managed to pry open a narrow crevice!

Xu Qing rushed forward in a blur of speed, reaching the crevice just as it seemed Little Shadow wouldn't be able to hold out any longer. His right hand became as transparent as a Gruegloom's as he reached through that crevice and into the fire itself! Holding back nothing at all, he reached out to grab the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp!

Chapter 945: First Step, Complete

After Xu Qing's hand went through the Gruegloom transformation to become transparent, there were still five drops of blood within it that formed a pentagonal shape. Even after the Gruegloom transformation, it wasn't possible to hide those five drops of blood. Just a glance at them revealed that they were spectacular.

The moment Xu Qing's hand entered the altar, the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp vibrated, then rose up into the air and flew toward him.

But then, the five coffins trembled, and corpse energy erupted out. Pulsing with the aura of the imperial bloodline erupted, it merged with the surrounding flames to make a large golden hand. It reached out toward the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp to grab it.

Meanwhile, howling sounds that sounded human drifted out from the coffins, and the lids began to shake as if they were about to break open. Simultaneously, the surrounding flames grew more intense. The terrifying heat was joined by a godly aura that could suppress the soul.

Xu Qing's Gruegloom hand burst into flames. His Grand Darkheaven Armor and god body were already having a hard time dealing with the high temperature. And the flesh on his hand was starting to crumble into ash. Only his godly authority was able to stand strong. However, it couldn't stop his right hand from slowly being destroyed.

It seemed that his right hand was just on the verge of turning into nothing but sparks. And yet, without pausing for a moment, Xu Qing unleashed the power of the five drops of blood.

The blood drops shot through the burning flames and toward the five coffins. As they did, an even purer and more ancient form of imperial bloodline fluctuations shot out from the drops of blood. They formed a bloodline suppression!

The golden hand formed from the energy from the coffins couldn't do anything to stop the blood drops. They shot through the hand and landed right on the coffins. The shuddering of the coffin lids ceased, and the howling stopped. Everything went quiet. Then the golden hand went stiff.

As for Xu Qing, he used the crumbling remains of his right hand to reach out toward the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp!

Grabbing it, he pulled it back through the crevice. The moment it left the altar, the five coffins started shaking again, and the howling resumed, this time, with unparalleled levels of defiance. However, the five drops of blood glittered and kept the coffins suppressed.

Xu Qing's right hand crumbled into nothing. But he quickly sent his left hand shooting out to grab the lamp before falling back at top speed.

All of this takes a bit of time to describe, but from the moment Xu Qing managed to make an opening into the fire until the moment he fled, hardly enough time passed for a spark to fly off a piece of flint.

Little Shadow couldn't hold on any longer. It dimmed and collapsed into countless smaller shadows that scattered in all directions. The vine reached its limit. Looking very withered, it retreated. Without any power disrupting the flames, they went back to their original position.

Even more furious howling erupted from the five coffins, all while they shook so violently cracks started spreading across their surface. Fluctuations of instability were now surging out of the altar. The altar had lost its lamp. It had lost its immortal element. And

the godly aura was going wild. Without any stability or balance... the ceremony was heading toward a destructive backlash! Terrifying pressure grew within the flames.

Seeing that caused Eleventh Prince to start laughing uproariously. The officials looked on silently. The court eunuch let loose a moan of anguish.

Xu Qing ignored all of that as he sped backward. He put away the cracked Plumdark Evergreen Lamp, all while his right arm started to repair itself thanks to the unique qualities of his god body. Though he felt weak, he was also sighing with relief.

Months ago in his greater spirit mansion, he had talked with Plumdark about how to retrieve the lamp. Plumdark had been the one to suggest this tactic, and Xu Qing had agreed wholeheartedly. Plumdark was able to keenly sense the lamp. And in the years Xu Qing had been away from the capital, though Plumdark had seemingly been in seclusion, the reality was that she had used a secret magic to go out and gather a lot of information.

The five drops of blood were actually Plumdark's essence blood. They had been prepared specifically to use against the five coffins if necessary, to keep them suppressed. That was what made it possible to retrieve the lamp smoothly. They had discussed other possibilities and options. However, the godly ascension flames had made most of those other options impossible to use. Therefore, Xu Qing had been forced to take a big risk.

After acquiring the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp, Xu Qing felt a very strange sensation within him.

It seemed like it was risky, but it also seemed like... it went very, very smoothly. Maybe too smoothly. freewebnovel.com

Eyes narrowing, he collected Little Shadow and the vine and kept moving backward. As he did, the altar continued to shake, and the howls continued to echo out. Then, the coffins started crumbling to pieces. Before any corpses could emerge, the golden fire surrounding the altar went into chaos.

The backlash was beginning. The temperature spiked, and rumbling sounds echoed out as the fire swept over everything. The five coffins were hit first. The backlash of godfire instantly incinerated them, as well as the corpses inside. Even the altar was reduced to ashes. Everything suffered from the backlash of golden flames, and was wiped out....

But then the golden fire had nothing to feed it, and it went out. The aura of godly ascension dissipated. Heaven and earth went back to normal. The emperor's ceremony of godly ascension had been interrupted! As a result, it failed!

Eleventh Prince's laughter rang out, full of merriment. He looked at the emperor.

The officials both on and off Planet Ancient Emperor had complicated expressions. Some were breathing sighs of relief. However, they couldn't stop from feeling anxious about the future.

But then, Eleventh Prince's laughter suddenly stopped as a feeling of unease rose up within him. And that was because he didn't see any reaction on the face of the emperor! The greater part of the chains were still binding the emperor, and his godly ascension ceremony had just failed. Yet he seemed as calm as ever. The unease within Eleventh Prince grew more intense, and he opened his mouth to speak...

Before he could, the ashes of the altar and the corpses converged together and shot toward the emperor. He inhaled, and the ashes... flew right into his mouth.

Intense rumbling sounds rose into the dome of heaven. Planet Ancient Emperor started shaking. Destiny aura surged at peak levels. An aura of godly ascension vastly more intense than anything from before suddenly erupted out! The source of the eruption wasn't the ashes of the altar. Instead... it was from Planet Ancient Emperor itself!! The planet was burning!

This aura went beyond anything from earlier. And the golden flames that spread out from Planet Ancient Emperor seemed capable of burning anything and everything.

The imperial capital shook, and all of the Imperial Region trembled. There was no doubt... that this reemergence of the godly ascension was monumentally terrifying.

All of the human government officials, whether on Planet Ancient Emperor or off it, reacted with visible astonishment. But what shook them to the core more than anything... was what happened with King Firecrusher and the court eunuch, who were still in the middle of fighting. Even as they seemed about to rip each other to shreds, they both backed away from each other. King Firecrusher returned to Eleventh Prince's side, his facial expression the same as ever.

The court eunuch returned to the emperor. Standing there, he respectfully said, "Congratulations, Your Majesty, on successfully completing the first step of the godly ascension ceremony."

His words resulted in numerous involuntary cries of shock. As of this moment, everyone realized that the court eunuch's attempt to stop Xu Qing, whether by word or action, had all been an act. One of the most critical aspects of the entire thing was Xu Qing destroying the godly ascension altar!

Now Planet Ancient Emperor itself was erupting, which went to show that the destruction of the pentagonal altar wasn't just something that the emperor had planned. It was also... a crucial element of the ceremony itself!

Xu Qing's eyes were narrowed. Although it had seemed like he was in a dangerous situation, the reality was that he had sensed all along that things were going smoothly. Now he realized his senses had not been deceiving him.

And yet, none of that influenced his decisions. He was not going to actively participate in anything going on here, nor would he cast judgment on the parties involved. Getting the Plumdark Evergreen Lamp was enough for him. Backing up a bit, he sat down cross-legged.

As the chains on the emperor continued to snap and crumble, he maintained the same calm facial expression as he looked at the astonished Eleventh Prince.

"Anything else?" the emperor asked calmly.

Eleventh Prince's face drained of blood, and his eyes turned very grim.

At his side, King Firecrusher coolly said, "There's no need for a facial expression like that, Ningchang. All of this is within the realm of what we predicted could happen." [1]

The strange look on Eleventh Prince's face disappeared, to be replaced by a smile. "Although we did predict this possibility, I still wish it hadn't presented itself. That said, he is the emperor. No matter what emotions I tried to reveal, he's remained calm this entire time. How dull. In any case, there's no need for dramatic emotional displays now." Sighing, Eleventh Prince clasped hands and bowed to the emperor. "Father, if you want to see what else I've prepared, then... please allow me to proceed."

Eleventh Prince then hit himself on the top of the head and spat out a massive mouthful of blood. Then he waved his hand, causing eleven little bottles to appear, which shattered, revealing that they all contained blood. Combined with the mouthful of blood he had just spat out, that was twelve globs of blood. The moment they were out in the open, the twelve globs of blood erupted with imperial bloodline fluctuations.

Further back at the very edge of the Temple of Heaven stood Grand Prince, Fourth Prince, Fifth Prince, and Tenth Prince. All of them looked completely shocked. After all, they could sense the presence of their own blood. They weren't the only shocked ones. All of the other children of the emperor who hadn't entered Planet Ancient Emperor felt similar sensations.

"This," Eleventh Prince said softly, "is the blood I secretly collected from my brothers and sisters over the years. Mine's in there too. Today, I will use the blood of the imperial princes and princesses to open the way through the vortex of destiny aura, bypass the grand spell formation of humankind, and surpass the limitations of the imperial planet... to open a heavenly gate!"

Eleventh Prince performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then waved his hands out. Instantly, the twelve globs of blood shot up into the air over Planet Ancient Emperor, where they became a massive blood-colored vortex.

Deafening rumbling sounds swept out as a shocking gravitational force erupted from the vortex as a passageway opened up! A terrifying aura then spilled out.

1. Guyue Ningchang. We now know that Eleventh Prince's given name is Ningchang, which means his full name is Guyue Ningchang. I've already explained Guyue before. Ning is the same as the character from Ningyan's name. It means "peace, calm." Chang means "prosperous, flourishing." Madam Deathblade said, "It makes me think of peace and prosperity, like this is a calm guy with big hopes for a chaotic world." Incidentally, since I haven't mentioned it in a while, I'd like to reiterate that Madam Deathblade is not familiar with these characters or the story. Her reactions are basically instinctive reactions to what the names "sound" or "feel" like to her in Chinese. ☞

Chapter 946: Four Esteemed Heaveneaters

The Heaveneater species didn't count as one of the top species in Revered Ancient. At best, they were second-tier. Unlike the first-tier species, they lacked reserve powers, had insufficient destiny aura, and even more relevant, didn't have the backing of any god. In order for them to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the most powerful species, they would have to work hard and pay a very, very steep price.

Their home, the Heaveneater Region, was located far away from the humans' Imperial Region. Even a Void Returning expert would need decades to make that journey by flight. As a result, the Heaveneaters had never gone to war with humans.

However, they weren't happy with their current state of affairs. The reigning Emperor Heaveneater was a person of outstanding ability and grand vision, and had already led his people to new heights of glory. In fact, using some unknown method, Emperor Heaveneater had actually broken through the limits of the Smoldering God level, becoming the first of his species since the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity to become an Imperial Sovereign.

As they grew strong, the Heaveneaters grew more ambitious. All they needed to do now was devour a suitable species to boost their own reserve powers and destiny, thus earning the qualifications to offer a sacrifice to a god. Then they would be on the path to becoming one of the top species.

Considering that humans had once been one of the most powerful species, they were the perfect target for the Heaveneaters. After all, humans were suitable both when it came to their reserve powers and their destiny aura.

That said, though humankind wasn't one of the top species anymore, they did have Grand Emperor Swordsage, whose might resounded even now. What was more, all of

the successive emperors of humankind were Imperial Sovereigns, which caused even the most greedy scoundrels to avoid them.

Emperor Heaveneater had come to the conclusion that targeting humanity would require doing things in a very secretive and clever way. It would also require... waiting for the right opportunity. After years and years, that opportunity had finally come. That said, the opportunity wasn't fully ready to take advantage of, until today. The emperor was waiting for... the fulfillment of a pledge.

Four majestic figures stood in the plaza outside the Heaveneaters' imperial palace. Each was some 300 meters tall. Their faces didn't look human, as they only had one eye in the middle of their forehead. Their skin was greenish-black and very coarse, while simultaneously pulsing with astonishing fleshly body power. They were clad in battle armor, and were so impressive that wild colors flashed in heaven and earth.

Above the shoulders, heads, and other body locations on each of them were, astonishingly, at least seven worlds. And the two strongest among them had nine worlds!

These four were high-level Smoldering God cultivators. They were the Heaveneaters' four heavenly kings, and they were considered the species' most precious and powerful assets.

They stood silently in the plaza, looking into the depths of the imperial palace, at a figure even more majestic than themselves.

It was their emperor! He was fully 3,000 meters tall, with a majestic aura that seemed like that of a god. He stood looking up into the canopy of heaven, as if he were currently receiving orders.

The plaza was completely and utterly silent.

A moment passed, then rumbling filled the sky. Blood-red bolts of lightning crashed left and right, eventually forming a gigantic magical symbol that covered everything for 5,000 kilometers. The flickering, blood-red color spread from the symbol to form a vortex. As it rotated, it rumbled loudly, while simultaneously exerting a huge gravitation force that covered the Heaveneaters' imperial palace. Throughout all of that, the four heavenly kings didn't move a muscle.

Until....

Among the countless blood-red lightning bolts appeared a silver bolt of lightning. It shot from the horizon toward the 3,000-meter-tall emperor and pierced into his head. He exhaled a stream of energy, which pierced through the air, opening up a pocket dimension.

“The fulfillment of their pledge...” Emperor Heaveneater said calmly. “Gentlemen, for the sake of the future of our species, please take a visit to human lands!”

The four heavenly kings surged with battle spirit. Without saying a word, they turned into deadly streaks of light that shot up toward the blood-colored vortex. Within moments, they disappeared inside. As teleportation fluctuations rolled out, Emperor Heaveneater looked up at the crimson sky and sighed.

“As long as the fulfillment of their pledge brings enough value.... Maybe this opportunity really is just about us being a weapon used for an assassination. But that’s acceptable! After all, they’re the ones who made the promise.”

Emperor Heaveneater smiled. As he continued to look up into the sky, his gaze pierced through the clouds and off into the distance.... Far, far off into the distance....

In the humans’ Imperial Region, on Planet Ancient Emperor, twelve globs of blood hovered in front of Eleventh Prince. As the blood-colored vortex spun faster and faster in the sky, a nonhuman aura spilled out. It was an unfamiliar aura to everyone present, but it was obviously terrifying and powerful. Just sensing it left everyone feeling shaken.

An instant later, a 300-meter-tall armor-clad figure shot out of the vortex, accompanied by deafening rumbling sounds. He dropped down with the power to sunder heaven and earth as he appeared on Planet Ancient Emperor! The arrival of this figure caused the cosmos to tremble, and sent the human destiny aura seething.

The 300-meter-tall giant had a single eye in his forehead that he used to look around. A cruel grin could be seen on his face as more rumbling emerged from the vortex, along with a second, third, and fourth figure.

All were about 300 meters tall, clad in armor, and surrounded by a fiendish aura. They were the four heavenly kings of the Heaveneater species!

Countless gasps and expressions of astonishment could be heard outside of Planet Ancient Emperor.

“What species are they?”

“Nine-world Smoldering Gods!”

Even the people on Planet Ancient Emperor were shocked. Maybe the emperor was attempting godly ascension, but... the arrival of these nonhumans made everything else much less important. Numerous auras locked onto the newcomers. Behind the emperor was the court eunuch, whose gaze had suddenly become extremely sharp.

Then Eleventh Prince's voice once again rang out.

"Welcome. Now, please abide by our agreement... and kill the human emperor!"

When the four Heaveneaters heard that, they didn't hesitate for a moment. Circulating their cultivation bases, they started advancing on the emperor, who was still not fully freed from the chains.

The court eunuch scowled as he moved out to block their path.

At the same time, a good number of the heavenly kings near Xu Qing shot forward. In an instant, deafening booms filled the skies of Planet Ancient Emperor. Everything blurred as fierce fighting broke out. The air was thrown into chaos and time shattered. At the same time, the aura of godly ascension on Planet Ancient Emperor started to falter.

Xu Qing's expression was extremely grim. As of now, this situation had changed from an internal human affair into a nonhuman invasion.

As the booms rang out, Eleventh Prince looked at the emperor, whose face was still calm. Taking something out of his sleeve, Eleventh Prince laughed and said, "Father, I'm sure you recognize this Dawning Sun. And you must know why I'm really here."

The object he was holding was the very same Dawning Sun that went missing![1]

"I'm curious about something. Since you knew all along that I was the one who took the Dawning Sun, what exactly did you prepare to deal with it today?"

Eyes suddenly flashing with cruelty, Eleventh Prince suddenly hurled the Dawning Sun... right into the depths of Planet Ancient Emperor!

The Dawning Sun immediately began to shine with dazzling light. A sun was exploding!

1. The situation with the missing Dawning Sun started in [chapter 771](#). Well, technically it started in the chapter before that, but the relevant aspects were in 771. ☞

Chapter 947: A Parent

The moment Eleventh Prince took out the Dawning Sun, Xu Qing started backing away at top speed. He also pulled out the emperor's corpse. Erniu wasn't around, and it took both of them to operate the corpse. Xu Qing had not notified Erniu of what was going on, and would have a very hard time doing anything with it by himself. But the defenses it provided would work regardless.

Xu Qing was the type of person who would occasionally want to face certain things alone. As for facing a Dawning Sun, he had a bit of experience. And there were certain clues he had already picked up on.

Although this Dawning Sun had similar characteristics to his own ancient sun, there were also some big differences. For one thing, his version was a combination of an ancient sun and Crimson Mother's flesh. It was actually inherently unstable, which meant that being hit by it would be very dangerous.

The true Dawning Suns of humankind weren't like that. They were a very stable source of power. Although they couldn't be mass produced, they could be reliably created using a specific method. That was why they counted as the domain treasure of an entire species. Of course, they also required a certain amount of raw materials.

When a Dawning Sun was detonated, it created blinding light so terrifying that it made people think of a sun rising in the morning. Like a rising sun which would dispel the night, the Dawning Suns could ignite the world and dispel the darkness. They could bring radiance and light to everything, and crush all darkness and gloom. And yet... this Dawning Sun was controlled by Eleventh Prince, and thus, the 'darkness and gloom' was actually humankind and Planet Ancient Emperor.

The next instant, boundless light and heat spread out like an angry tempest, causing Planet Ancient Emperor to shake violently. It was as if an actual sun were rising over the planet!

In fact, it seemed as if the point was to supplant Planet Ancient Emperor and turn into an actual sun of Revered Ancient. Thanks to its immense and mighty power, the godfire forming from the Planet Ancient Emperor ceremony began to flicker violently. Terrifying fluctuations spread out. A destruction aura proliferated. It was like the end of days.

On Planet Ancient Emperor, most cultivators reacted with open shock. All were experiencing explosive sensations of deadly crisis and astonishment.

However... it was different with the four Heaveneaters as they battled with their human heavenly king counterparts. The Heaveneaters' facial expressions never changed. From the moment they entered the vortex, they knew in the bottom of their hearts that they had a mission to accomplish. For their species, and for the fulfillment of the pledge, they were willing to become assassin blades. Their mission... was to kill the target and then self-destruct.

Resurrection formations had already been set up back home, and therefore, they were completely ready to blow up both their bodies and their cultivation bases.

To them, the detonation of the Dawning Sun was a signal. The four Heaveneaters exchanged glances and could see the determination in each other's eyes. They didn't

hesitate. An instant later, a terrifying aura began to build up in them. A Dawning Sun plus four self-detonating heavenly kings could form a very deadly weapon!

As of this moment, Planet Ancient Emperor had plunged into unprecedented danger! Death seemed like it was only an instant away.

Beyond Planet Ancient Emperor in the imperial capital, all cultivators were completely stunned. The grand spell formation flickered as it tried to keep everything under control. Unfortunately... it was no use. Unless some vastly powerful force came along that could disregard a Dawning Sun, then the ancestral sacrifices were over. And that would signal doomsday for humankind.

Some people instinctively looked in the direction of the statue of Grand Emperor Swordsage.... Right now, it seemed that Grand Emperor Swordsage's final sword move was the only thing that could resolve the situation. Except... Grand Emperor Swordsage did nothing.

Xu Qing sighed inwardly. Even after everything that had played out up to now, he was still convinced there was more going on that hadn't been made public.

The Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan, who seemed to have ties of some sort to the emperor, hadn't done anything yet. The emperor himself had remained completely calm the entire time. The destructive might filling Planet Ancient Emperor was reaching a crescendo.

But then... the emperor *did* do something. Though his face still remained expressionless, he lifted his right hand. As he did, many of the destiny aura chains snapped and crumbled. Pressure began to radiate down from his hand.

At the same time, a gargantuan hand appeared, taking over the entire sky of Planet Ancient Emperor, and covered all the lands. In the blink of an eye, screaming winds sprang up, and the sky dimmed. A terrifying aura that surpassed the Smoldering God level spread out. Everything trembled.

Then he gently pushed his hand down. The air shattered. The lands heaved.

The four Heaveneater heavenly kings, who were in the middle of self-detonation, all shivered as an immense force settled down on them. As they howled in anguish, the power of self-detonation that had been just starting to spread out of them... was forced back inside!

The immense force caused blood to spray out of the mouths of the four heavenly kings. Trembling, they were shoved down to the ground. After they slammed down, they were kept in place, twitching but unable to move. Their major worlds were similarly suppressed. Trying to fight back against power as overwhelming as this was pointless.

They weren't the only ones affected. The detonating Dawning Sun trembled, and then the light and heat it was emanating was crushed. All of it went right back where it came from, and the Dawning Sun reverted to its original form. However, the cracks that covered it went to show that it was now unstable. Eventually, the Dawning Sun disappeared.

Up in midair, the emperor waved his hand. The dome of heaven went silent. Earth became as still as death.

Countless eyes came to be fixed on the emperor.

Some looked surprised. Some looked blank. Some seemed incredulous. Some were terrified.

The emperor was the only Imperial Sovereign among humans. Everyone knew it to be a fact, except that... in the 3,000 years since he had succeeded to the throne, he had never taken action in public. For the most part, humans' understanding of Imperial Sovereigns came from simple descriptions left behind in ancient records. After all, most humans in existence had never even seen a second Imperial Sovereign. And considering that gods existed, many people weren't very impressed with the Imperial Sovereign level.

Until now.

"Imperial Sovereign...."

"That's the power of an Imperial Sovereign!!"

"To a presence like this, Smoldering Gods are like ants! If an Imperial Sovereign is like this, imagine what a god would be like...."

Many sharp inhalations could be heard.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing's eyes gleamed with mysterious light as he watched the emperor. This was also his first time seeing the emperor in action.

This is far from the level of Li Zihua. But it is Imperial Sovereign battle prowess....

Looking as calm as ever, the emperor took the Dawning Sun and then looked back at the glowering Eleventh Prince.

"Is that all, Little Eleventh?" the emperor said coolly.

"I have no idea if he has more tricks up his sleeve," a cold voice ran out. "But I certainly do!"

The voice came from behind the emperor on the Temple of Heaven. Numerous gazes shifted in that direction and locked onto the speaker. Most of those gazes were filled with surprise.

The person who had spoken was not Eleventh Prince. It was... a person standing with Grand Prince and Fourth and Fifth Princes. It was... Tenth Prince!

For this entire time, Tenth Prince, who had been allowed to join at the last minute, had watched all of the events playing out with a look of incredulous disbelief on his face. But now, his expression was one of complete calm.

The emperor looked over his shoulder. He didn't seem surprised. "So you ultimately decided to try to fight me? You had other options."

Tenth Prince waited for two breaths of time before coolly responding, "I realized what was happening when you suddenly asked this imperial prince that I parasitized to join the ancestral sacrifices. You wanted to force me out into the open to fight you. You're right, I had other options. But the fulfillment of the pledge to me left me with no choice. Given that, and given their desires, I decided to test out your battle prowess."

As 'Tenth Prince' spoke, his body blurred and his face distorted. A heaven-shaking, earth-shattering energy swept out of him, along with a sensation of restoration. Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. Winds screamed.

The energy caused Planet Ancient Emperor to shake, and the disruptions spread beyond the planet as well. It caused Void Returning to tremble and Smoldering God to feel great pressure weighing down on them. It was because it was... an Imperial Sovereign's aura. In fact, it was almost exactly the same level of power the human emperor had just unleashed.

After a few breaths of time passed, 'Tenth Prince's' face went still. He looked different now. He only had one eye in the middle of his forehead, and greenish-black skin. In fact, he looked almost exactly like the four Heaveneaters!

"Emperor Dark War," said 'Tenth Prince.'

"Emperor Heaveneater," Dark War replied calmly.

Two types of Imperial Sovereign energy clashed in the dome of heaven, shattering the air and shaking the cosmos. It looked like fierce fighting might break out at any moment.

But then, Eleventh Prince's eyes shone with mysterious light as he pulled out a small silver bottle.

"Father, I prepared a little something to make this fight between you and Emperor Heaveneater even more perfect. You might not have taken action in public since you

succeeded to the throne, but before then, you fought battles to the death with many nonhumans. Over the past few years, I've paid an incredible price and suffered untold hardships to track down a drop of your blood! With that blood, I created a life force curse!"

With that, Eleventh Prince crushed the silver bottle. As it shattered, a drop of blood appeared.

Instantly, the bloodline fluctuations of the imperial clan of humankind rolled out in all directions. All who could sense it were visibly taken aback. It really was the emperor's blood!

The shattered remnants of the bottle didn't fall to the ground. They swirled in the air around the blood, moving faster and faster until they turned into a host of silver maggots. Shrieking loudly, the maggots burrowed into the blood. As they madly devoured the blood, one of the maggots transformed into a centipede, which devoured the other maggots.

Then the centipede flicked its tail, which fell off and turned into an eerie-looking skeleton. The skeleton opened its mouth and devoured the centipede. Then the skeleton collapsed into pieces as a pitch-black imp burrowed out from inside. The aura of a god raged as the imp looked at the remnants of the skeleton and belched out a mouthful of black smoke.

As the smoke settled on the skeleton, the imp burst into flames, then dove into the bones. The black smoke shrank down on itself and everything else as it turned into... a drop of black blood.

A noxious, rotting odor spread out from the blood. Just barely visible within that black blood was a blurry figure. He was none other than the emperor! A powerful curse was forming inside the blood. And it was no ordinary curse!

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he recognized the terrifying elements of a god curse!

Eleventh Prince grinned broadly as he looked at the emperor. "Father, I still have two more gifts for you. This is only one of them. If you last long enough, you'll be able to see the last one. However, I have the feeling that the curse will affect your life force enough that you won't last long in your fight with Emperor Heaveneater."

Eleventh Prince quietly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then pointed at the blood. The black blood started burning.

Next, the figure of the emperor in the blood began to twist and distort, and the sounds of anguished screaming rang out. Ultimately, it turned into a single thread of fate which flew toward the chains binding the emperor. It pierced into him, and then... the thread of fate emerged from the emperor's forehead. It was as if it couldn't find what it was

looking for! Next, it whipped around for a moment before shooting toward Planet Ancient Emperor

At that point, the curse was successful.

Everyone who had witnessed this turn of events was shaken to the core, including Xu Qing. It seemed unbelievable. Impossible. Beyond the realm of what was realistic. Every single person was stunned by the seemingly unpredictable development.

Eleventh Prince's face fell, and this time, the expression was infinitely more realistic than any of his previous facial expressions. He felt like he was being struck by lightning. Trembling, he staggered backward a few steps, his eyes shining with disbelief. At the same time, a preposterous sensation was howling within him.

"Y-you... you're... you're just standing there.... The curse locks down on fate. Why would it go somewhere else...? Don't tell me you have some way to transform threads of fate? Or could it be that you...? Impossible!"

In the end, he couldn't shake that sensation of preposterous incredulity.

During this entire time, the emperor hadn't cast a single glance at Eleventh Prince. Gazing calmly at Emperor Heaveneater, he said, "The kid has a bit of a temper. It's honestly a bit embarrassing. That said, it's time to end the tantrum. Since they wanted you to come test out my true battle prowess, I suppose I'll show it to you. Pay attention."

As the emperor spoke calmly, chains of destiny aura snapped one after another.

Each snapped chain released an explosive burst of energy. In the blink of an eye, rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth. A great wind blew as terrifying pressure radiated off the emperor.

"From the time I achieved my dao until now, I've never fought anyone publicly. Today, Fellow Daoist Heaveneater, you'll be able to see me make one, single move."

As the last words came out of the emperor's mouth, the last of the chains snapped. A majestic aura immediately surged out in all directions. Planet Ancient Emperor trembled violently.

The emperor lifted his right hand in the same way he had when suppressing the Dawning Sun. However, this time... what he took control of was the canopy of heaven over Planet Ancient Emperor. And also... what lay beyond that!

The sky over the imperial capital instantly turned pitch black as a hand appeared, so large that it wasn't possible to take in the whole thing with one's eyes. And it caused an indescribably majestic aura to weigh down.

The air shattered. The sky cracked. The lands quaked. Mountains sank down. One hand covered the entire sky! That included any gods as well! Then the hand dropped down with indescribable speed onto Planet Ancient Emperor.

In the shortest of moments, it snatched up the entire planet. Then it started squeezing, and the planet shook. Everyone on the planet felt like the world was shaking around them.

Emperor Heaveneater was visibly stunned. He was breathing heavily, his face pale and his eyes full of incredulity. He even started backing up, and his face blurred as though he were trying to leave the body he'd parasitized. A will of teleportation even rose up.

He immediately decided to just flee!

Clearly, he didn't act fast enough.

The majestic hand that grabbed Planet Ancient Emperor descended without hurting anyone until it was right in front of Emperor Heaveneater.

"Allow me to send you on your way!" the emperor growled.

RUMBLE!

A shadowy figure was forced out of Tenth Prince's body. It quickly turned into Emperor Heaveneater, except he was crumbling and reforming constantly as he tumbled off to the side. The cycle of crumbling occurred over a thousand times, until Emperor Heaveneater's soul shadow was ripped to shreds.

"Today, I will destroy your soulclone," the emperor said coolly. "If you don't deliver your species' domain treasure to me within half a month, then I'll rip apart space itself and personally go visit your species."

As of this moment, he was being matchlessly domineering!

Among the humans, no one spoke a word. Everyone felt like their minds had been turned into complete blanks. They all knew the emperor was strong, but... the fact that he was strong enough to easily outmatch another Imperial Sovereign came as a complete shock to them. In fact, this wasn't just outmatching. It was absolutely crushing!

Xu Qing was shaken to the core. After all, he had seen another Imperial Sovereign! Li Zihua was also an Imperial Sovereign.

Imperial Sovereigns came in different levels. Early, mid, late and peak. Each of them had wildly different levels of battle prowess.

The sense I got from that huge hand... was very similar to what I sensed from Li Zihua.... I can't believe it! The emperor of humankind... is a peak Imperial Sovereign!

Xu Qing was really having a hard time believing that it was real. Based on his understanding, in the modern-day Revered Ancient mainland, the Imperial Sovereign level required both the proper bloodline and the right destiny aura to be able to make progress. But that was all in the early stage.

As for the peak stage... given that the top species in Revered Ancient were paying very close attention to such things, they basically didn't exist.

For instance, when the Firemoon Darkheavens' three gods of sun, moon, and star achieved their major breakthrough, a peak Imperial Sovereign had appeared to act as a dao protector. To the various species of Revered Ancient, that was an incredibly shocking development. Afterward, many investigations were carried out. Whether it was the top species or their gods, everyone wanted to know who that peak Imperial Sovereign was that was able to avoid the omniscience of other gods!

In the cultivation system of cultivators, Imperial Sovereigns were already rare. Those in the peak of that level... were generally not permitted to exist by the gods.

Xu Qing looked at the emperor. *Don't tell me....*

Meanwhile, the emperor now floated to the very top of the Temple of Heaven. That was the place where he had previously been carrying out the ancestral sacrifices. At that spot, he turned and looked down at the dazed and bedraggled Eleventh Prince. It was almost like everything had gone back to the very beginning of this whole event.

"Is that all, Little Eleventh?"

Deathblade's Thoughts

The meaning of the chapter title is not explained fully until the

Chapter 948: Once My Flower Blooms, a Hundred Flowers Perish

Those very same words... had been spoken by the emperor on multiple occasions this day. Every single time, it caused Eleventh Prince's heart to sink. By now, it had reached the point where he couldn't control his emotions. His face was as pale as death as he staggered backward several paces, shaking from head to toe, his eyes shining with disbelief.

The emperor looked as calm and collected as ever. That hadn't changed this entire time. No matter what Eleventh Prince did, regardless of what secret weapons he pulled out or trump cards he used, the emperor still seemed to be thinking of this entire event as a tantrum.

That was why the emperor hadn't called for anyone to deal with Eleventh Prince. He just let the tantrum happen.

It seemed as if, in his mind, it was all nothing more than a child acting out in front of a parent. If the parent didn't care, then the tantrum could happen. The child could cry and get angry, but then just go back to being obedient.

But if the parent wasn't pleased, then the child could be in for a world of hurt. Once the lesson was taught, and the child learned how to be afraid, they would go back to being obedient. Maybe the child could call for help. But that wouldn't matter either. In fact, it could be considered fishing. And whoever got fished up would be dealt with by means of a slap of the hand.

The emperor's attitude, and his eyes, caused Eleventh Prince to feel choking despair. He felt like he couldn't breathe easily, and his chest felt tight. All of his previous confidence was crumbling. A sense of powerlessness swept over him, filling his broken heart until all he could do was cough up a huge mouthful of blood.

How can this be happening...? How could you be a peak Imperial Sovereign...? Why did the curse fail like that...?

Eleventh Prince looked completely down and out, with his eyes bloodshot as he stood there trembling. All of his preparations were apparently useless. Even the nonhumans he had allied himself with were defeated with hardly any effort. Everything he had prepared, from the Painting of Grievances to the cursed blood, were like nothing more than children's toys.

The emperor was still standing there. And he was like a mountain that could prop up heaven and earth! As long as he never fell, then humankind would stand!

Eleventh Prince wasn't the only one experiencing intense emotions. The surrounding officials as well as all the commoners in the capital were feeling similar things.
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And yet, Eleventh Prince was still not willing to give up! His eyes were crimson as he stared at the emperor. The emperor's calm gaze made Eleventh Prince feel like he was on fire inside.

The emperor lifted his right hand and waved it through the air. An ancient scroll painting unfurled in front of him.

The painting depicted a woman. She wore a simple yet elegant blue gown. Her hair was not bound, and her smile seemed shrewd and even crafty. She wasn't stunningly beautiful, and in fact, there were many people in the world more attractive than her. But there was no doubt that she had a strong personality. The light in her eyes shone through even in the painting, making it clear how vivacious she was.

It was the very same painting from Ningyan's mansion that depicted his and Eleventh Prince's mother! It was impossible to determine who had painted it, but it was very lifelike, to the point where reflections were visible in her pupils. The reflections weren't perfectly clear, but there was enough of a shape to determine that they were reflecting some sort of altar....

When Xu Qing saw the painting, he sighed in his heart as he thought back to Ningyan weeping in front of it. Then he took a second look, and was suddenly shaken to the core as he realized that the vague shape of that altar was actually familiar. His pupils constricted. The altar was pentagonal, and looked... almost exactly like the altar he had just destroyed moments before.[1]

Xu Qing was completely taken aback.

"Dark War!" Eleventh Prince shouted, his face twisted with fury. At this point, he was ready to throw caution to the wind.

The emperor said nothing as he looked from Eleventh Prince to the painting. The sight of that woman caused his expression to flicker. His eyes filled with reminiscence.

"This is the last gift I prepared for you, Dark War!" Eleventh Prince said, his voice as sharp as a blade. "Everything I did today, from colluding with nonhumans to paying the immense price I paid, was all for the sake of avenging my mother's death! I don't care what species are involved. I don't care about righteousness. I don't need to be an imperial prince. I know that my actions will cause countless humans to disdain and hate me. But I... don't care about that!

"Heaven and earth can all crumble for all I care. Every species in the world can die! What's that got to do with me? The only thing I've cared about this entire time is making sure that I see you dead!"

As Eleventh Prince shouted, a sensation of bloodlust began to build in his words. "Today, right here, I, Ningchang, want to ask a question of the government officials!

"The Dawning Suns were first suggested by Emperor Mirrorcloud. In the tens of thousands of years since then, none were ever made! The development couldn't have gone more slowly. It was my mother who, thanks to her spectacular innate talent, restructured her mortal body to create the framework!

"It was my mother who didn't hesitate to waste her own life force and longevity to, for the sake of humankind, and the emperor, and all of you... advance the development of the Dawning Suns by at least 30,000 years! It was my mother who took all the Creation Mansion's research into gods and pushed it to a level commensurate with a top species!

"It was my mother who repaired the grand spell formation, pushing it to the absolute peak, all to protect you people! But... how did things end for her? She became nothing

but nutrients for the emperor!! She turned into mere nourishment for the revered emperor of all humans to achieve his dao!!

“Dark War, you have such ordinary talent that you had to sacrifice entire foreign regions to become an Imperial Sovereign. After that, you became completely demented. You lusted after my mother’s talent so badly that you completely ignored your love for your daoist partner... and devoured her!! You don’t deserve to be an emperor. You don’t deserve to be a husband. And you don’t deserve to be a father!”

Eleventh Prince then devolved into bitter laughter that rang out everywhere. The officials maintained silence.

The emperor closed his eyes.

Although Xu Qing had never actually seen Ningyan’s mother, he had heard Ningyan talk about her after they came to the Imperial Region. Ningyan hadn’t gone into a lot of detail, but what little he had said left Xu Qing with the distinct impression that this woman was extraordinary. Unfortunately... after she died, both her name and her story had been made taboo by the emperor. As a result, few people were willing to even mention her. What actually happened all those years ago became something of a mystery.

As the officials looked on silently, Eleventh Prince dropped to his knees in front of the scroll painting and began forcefully kowtowing. Tears poured out of his eyes. It was as if he were saying farewell. Then he reached up, cut open his fingertip, and sent a drop of blood flying toward the painting.

The emperor did nothing to stop him.

When the blood fused into the painting, Eleventh Prince’s mother’s eyes slowly seemed to fill with grace and charm. They even started shimmering with light. The light emerged from the painting, swirled to a stop in front of Eleventh Prince, and turned into... a firefly flower! Unfortunately, it was in a very withered state.

When Eleventh Prince looked at the flower, his heart filled with bitterness and other deep thoughts. All of sudden, he found himself thinking about his mother’s smile.

“This is my mother’s life essence flower. My mother might have been a mortal who, for various reasons, could never practice cultivation. But in terms of talent, she was the best among all humans! Back when she was researching the Dawning Suns, she gained enlightenment of a special technique that allowed her to create a life essence flower even though she had no cultivation base.

“With her bloodline and the flower, she created the life essence flower to give to me and Ningyan. Back then, I didn’t understand. But thinking back, I realize that mother must

have known how things would end for her, so she created the flower to give to me and my brother. To protect us.

“To a certain extent, you can say that this flower is the earliest version of a Dawning Sun. The essence of the Dawning Sun! Whenever a Dawning Sun shines on someone, their karma becomes inextricably linked to it. When the Dawning Sun withers, they flourish. When they flourish, the Dawning Sun withers.

“That, Dark War, is why I stole that Dawning Sun! You might have prevented it from detonating, but the moment you took hold of it, you were exposed to its light! And now... let’s see how you escape this deadly trap I prepared for you!”

Even as Eleventh Prince’s words echoed out, the withered firefly flower in front of him stirred, and the petals began to move. Despite being withered up, the flower... was opening! It was almost like life force blossoming!

All of a sudden, the light of dawn appeared in the dome of heaven. Intense heat began to rise up everywhere, burning everything. The wind went still.

Everyone, whether they were in the imperial capital, on the bridge, or on Planet Ancient Emperor, suddenly began to glow. The glowing light was like karma from the Dawning Sun, pulsing through their blood.

The light rose up slowly, to the shock of everyone, until it formed a blooming flower! It illuminated the world and stirred the hearts of the people. Its light entered the world of mortals like the light of a true heavenly body, bringing life force and strength to all. It was incomparably majestic. It was just like the line of poetry: *Waiting for autumn to come, on the eighth of the ninth month; once my flower blooms, a hundred flowers perish.*[2]

All of a sudden, a sensation of withering rose up within all people, all living things, and within the dome of heaven! Ultimately... it converged on the emperor!

The emperor opened his eyes. His gaze was one of reminiscence, fond recollection, and mixed emotions. And it all came together in the first sigh that had escaped his lips in many years.

As he sighed, he lifted his hand. He made a beckoning gesture at the flower.

That gesture was absolutely shocking to everyone present. Eleventh Prince felt like he was being struck to the core.

The blooming flower floated over to the emperor, landed in his hand, and then... merged into his palm! It didn’t fight against him. It didn’t slow down. It was almost as if the flower was returning to its source. It was almost as if the flower and the emperor were one.

Heaven and earth went deathly silent. Countless gazes were filled with confusion and speculation as they focused on the emperor. If those gazes could have been made corporeal, they would have been raging waves that could overwhelm an entire region.

But the most intense of them all came from Eleventh Prince. He felt like he was being struck by 1,000,000 lightning bolts. He trembled, gasping for breath, his face first pale then flushed.

“Impossible. This... this isn’t possible! That’s my mother’s life essence flower. It couldn’t possibly merge into another person. Th-this... this... you....”

Xu Qing was just as shaken as everyone else. At the same time, a new thought occurred to him, something completely different from any of his previous speculations.

As everyone struggled to control their breathing, and as silence reigned, fire burned on Planet Ancient Emperor, and pressure weighed down everywhere....

The emperor’s gaze left his palm and shifted to Eleventh Prince. Then he reached up and touched his own forehead. An instant later... his facial features blurred, and his skin fell away, revealing the true features underneath!

It was a woman.

She was refined and beautiful, with an elegant disposition. She seemed inherently noble, with eyes as bright as stars. In fact, they glittered with wisdom and seemed capable of penetrating the hearts of people. Her eyebrows seemed gentle but firm, making her seem like a distant, mist-covered mountain that imparted a sense of calm and determination.

She stood as tall and straight as a cypress in a winter wind, as if she could maintain her dignity no matter what was happening. Her graceful bearing made it seem like she was constantly in the process of writing her own legend. The facial features were exactly the same as those on Ningyan’s painting, except that this woman seemed a bit older and a bit more dignified.

Everyone was absolutely shaken to the core.

Eleventh Prince’s mind spun until it was blank.

“Mother...?”[3]

1. The painting was originally described in [chapter 753](#), including the part about the reflection in the pupils. 📖

2. This poem is by Tang-era rebel [Huang Chao](#). I found different versions and explanations of this poem. The explanation that made the most sense to me claimed

that the poem uses the chrysanthemum flower as a symbol of the oppressed commoners, while referring to the reactionary and decadent feudal ruling group as the hundred flowers. Maybe the author is intentionally tapping into some of that meaning, or maybe he just wanted to have a cool flower-related poem. What do you think? 📖

3. Specifically, Eleventh Prince uses a form of address that princes (either of an empire or monarchy), would use when addressing their mother, who is the wife of the leader but not the actual leader, something like a Queen Mother or Empress Dowager depending on the circumstances. 📖

Chapter 949: Empress

There was now an explanation for everything.

Why had that curse, which was made from the emperor's blood, actually not honed in on the emperor, but instead flew to the depths of Planet Ancient Emperor? Why did the godly ascension ceremony feature a pentagonal altar with a coffin and shrine for Dark War? Why did Xu Qing's action of taking that lamp cause corpse energy to come out of all five coffins and form a hand with five fingers and not four?

Why had Eleventh Prince's extremely unfilial and rebellious behavior provoked little more than cold indifference from the emperor? Why had the emperor not launched into an attack? Why had the emperor acted like a parent the whole time? Why had Emperor Heaveneater, who parasitized Tenth Prince but was under the emperor's control the entire time, had his soulclone killed, all while Tenth Prince's physical body remained unharmed?

The answers to all those questions were provided the moment the emperor's mask came off.

This woman was not Dark War! She was Dark War's daoist partner, and also the mother of Eleventh Prince and Ningyan. What was more, considering her position years ago, she had only been a step away from becoming the empress consort.

Everyone, down to the last one, was flabbergasted to the core, including everyone on Planet Ancient Emperor, everyone outside the planet, and everyone in the imperial capital. There was no denying... that this was a monumental development that surpassed imagination and what the senses could impart.

In fact, it was really a complete impossibility. Everything the emperor said and did, down to his daily routine, did not give even a scrap of a clue pointing toward this outcome.

In fact, it was correct to say that the act had been perfect. No one had even been able to guess that this was the truth until Dark War's coffin appeared on that pentagonal altar. And yet, most people just instinctively assumed that Dark War's coffin was empty.

The entire matter was terrifying to think about. That was especially true... when the corpse energy rose up from the five coffins. Even then, no one speculated about what was really going on....

It was almost as if the idea that the reigning emperor wasn't actually Dark War had been suppressed by some terrifying power, interfering with the perceptions of everyone in the world. And that same power seemed to help people come up with reasonable explanations for all sorts of unreasonable situations.

Until now.

That veil had been pulled to the side by this woman. And the truth was completely and utterly astonishing.

After all, though it might be possible for a god to create an effect that could secretly alter the perceptions of so many people, in the end, it would only be a powerful High God. Although... there was actually one other individual who could do something like that. Only he could pull something like this off flawlessly.

That individual was... Grand Emperor Swordsage!

He knew from the very beginning what was going on. And because Grand Emperor Swordsage approved of the 'emperor,' it made sense why The Emperor's Sword didn't react when Xu Qing tested it out. That was because... her presence, and everything she was doing, was approved of by Grand Emperor Swordsage![1]

This line of thinking didn't just pop up in Xu Qing's mind. It occurred to many others at the same time.

At the moment, it was impossible to say what this spectacular woman had gone through. What twists and turns had been involved in her relationship with Dark War. Did Dark War help her achieve her goals? Or did he actually devour her, only for her to be resurrected later, and then somehow turned into the emperor...? Or was it the case that she had *always* been impersonating the emperor...?

Right now, no one knew. It was a mystery that was impossible to solve.

While virtually everyone in the crowd was reeling in astonishment, as well as fear and unease for the future, there were three people whose facial expressions were the same as ever.

The first was the chief minister, who stood silently in place on Planet Ancient Emperor. Stepping forward, he dropped to his knees in front of the woman.

"My respects, Empress!" [2]

The second person was the court eunuch who was a nine-world Smoldering God. He also bowed his head and dropped to his knees.

“My respects, Empress!”

The third person was someone that no one in the crowd could have guessed would step forward. But once they saw him, it only took a moment to realize why his actions made sense. He was none other than... King Firecrusher. Expression placid, he stepped away from Eleventh Prince's side, walked up to the woman, looked her in the face, and with eyes flickering full of memories, he bowed and dropped to his knees.

“My respects, Empress!”

In reality, he had never turned traitor! He had just been playing along with the act.

The reason was that this entire thing was a complicated plot, hatched years ago by the talented woman who had replaced Dark War. When she began making preparations for the godly ascension ceremony, she knew that her actions would meet with disapproval by many factions. That was why she kept her true battle prowess hidden the entire time.

She couldn't reveal that she had a peak Imperial Sovereign cultivation base. Not even if nonhumans invaded. Not even if humankind was in great peril. The only exception would be if the species was in true threat of extinction....

Otherwise, revealing a peak Imperial Sovereign cultivation base would just put humankind in the position to be invaded by a host of gods. There was no way the gods would allow any peak Imperial Sovereigns among the species of Revered Ancient. And if she did reveal that peak level of strength, it could only be within human territory. Even outside of human territory, it was a big taboo to even step halfway into that peak level.

She could only wait patiently. She had to wait for the right opportunity to reveal her battle prowess. And she also needed to be confident in being able to keep that opportunity under control.

That was also why she had to be aloof to Ningyan and his brother. She needed them to be on their own, nursing hatred toward Emperor Dark War. It was the perfect distraction for the prying eyes of any nonhumans.

It was also something of a fishing expedition. When the opportunity arrived, whoever was poking around the fishing lure would be taken out in one fell swoop. As of this moment, she had succeeded.

Considering that the chief minister, court eunuch, and King Firecrusher himself were all active participants, all the other shocked government officials could ultimately... just bow their heads.

Xu Qing was feeling rocked to the core. Things really were turning out according to his earlier expectations. But to see it playing out with his own eyes was still incomparably shocking. Of course, what was most shocking of all was that this mother of Ningyan had a peak Imperial Sovereign cultivation base.

Inside, Xu Qing sighed. He had just thought back to the time when he first arrived at the imperial capital and gained the sense that Grand Emperor Swordsage was dying. Now everything made sense.

Could it be that the Grand Emperor provided a secret magic to this empress to help her do all this, either as a gift or a legacy? And then he gave The Emperor's Sword to me...?

Xu Qing wasn't sure if his speculations were correct. Lifting his head, he looked at the statue of the Grand Emperor outside of Planet Ancient Emperor.

Meanwhile, Eleventh Prince was struck as mute as a wooden chicken. He stood there trembling, looking drained and blank. freewebnvel.com

Finally, the empress said, "Stop causing trouble. Back down."

Eleventh Prince seemed to get excited by the words. He bowed his head, but couldn't prevent tears of joy from flowing down his face. All evidence of his immature temper was gone.

The empress turned. Her eyes were full of determination and courage. Her expression and bearing seemed full of power and resolve. She seemed to be telling the world that she was the ruler here, and that she had the strength to change anything and everything.

"I am the empress of humankind. My dear ministers and officials, do you have any objection?"

A few breaths of time passed in which there was only silence. But then the officials both on and off Planet Ancient Emperor clasped hands and bowed.

"Our respects, Empress!"

Their voices crashed like thunder.

Next, Planet Ancient Emperor rumbled, and the destiny aura of humankind seethed as it converged on the empress. As it blessed her, it formed an imperial crown over her head. The destiny aura was confirming its approval of the current office holder!

All eyes focused on the empress as she stood atop the Temple of Heaven, looking into the dome of heaven with her true facial features.

“After the ancestral sacrifices are the heavenly sacrifices!” she said, her eyes shining brightly. All of a sudden, she seemed even more confident than before.

The first part of the grand ceremony was concluded. The second part... was now officially starting!

1. Xu Qing tested the sword on the ‘emperor’ in chapter 771. ☞

2. The actual title here is the same title for all the successive emperors of humankind. It’s literally ‘human emperor.’ Of course, as I mentioned previously, the character for emperor isn’t gender specific. If you wanted to go really literal, it could be ‘human imperial person.’ In any case, the author does include the gender tag for the empress on numerous occasions to clarify that she is a “female emperor.” Just as with the (male) emperors, I’m generally going to leave out the ‘human’ part unless it’s relevant to the story. ☞

Chapter 950: I Do Invite Thee to Partake

From ancient times until now, formalized sacrifices among humans were divided into two parts.

First came the ancestral sacrifices. Then came the heavenly sacrifices. The ancestral sacrifices, as the name implied, were supposed to be for Dark Serenity. Though the empress actually didn’t mention Dark Serenity, but rather the Forefathers, it fell within the realm of what was reasonable, and didn’t count as a usurping of proper authority. For the leader of humankind to offer sacrifices to the Forefathers of humans just barely fell within the scope of etiquette.

However, the ‘heavens’ from the heavenly sacrifices could not be changed. Before Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity left, the ‘heavens’ referred to the ancient heavenly daos of Revered Ancient.

After the departure, word spread that the meaning of the ‘heavens beyond’ had changed. Starting with Emperor Eastglory, those ‘heavens’ referred to the holy lands. That wasn’t just the case for humans. All species in the Revered Ancient mainland who weren’t connected to a god would conform to that view of the ‘heavens beyond.’ Their heavenly sacrifices also involved worshiping their bloodline as it existed in the holy lands. *Not* offering worship was considered an act of defiance. Species who did things like that always ended up being destroyed somehow.

People from the holy lands were not commonly seen in Revered Ancient. They existed in the heavens beyond, lofty and above all else. However, they could still use special techniques to affect the hearts and minds of the species in Revered Ancient.

For generations, the human emperors had used the ceremonies of the heavenly sacrifices to make offerings to the holy lands. Apparently, the empress was not going to be an exception.

She stood on the Temple of Heaven, straight and tall as a mountain, as if she could provide protection to all living beings in heaven and earth. Destiny aura swirled around her, and with her imperial robes and crown, she looked completely dazzling. Her facial expression seemed relaxed, but her eyes were piercing, as if she could see through the dome of heaven and all the way to the holy lands. She seemed to fairly pulse with determination.

When the officials saw that, they felt very calm at heart. The truth was that the events that had played out so far made it seem like this day had lasted half a lifetime. The things that happened in front of their eyes were profoundly astonishing.

And yet, every single person present also felt... that the sacrificial event was only just getting started, and that what was to come would be even more of a violent tempest. As for what exactly that tempest would be, it was impossible for them to predict. After all, nobody had any clue what this empress had been planning over the years.

Did she love Dark War, or did she hate him? How did she assume the throne? What setbacks and torments had she endured? Presumably, only she knew the details. However, there was one thing that seemed obvious to everyone: she was not the kind of person who bowed her head to fate.

She was wise and valorous, and over the years that had passed, had created her own legend among the histories of humankind. Not only was she a woman, but also, she didn't have any imperial blood. And yet... the aristocracy and government officials both on and off Planet Ancient Emperor were fully convinced of her right to rule.

At the moment, everything was silent.

Xu Qing's mind was racing. As he thought back to everything, he realized that the empress had obviously been expecting him to take action.

I bet she knew from day one exactly what I was here for.

Breaths of time ticked by, until exactly forty-nine had passed. At that point, the court eunuch looked up, his eyes shining incisively and his expression extremely solemn. Then he continued with the same chant from the ancestral sacrifices.

“Sacrificing gifts to heaven brings prosperity to humankind. The sacrificer loses a year of life, and thus forty-nine is the limit.[1]

“First gift... the War Banner of Humankind!”[2]

As the words left his mouth, heaven and earth shook violently. The blooming flower of destiny aura in the dome of heaven tumbled to the side as numerous beams of blood-colored light shot up from Planet Ancient Emperor.

One after another they appeared, until there were a total of forty-nine arrayed above. They seemed to rip apart the sky, shred the air, and tear destiny as they revealed a huge banner that had been hidden as if in time itself.

The banner was now visible. As it unfurled, it covered the sky. In fact, it became the sky, with ripples flowing across it like majestic waves! As the lands went dark, life force flames appeared both inside and outside of Planet Ancient Emperor. They even formed in the imperial capital. Each one corresponded to a specific human! And that was because this was the War Banner of Humankind! It represented the will of humankind, the species' battle spirit, and the dignity of all humans.

This banner wasn't actually the most ancient version, but it was still profoundly meaningful.

The most ancient War Banner of Humankind had been created by Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. It actually consisted of one main banner and 360 smaller banners. That set of banners had accompanied him as he conquered Revered Ancient. When he left Revered Ancient, he took them with him.

Humans of that time had used innumerable precious materials to forge their own new set. This later War Banner of Humankind accompanied Emperor Eastglory on the campaign trail, and contained the blood of countless nonhumans.

Ultimately, Emperor Eastglory suffered a huge defeat. Although the war banner never fell, it was ripped into many pieces that ended up being scattered throughout Revered Ancient. Even one tiny piece contained immense power. As those scattered fragments spread, some disappeared, some were collected up by nonhumans, some were acquired by human cultivators. Collecting all of them would be a monumentally difficult task.

As far as humans were concerned, it made more sense to just make a new banner than to expend all the effort required to collect the pieces of the old one. That was why they had ultimately given up on collecting the pieces.

Later, when the new banner was crafted, successive human emperors would use it when they waged war.

Over the countless years that had passed, that banner became a symbol of humankind. It was splattered with the blood of nonhumans, and thus, when it was unfurled, the aura of blood spread out into the world. At the same time, the will of humankind as a species surged. It provoked a strong reaction in the blood of all humans, as if calling out to them.

That included Xu Qing. When he looked up into the dome of heaven at the War Banner of Humankind, he thought back to the version of the banner he'd seen back in Seven Blood Eyes.[3]

Though Xu Qing didn't know the full story about what happened with the original banner, he could see at first glance that the two of them were constructed similarly. In fact, they probably had the same origin. However, comparing the might and majesty of the two, one was like the full moon, while the other was like a firefly.

As Xu Qing studied the War Banner of Humankind, the court eunuch's chanting again rang out.

"The war banner is presented. Let there be sacrifices! All lands and all parties, open up your heavenly prisons! Sacrifice them to the War Banner of Humankind!"

As the eunuch's voice echoed out, thunderous rumblings echoed out from the War Banner of Humankind. As the deafening sound shook everything, the Five Greater Celestial Divisions in the imperial capital opened their prison doors. Squads of human cultivators escorted out innumerable nonhuman prisoners and dragged them up into the sky. There were millions upon millions of them.

At the moment, the cultivators in the imperial capital were looking up into the sky with solemn expressions. The people on Planet Ancient Emperor acted the same, including Xu Qing.

Meanwhile, teleportation portals within the imperial capital activated, connecting to prisons throughout the surrounding region. All of them received the same orders. They opened their prison doors and sent out the captives.

If someone could look down on the Imperial Region from high above, it would be possible to estimate that, after all the prisons were opened and emptied, there were probably somewhere around 50-60,000,000 prisoners. They were nonhuman cultivators who had been locked up during the empress' rule. Most of them, however, had been taken captive after humans revealed their Dawning Suns.

The empress said one thing in a calm voice.

"Execute them!"

The cultivators standing behind the captives raised their sabers, and then screams rang out in heaven and earth. Millions upon millions of heads flew into the air. Millions upon millions of corpses fell to the ground. Innumerable quantities of blood fell like rain. However, it didn't fall into the mortal world. A gravitational force erupted from the War Banner of Humankind, turning into a vortex that sucked up all of the corpses and blood.

At the same time, the teleportation portals surged, causing all of the corpses there to be teleported to the spot. All of them were also pulled into the War Banner of Humankind.

As of now, the War Banner of Humankind was a deeper crimson than it had ever been, and it was ghastly to behold. It was a blood-soaked event, but it was just further evidence of how the species of Revered Ancient lived brutal lives.

It wasn't just human sacrifices that were like this. All species offered living sacrifices. It was a world in which the weak were the prey of the strong. That was the paramount magical law in Revered Ancient.

After the flesh and blood was absorbed, turning the war banner bright red, the way the banner stirred seemed to indicate... that there was a second phase about to begin.

It was the sacrifice of souls.

Next, the souls of the millions upon millions of executed prisoners were locked down and prevented from entering the cycle of reincarnation. They couldn't leave, and thus, they could only gather and wait. Millions upon millions of nonhuman souls swirled in the air, making it seem like evil ghosts were invading the mortal world. Though the mortal world was a place of weakness, there were some situations in which devil ghosts couldn't do anything more than howl and shriek.

Then the War Banner of Humankind flapped, and thunderous rumblings could be heard as the vast host of nonhuman souls were absorbed. All of them were sucked in to be nutrients for the banner!

At that point, the shrill voice of the eunuch again rang out.

"The sacrifice to the banner is complete. Let the empress officiate!"

Face completely expressionless, the empress reached up and made a grasping gesture toward the sky.

In response, the dome of heaven trembled and distorted, bending in the direction of the empress as the enormous War Banner of Humankind flew toward her.

An instant later, she snatched it out of the sky! With her hand gripping the flagpole, she hefted the war banner, looked up at the canopy of heaven, and then waved the banner forcefully.

It rippled like waves, filling the air above the imperial capital. And then it turned into a bright red vortex.

Things weren't over yet, though. She once again waved the banner. The blood-colored vortex grew more intense. After it spun nine times, it was like a red tornado raging in the sky, shattering the air as it spread out. It looked like something was opening up!

Unfortunately, the heaven of Revered Ancient was sealed. It was possible to get in from outside, but not possible to get out from the inside. To do so required paying an astronomical price. Xu Qing and the Captain had only managed it by tapping into the power of a god domain.

Seeing that the empress was apparently doing something similar caused Xu Qing's pupils to constrict.

Deafening rumbling swept out as Planet Ancient Emperor shook violently. Destiny aura was like a dragon, shooting up toward the vortex before slamming into it. As the dragon continued to roar, terrifying fluctuations erupted from Planet Ancient Emperor. Specifically... they came from the golden godfire burning on the planet.

Although the fire wasn't complete, it did have the aura of a god in it. As Planet Ancient Emperor rumbled, the fire rose up into the sky toward the blood-red tempest. It looked like a shocking ancient stream of flames that could burn anything in its path!

And yet, things still weren't over. Next, the empress swept her hand out, throwing the War Banner of Humankind like a spear toward the sky.

As a spear, it shot forward like a hammer crushing an ice cube. Nothing could stop it as it shot forth, backed by the fate of humankind, with a will to defy all odds.

At the same time, the empress took a step toward the canopy of heaven. When she appeared up above, she became the destiny aura and the will of humankind. Drawing on her imperial title and her daring personality, she clenched her right hand into a fist... and punched it toward heaven!

She seemed to be doing all of this to break open heaven! Using the vortex banner, the will of humankind, the dragon of destiny, the banner as the spear, the might of godfire, and her peak Imperial Sovereign battle prowess, it was possible to break open heaven and sunder the earth!

Intense rumbling and cracking sounds spread out. Heaven was splitting open!

A huge rift could be seen tearing through the canopy of heaven. The starry sky that existed beyond the world was now visible, along with a shimmering band of silver light.

That band was enormous, as it started in the starry sky above the Imperial Region and stretched out... far into the deeper starry sky. Far out in the imperceptible starry sky was a holy planet that was completely silver in color!

The planet wasn't anywhere near as big as Revered Ancient. But it was still majestic. And if you looked closely at it, you would realize it looked a lot like Planet Ancient Emperor.

It was... the very same place that Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity had carved out years ago. It was... the Dark Serenity holy land!

As for the great silver band, it was apparently a path leading there! As of now, that path was visible!

The empress stood outside of the path, her eyes full of determination.

"I am the current empress of the humans in Revered Ancient. Today, I offer forty-nine imperial jade seals made from the nourished destiny aura of humankind as sacrifices to the Dark Serenity holy land."

The empress waved her hand, and a host of glittering jade seals flew out of the destiny aura on Planet Ancient Emperor. Each jade seal was obviously a precious treasure, and contained immense amounts of human destiny aura, as well as the will of humankind. Because humans were currently rising to prominence, they were unusually sparkling and brilliant.

They even seemed to pulse with the power of faith. Now they were being respectfully offered by the empress to the holy land.

As everyone looked on, the empress inclined her head and bowed at the waist. The forty-nine jade seals flew into the rift and onto the silver path. Thus was completed the ceremony of the heavenly sacrifices.

Each sacrifice to heaven involved offering gifts to the holy land above. In the past, though the offerings were always jade seals made from destiny aura, there were usually not so many offered, nor was the canopy of heaven ripped open. Instead, it was done via an ancient method passed down by the holy lands.[4]

This time, though, things were different. Also different was how, as the forty-nine jade seals shot rapidly across that band of silver light, a force of rejection appeared. Ripples spread through the silver light, as if an inspection was being carried out. Then the forty-nine jade seals suddenly shivered.

Next, as all the human cultivators watched, something astonishing happened. The sacrificial offerings in the form of the forty-nine jade seals began to crumble from the outside, revealing what was inside.

There were forty-nine objects that resembled suns. freewebnovel.com

There were forty-nine balls of flame like hell.

There were... forty-nine Dawning Suns!

Looking up, the empress coolly said, "Would the holy land please enjoy the gift? I do invite thee to partake!"

1. The second line in this paragraph is extremely hard to decipher, even in Chinese. I enlisted Madam Deathblade to help, and we both read all the comments and did our own various bits of research and checking to try to determine the meaning. My interpretation is a fairly direct translation, and thus, it's kind of vague. Normally speaking, I will translate the text in a way which either includes some of the unstated meaning, or makes it easy to guess. But in this case, since I can't really determine exactly what it means, I'm leaving it vague. Personally, I think it means that the act of carrying out these sacrifices causes the person making the sacrifice to lose a year of longevity, and that it somehow relates to her being 49 years old. Though the time frames were never stated outright, if Ningyan is roughly the same age as Xu Qing, and he was born when his mother was in her 20's, then she could well be about 50 years old right now. However, some Chinese commenters seemed to think it meant she was 490 years old, which I don't think makes sense. Of course, maybe there are some things I haven't thought about or am remembering incorrectly. In any case, it doesn't seem to be very important other than to highlight that there is some formal/ceremonial justification for using the number 49 in this chapter. ☞

2. The War Banner of Humankind was mentioned a few times in early chapters, specifically, [122](#), [219.1](#), [219.2](#), [220](#), [326](#). ☞

3. See the previous footnote for all the references to the time the banner appeared in 7BE days. ☞

4. This part sort of pokes a hole in my argument that 49 is related to the empress' age. However, for the life of me I can't think of how a reduction of one year is relevant to anything, nor can I figure out how 49 or 50 is relevant to this section. Sorry guys, usually I can decipher the vague parts and explain them, but in this part I am falling short in that regard. The upside is that it's only relevant in this chapter, and doesn't seem to be deeply related to the larger plot. ☞