

Read Beyond the Timescape Chapter 951: I Will Shoulder the Responsibility!

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The development occurred too suddenly. All human cultivators present had been aware that the empress was surely going to do something extremely dramatic, they had assumed it would be a move made against nonhumans. There was no way anyone could have imagined... that the tempest would be aimed at the holy lands! Cries of alarm and surprise rang out instantly.

The holy lands were far, far away from Revered Ancient. But for countless years, the holy lands still held sway. That was especially true for humans.

After all, the most important person in the holy lands, and in fact, their leader, was Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. Despite the fact that he had been gone for countless years, his name, accomplishments, and majesty were still known throughout all of Revered Ancient. The worse things got for humans, the more they remembered past glories. The more bitterness humankind faced, the more they longed to connect again with the holy lands. The passage of countless years had resulted in the holy lands becoming a symbol of hope for all humans.

Although, it was true that their ultimate ancestor had abandoned them, there were reasons it happened, and humans hadn't forgotten that. And starting with Emperor Eastglory, humans had used the heavenly sacrifices to maintain that connection with the Dark Serenity holy land, and the humans there.

Most humans weren't really aware of how much help and hope the holy lands provided. But the top government officials and experts of their level did know. Because of that, the empress' actions left all of them shaken and numb. There were also traces of anger and fear in them. Their emotional reaction didn't change anything.

In the dome of heaven beyond the rift that had been torn open, the Dawning Suns that had been revealed within the forty-nine jade seals, all started to glow brightly and heated up. And then, one after another... they detonated.

All of a sudden, the sky over Revered Ancient became incomparably bright. Even distant regions could clearly see the unprecedented event. Blinding light and boundless heat waves spread out from the forty-nine specially-prepared Dawning Suns. And not one bit of light or heat went in the wrong direction.

Shockingly, it all converged to create a massive spell formation.

It had a name: Dawning Formation.

It had two purposes: convergence and attack!

The power of the forty-nine detonating Dawning Suns converged, creating a beam of incredibly intense light and heat. It shot across the silver light, heading with indescribable speed directly toward the Dark Serenity holy land! The pathway of silver light began crumbling.

As the beam of light from the forty-nine Dawning Suns shot forth, the surrounding starry sky shattered, and the universe was illuminated. It was like a long spear, packed with the strength of the empress and the madness of the Dawning Suns, and it was flying right toward the Dark Serenity holy land.

Terrifying rumbling sounds echoed out, like that of some enormous star-faring beast. Crumbling fragments of the silver path fell through the rift in the sky, becoming like bits of light that illuminated the imperial capital. This was a type of light that was foreign to Revered Ancient. It was the light of the holy lands.

The empress' voice then rang out into the ears of the terrified and confused onlookers. It was a voice that was majestic, but also hoarse, as if it had traveled through countless years and to tell a story of the ancient past.

"Minsters, citizens, and living beings of humankind....

"The ancestral edicts of humankind state that the ruler obeys the orders of the heavens. Those heavens are the holy lands. And all of it traces back to the holy ancestor. The ancestral edicts dictate that the emperor of humankind may not profane the holy lands and may not walk the path of gods. Gods are enemies for all time.

"Those edicts were approved by humans throughout history, and were always respected. People suffered. People died. And no one felt regret. However... there are certain matters that you people aren't aware of!" The empress' voice was now trembling.

"When the broken face came, who focused on self-protection? The holy lands. Who benefited from tens of thousands of years of our sacrifices, all while looking down on everyone else? The holy lands.

"In the year 37,938 of the Eastglory calendar, the historical records indicate that Emperor Eastglory sought to achieve extraordinary things. He led our species to war against the Firemoon Darkheaven people, only to meet with a resounding defeat. The resources we humans had stockpiled for tens of thousands of years were lost forever. It came to be called the Darkheaven Rebellion. However, that's not the truth of what happened![1]

"The truth is that Emperor Eastglory received a mission from the holy lands, calling for him to lead a military campaign against the Firemoons, all with the goal of learning their

deepest secrets. After going through countless trials and tribulations, the holy lands abandoned Eastglory and us humans. We had to face the rage of the Firemoons alone, and that was when our downfall began.

“Eastglory did not wish to shame the holy lands, so he accepted it without a word of complaint. After his death and down to this day, he was reviled and cursed. Except who was really responsible? The holy lands!

“When Emperor Sageheaven took the throne, traditions changed. Sacrifices were dutifully offered to the holy lands year after year. We did not plead for the holy lands to help us expand our territory. We only begged that they safeguard humans in times of weakness.

“But the holy lands kept their doors locked! They only *took* from us. Never did they ask about our safety or concern themselves with our survival. They didn’t care that humans lost thirty-nine regions. They didn’t mind that billions upon billions of commoners became destitute and homeless, and ended up scattered throughout Revered Ancient, where most became slaves to nonhumans.

“Some years later during the Mirrorcloud calendar, humankind had a chance to rise to new heights. Emperor Mirrorcloud was wise and capable. But the holy lands feared him, so they secretly sent agents here to suppress our species.[2]

“After that, Emperor Dao Life continued to carry out Mirrorcloud’s ambitions. He wanted to break ties with the holy lands. However, he unexpectedly died a violent death, a murder mystery that has remained unresolved for tens of thousands of years. Well, who was behind all of that?

“The humans in the holy lands are human. Are we here on Revered Ancient *not* human?

“Why do the holy lands fear the possibility of the humans in Revered Ancient rising to prominence? Is Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity even present in the holy lands now? Who exactly is in charge of the holy lands nowadays?

“Today, the emperor of the Heaveneaters came with four of his heavenly kings. They shouldn’t have come here, yet they did. To probe for information. Why? Because someone made a pledge to them. But who? Who gave them that pledge?”

All humans present maintained silence.

There were some of the officials who wished to speak, except their words stuck in their throat. There were some things that commoners weren’t aware of, but that they, as aristocrats and important officials, were deeply familiar with. They were just careful to never bring those things up.

“On this day, I am going to violate the ancestral edicts! I will bring down this holy land and walk the path of the gods. I will sever all connections with the holy lands! After I do this, I don’t hope to live for all eternity. I only hope that I can give humankind a chance to flourish. A chance to once again be glorious in Revered Ancient!”

The empress’ eyes shone with bright light and a boundlessly domineering spirit. And her voice echoed to fill the imperial capital. She reached out, and the light of the holy lands that was spilling down toward the imperial capital changed directions and shot toward her. Apparently, the light of the holy lands was important during this key moment of godly ascension. As it descended, it seemed to ignite an opportunity!

Planet Ancient Emperor rumbled loudly as five vortexes appeared around it, slowly orbiting it. Astonishingly, each vortex had a Temple of Heaven in it. Seated cross-legged atop each temple was a figure in an imperial robe. They were the corpses of the past emperors, Dark War included. What had been in the coffins earlier were only small representations of them. The true corpses were now being revealed.

Imperial energy raged to the sky. All had godfire, and with Planet Ancient Emperor forming the nexus, it started burning.

The empress raised both of her hands as if to lift the planet overhead. Then she spoke in a dignified voice that boomed like thunder.

“On this day, I do not seek godly ascension for myself. No, I will take all of these past emperors and reach godly ascension together!

“Going forward, these five emperors will become zombie gods! Though they will lack thinking faculties, they will have godly might. They will possess the will of humankind, and they will follow the direction of human destiny aura. They will protect all of our interests, and strike fear into the hearts of the nonhumans.

“As for me, I will be a human god, ready to safeguard humankind and bring peace for generations to come! My actions will result in karma that will bring catastrophe and tribulation. But as the empress... I will shoulder the responsibility!”

The empress held her head high as she looked into the sky of Revered Ancient, her voice reaching the heavenly daos as she uttered her oath.

An instant later, Revered Ancient began to tremble, and the heavenly daos began to appear. Thunderous booms rang out.

1. Just a quick note to point out that the date corresponds to the historical date mentioned in [chapter 401](#). 📖

2. As mentioned in [chapter 401](#) and expanded on later in the narrative, Mirrorcloud worked together with the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan. 📖

Chapter 952: The Bright of Dawn, the Dark of Night

It was currently dawn as the five vortexes slowly spun around Planet Ancient Emperor. The corpses of the past emperors emanated shocking imperial energy. Though these emperors were dead, thanks to the vortexes, their auras were still heaven-shaking and earth-shattering.

They became five gigantic beams of light that shot up into the clouds. They formed a pentagonal shape with Planet Ancient Emperor in the middle. From a distance, it almost looked like a huge pentagonal altar. Although it was somewhat similar to the previous altar, whether it was in terms of the size or the structure, it was absolutely beyond comparison.

This was the empress' true godly ascension ceremony. Something else that was different compared to before was that this ceremony contained something unimaginably clever. It was as if... the ceremony itself possessed life force!

Xu Qing had never seen anything the likes of this before.

All of the godly ascension ceremonies he had seen in the past were vaguely similar in the sense that they were just ceremonies. None of them had imparted a sensation of life force. This was the first he had ever witnessed like this.

She's going to become a human god, and the past emperors will become zombie gods.... Now this is daring and bold!

Xu Qing was visibly moved. He had run into domineering people before. And he had seen people who were bold and daring. But most of them were men. In this case, the empress was doing something that countless men would have trouble pulling off. That was definitely a rarity! That was especially true considering she wanted to break ties with the holy lands. That was essentially the definition of being hard and unyielding.

The revelation of forty-nine Dawning Suns was something Xu Qing could never have predicted. In fact, no one could have predicted that. This was a level of imposing loftiness that surpassed the word 'emperor.'

Beyond all of that, there seemed to be something else forming the ignition source for this ceremony.

The silver light from that holy land formed the passageway. But it was ripped to shreds, and the fragments became light!

Xu Qing looked up at the closing rift in the dome of heaven. Just now, fragments had fallen through that rift and turned into light over the imperial capital. Then the empress gathered that light and made it part of the ceremony. That was when the ceremony seemed to gain life force.

It was light from beyond the heavens. More precisely, it was light from the holy lands. And the empress took advantage of it at a key point in the godly ascension ceremony.

The entire thing was astonishing, not just to Xu Qing, but also to all the other humans in the area. The shocking events of this day were like successive waves crashing on the beach.

Meanwhile, the empress' words boomed like thunder or the eruption of volcanoes. As it turned out, these were the details of Emperor Eastglory's story. As it turned out, this was the source of Emperor Mirrorcloud's grief. As it turned out, this was why Emperor Sageheaven was so bitter. As it turned out, Emperor Dao Life's death was an unsolved mystery.

No one knew how to react. No one but the empress, who hovered in midair amidst the five beams of light, looking up into the sky.

Beneath her, Planet Ancient Emperor burned with intense golden light. When that golden color became complete, it would indicate that the ceremony was successful. At that time, the five past emperors would become gods, and the empress' success would ensure that she became a legend.

At that point, the empress' gaze became profoundly sharp. It seemed intense enough to pierce heaven and shake the earth! Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth, and intense, thunderous rumblings shook the sky. That noise didn't come from the dome of heaven itself, but rather... from beyond the dome of heaven! As it entered Revered Ancient, it became a majestic voice that filled the entire imperial capital.

"These are the words of the Ancient Emperor, who hath accepted the Mandate of Heaven and hath been enshrined by immortals. This false emperor is not surnamed Guyue, does not have a pleasant disposition, and is cruel and vicious at heart. Once the concubine of Dark War, she served as a mortal, selfishly convinced Dark War to withdraw from the public eye, and plotted to earn special favors in the imperial harem.

"She has the heart of a venomous insect and the personality of a jackal. She befriends corrupt officials and bewitches the kind and loyal. She is hated by men and ghosts. She is rejected by heaven and earth.

"There is no doubt she harbors evil intentions, going so far as to lust after the ancestral relics. But today, we will find out who is truly in charge of this region!

"The promises of the humans of Revered Ancient still ring loudly in my ears. For the sake of Revered Ancient's destiny aura, and in order to save the entire realm, this woman must be deposed!

"Let everyone from mortals to the nobility abide by this universal decree!

“If one harbors improper attachments and wanders the incorrect path, one will ignore the ominous omens and suffer the punishment of execution! Thus speaketh the Ancient Emperor!”

The words struck the humans like thunderbolts, causing countless cultivators to tremble. A tempest built within them, arising from within their blood and exploding into their minds. The power of human destiny aura surged, spreading out in all directions to create a force of expulsion targeting the empress.

The empress' imperial robes were ripped to shreds, and her imperial crown was torn apart. That was because these words came from beyond the heavens, and they were a true imperial edict! It was an edict from an Ancient Emperor! Such an edict could command a species and determine life or death with a word. It could affect all humans and control all destiny aura.

As the hearts of all humans pounded, the gigantic dragon of destiny aura turned to the empress and roared. The projections of the countless sages of the past turned and glared angrily at her. Simultaneously, the destiny aura seethed as the spirits of human heroes appeared, people who had died over the years waging war against the gods. They quickly filled heaven and earth, forming a shocking power. All of them seemed furious as they looked at the empress.

They wanted to remove her imperial title and prevent her from reaching godly ascension! This was the counterattack from the holy lands! freewebnovel.cm

In response to all of that, the empress' gaze remained as incisive as ever. As the destiny aura formed innumerable heroes around her, she spoke in a calm voice.

“All of you witnessed Eastglory's fate. All of you observed Mirrorcloud's grief. All of you understood Sageheaven's bitterness. All of you perished just like Dao Life.

“You are all sages and heroes. You lived as humans and you died as such. I offer you my respect. However... I cannot see what is wrong and ignore it. I cannot understand the truth but speak deceitfully.

“And I cannot base my thinking and actions all on some edict from beyond the heavens! For tens of thousands of years, humans have suffered. The common people have been unprotected, dying constantly, filling the lands with their corpses. They have been like slaves. Livestock. Their lives have been a spectacle too horrible to endure....

“Today I rise to prominence so that I can protect my people. I will bring home all those who are lost and wandering. I will safeguard our lands near and far. I refuse to let humans be weak. From now on, we humans will be able to stand strong and tall!

“Heaven and earth can bear witness to my intentions. All Revered Ancient can hear my words. In that case... what basis does the destiny aura of humankind have to devour me?”

The empress' voice was as sharp as a blade as it cut through heaven and earth before stabbing into the destiny aura. The destiny aura seethed more chaotically, as though the heroes and sages were contemplating what had just been said.

The empress lifted her foot and took a step forward. Intense rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth as she continued to speak in a thunderous voice.

“Humankind has been weak and feeble. In decline. And through it all, the holy lands just make demands. They don't care at all whether our species lives or dies! We struggle while powerful species abound around us, always longing to wipe us out forever!

“Ever since I succeeded to the throne, I have been cautious and conscientious. I haven't dared to relax for a moment. I created the Dawning Suns and created alliances, all while treading thin ice. The slightest misstep could result in the complete extinction of the human species. What else could I have done?”

“Oh, heroes and sages, what advice would you have given me? Do you really want to just stand by and watch as humankind is wiped out? Will you just casually observe humans descending into the most terrible of situations? Do you really want *all* existing humans to become spirits of the dead like you?”

The empress' foot touched down, and everything shook. The destiny aura was in chaos as the expressions of the faces of the heroes and sages filled with intense pain. They no longer looked angry.

“Well, I refuse!” the empress said. As of now, her voice was the only thing that could be heard. “And therefore... the only option is godly ascension! I've become empress, and now I'll become a god. All is karma. I will shoulder the responsibility, all for the glory of humankind. I hereby ask heaven, ask earth, ask the heart, and ask the heroes and sages in the destiny aura of humankind: is there anything wrong with what I've done?”

“The holy lands don't care about humankind, but I do! Heaven and earth do not pity humankind, but I do! Heroes and sages of human destiny aura, considering my stance... why are you fighting me?”

The empress' words seemed to shake the entire world. She was tapping into karma to form grand aspirations! She had an honest and upright heart, and spoke with a clear conscience as she asked her questions of the destiny aura, of the heroes, and of the sages.

Why are you trying to devour me?

Why are you fighting me?

The destiny aura erupted with sounds like howls of grief. The heroes and sages all stood there. And then, all of the heroes and every one of the sages inclined their heads and kowtowed to the empress.

“Empress!”

Their voices filled the world.

The destiny aura surged as a new imperial robe appeared on the empress, along with a new imperial crown. They were even more majestic and impressive than before. The lands, will, history, and destiny aura of humankind were all blessing the empress! A terrifying aura began to build up on her.

After the departure of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity, in all the countless years of human history, nothing like this had ever happened among the successive Ancient Emperors. Down below, Planet Ancient Emperor was ablaze.

As human momentum built within the dawn, something else was happening in the darkness of night in a very distant region. Everything happening was the exact opposite.

It was happening in the Heaveneater Region.

Outside of their imperial palace was the 3,000-meter-tall Emperor Heaveneater. At the moment, he was crumbling. Countless bits of blood and flesh rained down in all directions.

The Heaveneaters surrounding him had looks of shock and anxiety on their faces. But they were powerless to do anything. The sensation of weakness emanating off of their emperor was clear for everyone to see.

A moment later, Emperor Heaveneater slowly opened his eyes.

“I am well,” he said in a hoarse voice.

Everyone could see that he was most definitely not well. In fact, he was in a very serious situation. He was so badly wounded that he obviously needed to go into seclusion immediately. And that was his plan as he gritted his teeth against the pain of the injuries.

“All of you—” he said, but before he could finish the sentence, a sensation of profound crisis exploded within him. He looked up into the dark dome of heaven, his expression one of shock. “Is that...?”

Before he could finish speaking, a chanting voice filled the canopy of heaven.

“The energy of the ultimate yang of the two polarities merges into the ancient eyes of the gods, becoming the glittering light of the starry sky over Revered Ancient. Let the projection fall and incarnate into the domain of a god.

“Respected lord of the sun and many heavens of the universe, the holy Torchlight. Let the door descend!”[1]

As the words erupted, heaven and earth in the Heaveneaters’ imperial capital shook violently. A terrifying, indescribably mighty force weighed down, not only on the capital, but on the entire Heaveneater Region.

All of a sudden, a blurry image appeared in the sky over the head of Emperor Heaveneater. It overtook heaven and overtook all daos. It overtook anything and everything.

Within the image was an extremely grisly and mysterious world. It was possible to see a host of freakish, immense trees that emanated fluctuations of godliness. Godly, grisly beasts abounded. Ancient, unique temples appeared, emanating a sense of profound age. It was possible to see frozen seas and mountains that existed in gaseous states. There were freakish, humanoid clouds, spirits resembling octopuses that had lived for innumerable years. And there were huge birds with plumed wings that could obscure the sky and cover the lands. Each seemed larger than the next, and all were bizarre in appearance and form.

In the depths of that bizarre scene was a shocking figure that was a terrifying, 5,000-kilometer sphere. The sphere was black and covered with both writhing tentacles and grisly, blinking eyes that seemed capable of peering through both time and space. Deep, resonant voices spoke from within the sphere, like thunder that caused the clouds to seethe. As the sphere stirred, the world trembled, the lands shook, the seas went wild, and the air burst into flames.

The black sphere’s surface was covered with innumerable faces, all of which were singing the same words that had just been chanted.

This was... Torchlight’s god domain!

Next, a host of innumerable tentacles erupted from the black sphere. Each one pulsed with the power of godly authority, and could ignore magical laws.

Emperor Heaveneater’s face fell, and he backed up at top speed. At the same time, he lifted his hand to call upon his Imperial Sovereign’s might. Doing so, he changed the face of heaven and earth. It was as if he had carved out his own chunk of space-time. His own universe.

And yet the tentacles glowed with black light as they stretched out hungrily from the black sphere of flesh that was a god domain.

Innumerable tentacles writhed out to bind the emperor. In the blink of an eye, the seriously injured Emperor Heaveneater was dragged into the god domain.

The other surrounding Heaveneaters cried out in alarm as shadowy figures flew out of the Torchlight god domain and into their lands. There were hundreds of thousands of them!

They abounded with baleful auras and were incomparably fierce. Some had completely expressionless faces, others had faint, warm smiles. There were all sorts of temperaments on display, and numerous different species represented. The one unifying element to them was that they were all chosen cultivators who had carried out Blood-Soaked Performances.

They were Torchlight agents from all parts of the Revered Ancient mainland!

In addition to them, there were some even more gruish entities. They were dressed in black cloaks that covered them from head to toe. Yet the cold, terrifying auras they exuded made them seem like they were ancient ghosts from the netherworld. They pulsed with black smoke that swirled around them and took the form of horrendous monsters. Even more noteworthy, their bodies seemed to be made of plants. They were either tall and burly, or very gruish. Some looked humanoid, but others resembled beasts. All of them pulsed with the mutagen of gods.

If Xu Qing were present, he would have recognized them immediately. They were all experimental god bodies! As they descended, these vile cultivators' eyes glowed with underworld light. They cackled viciously.

"Is this the location the crown prince selected for us?"

"The aura here is actually wonderful..."

"I suppose we should start the slaughter. Follow the crown prince's orders. Turn all living beings here into building materials of flesh and blood!"

With that, they charged down.

While humans became the focus of countless gazes, a shocking massacre took place in the imperial capital of the Heaveneaters. And that massacre quickly spread to fill the entire region.

Without their emperor or their heavenly kings, the previously extraordinary Heaveneaters were now forced to face the Torchlight organization, including their experimental god bodies, some of which were capable of self-detonation. And in the end, they were facing a god domain....

It was easy to imagine what fate lay in store for them. That was especially true considering... that the gruish entities which descended from that god domain brought with them pure terror.

A devastating catastrophe had struck the Heaveneater Region.

1. This words are a verbatim repetition of what we heard in [chapters 800](#) and [801](#). 📖

Chapter 953: Human Heavenly Daos Awaken

That night's catastrophe brought havoc to all living beings in the Heaveneater Region. Meanwhile, the light of dawn shone in the sky over the humans' imperial capital. As of this moment, the contrast between light and dark was very prominent in Revered Ancient.

However, while there was struggle in that dark night, there were also obstacles to overcome within the dawn light.

In the human imperial capital, on Planet Ancient Emperor, the destiny aura was rejecting the holy lands. It created a new imperial robe and crown for the empress, all while scintillating godfire burned on the planet below. The fire was becoming increasingly golden.

The five vortexes with the corpses of the past emperors were the same. The golden fire within them made the emperors seem increasingly full of life. Even the blood within their withered bodies was showing signs of awakening. A godly aura was increasingly prominent.

Most shocking of all was the empress herself. Her aura was startlingly outstanding, making her seem like the lord of all heaven and earth. She seemed like an actual god of this world, possessing omniscience, and boundlessly majestic. What was more, she shimmered with more and more golden light. Even from a distance, she seemed like a bright sun in the sky!

As she powered up, it affected the destiny aura. The destiny aura was in motion, rising, causing the boundless clouds to form infinite auspicious shapes.

As of this moment... there was no one among humankind who wanted to speak out against godly ascension.

As the godly might of the past emperors erupted, it shook the cosmos, fusing with the majesty of the empress to create something like a dazzling god lantern that cast light all throughout Revered Ancient. Countless species could sense it. Innumerable gods felt it. Many streams of divine will came from all directions to converge on the imperial capital.

There was no denying that the empress' aura was astounding to the point of being stupefying. Her actions were profoundly domineering. Her heart could strike fear into the hearts of all.

Peak Imperial Sovereign was a terrifying level that was analogous to a tribulation fire High God. Although it wasn't quite on the level of a Flawless God, it was extremely close. What was more, for someone like that to shift their dao to that of the gods was something that was extremely rare from ancient times until now.

If it worked... then after igniting godfire, that power would be incomparably close to Flawless!

There was even the possibility that, like Li Zihua, Flawless God could be skipped, allowing the empress... to step right into Altar God! That was comparable to the Quasi-Immortal level in the Summer Immortal cultivation system!

It was hard to say for sure. But one thing was certain: although this was an extremely rare destined opportunity, there was definitely a chance for success!

Li Zihua proved that!

How could the inhabitants of Revered Ancient *not* be astonished? Granted, there was only a small chance at success. But the gods of Revered Ancient had long since prohibited the existence of any god like that. And considering what happened recently with the Firemoons, the other top species in Revered Ancient obviously didn't want another powerful species rising up. Therefore, the empress' attempt at godly ascension was going to get a lot more resistance than the actions of the three Firemoon gods.
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There were many aspects of karma at play. What was more, because the Firemoons had already been one of the top species, and their gods all High Gods, to a certain extent, they had already qualified to have Flawless Gods. But humankind did not have any such qualifications. What was more, during that event, it was only the Firemoons' grand steward who was attempting godly ascension. But with humankind... if you counted the empress, there were six attempts at godly ascension going on!

Most importantly of all, the Firemoons were not subservient to any holy land. With humans, it was entirely different.

Put precisely, the holy lands had always lorded it over humankind, and had controlled them from afar. Whether it was Eastglory or Sageheaven, all had bent the knee to the

holy lands. Dao Life had contemplated breaking ties. But he had been mysteriously killed, and the case had never been solved. That made it abundantly clear how much control the holy lands had over Revered Ancient.

The empress' choice to attempt godly ascension indicated that humans on Revered Ancient wanted to be independent. They refused to be controlled. But even the fact that forty-nine Dawning Suns had been unleashed didn't change things for the Dark Serenity holy land!

After all, they had made a promise to the Heaveneaters, resulting in their emperor being used like a blade to see how strong the human emperor was. When all was said and done, the opposition to humankind came from the gods, the top species, and the holy lands! It was no exaggeration to say that no one would ever allow humans to do this!

That was the reason for the imperial edict from the holy lands, which had stirred the destiny aura against the empress.

However, that was only the first counterattack. The holy lands' second counterattack was already on the way.

The holy lands existed beyond the dome of heaven, making it difficult for them to interfere directly. Their options were limited. However, they did have forces in place that were astonishingly powerful.

Suddenly, intense ripples flowed out across the sky above the imperial capital, accompanied by thunderous booms. An astonishing figure appeared, piercing through the air to fill the sky. It was an enormous beast with the body of a dragon and the face of a human. It was so huge it blotted out the sky, and caused all cultivators' hearts to pound. A worshipful sensation filled their souls and spread out, causing their expressions to flicker.

This terrifying entity turned to face the empress, eyes cold and bereft of even a scrap of compassion. It was impossible to tell the gender of the face, but it exuded heavenly might. Every scale pulsed with magical laws that shook the very cultivation foundations of all the cultivators present.

It was a heavenly dao. In fact, it was one of the original ninety-nine ancient heavenly daos of Revered Ancient! And it wasn't alone! An instant later, a second heavenly dao manifested in the dome of heaven.

This second heavenly dao was a nine-headed lion that approached from afar, kicking up wind, rain, thunder, and lightning into a massive tempest.

Things weren't over yet. An instant later, an enormous pitch-black statue appeared out of nowhere, pulsing with the power of sealing. After that was a snow-white crane that let

loose a crisp, clear cry as it soared from over the horizon to circle above human lands. All were heavenly daos.

The final heavenly dao to appear didn't look like a living thing. Instead, it was an enormous sealing stamp that pulsed with a sensation of ancient time. It was carved with a landscape representing Revered Ancient, along with countless humans. In fact, the final image depicted humankind waging war with the gods.

This was... the Seal of Humanity!

It was the sealing stamp of the very first Ancient Emperor to exist in the Revered Ancient mainland, which was later sent into the dome of heaven to become one of the heavenly daos.

Including the sealing stamp, there were now five of the ancient heavenly daos arrayed in the sky above humankind. These were the reserve powers left in place in Revered Ancient by the Dark Serenity holy land, and they were being called on to stop the empress.

Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth as the mightiness of the heavenly daos created a pressure of law that weighed down everywhere. The ground shook so hard that cracks opened up, all while countless sealing marks surrounded the empress.

In the imperial capital, mortals and cultivators alike, including the aristocracy and government officials, were all visibly stunned. There were only a handful of people whose facial expressions remained the same as before.

One of them was the empress. She hovered in midair, pulsing with might as she resisted the suppression of the heavenly daos. It seemed as if no obstacle could do anything to her unswerving determination. No amount of force could bend her spine. No person in existence could make her bow her head.

As her phoenix-like eyes took in the five ancient heavenly daos, she lifted her right hand and waved it in front of her. Instantly, a gigantic war drum rumbled into existence atop Planet Ancient Emperor.

The drum was made from the very lands of humankind, and contained a peak level of human will. Its power came from the bloodline of humanity, and the moment it appeared, it pulsed with a majestic energy that embodied the idiom: *human wisdom can prevail over heaven*.

This was none other than the War Drum of Humankind!

"King Skycrusher," the empress said coolly. "Given your status, you are most suited to stand in for me. Strike the drum and crush the heavenly daos!"

Her voice swept across Planet Ancient Emperor and reached Xu Qing.

After making a move earlier, Xu Qing had held back and simply watched the spectacle of the godly ascension ceremony. He had heard everything the empress said, and was well aware that there was significance to her calling him out just now. Presumably she knew about him having a heavenly dao as a son, and thus had a deep karmic connection to the ancient heavenly daos.

Xu Qing silently took in the empress' boundless power and knew he couldn't refuse her. He burst into motion, heading toward the dome of heaven. As everyone looked on, he came to stand atop the enormous War Drum of Humankind. He tapped into his cultivation base, and 40,000,000 soul threads shot out to form his major world. Next came the Grand Darkheaven Armor and the Ninedawns skulls, pushing his aura to the absolute peak.

Eyes glittering brightly, he lifted his right hand, clenched it into a fist, and struck down onto the drum.

BOOM!

The fist contained world-shaking might that resulted in a deafening boom when it hit the drum! The sound shook the air and caused the land to quake. All buildings in the imperial capital shook back and forth, and the lands beyond the capital trembled. Rivers seethed and roared, joining with the sound of the drum to create a unified resonance. It was the ultimate sound that ripped through the canopy of heaven toward the five ancient heavenly daos. Especially relevant was that the sound of the drum contained some of the karma between Xu Qing and the ancient heavenly daos. In fact, it was just barely possible to hear the squeal of a child within it.

The five ancient heavenly daos were all shaken.

The backlash from striking the drum swept through Xu Qing's fist and into his body. Cracking sounds rang out as terrifying force surged through his flesh, meridians, bones, and even his soul. Black blood sprayed out of his mouth. It was extremely noxious, as if it were poisoned and full of infinite filth.

After coughing up the blood, Xu Qing had a sudden sense of clarity and lightness filling him, something very comfortable. It caused his heart to leap and his eyes to shine. All of his years of deadly battles had left him with many hidden injuries. But the backlash from the War Drum of Humankind was like a baptism that left him almost completely cleansed.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing again lifted his hand, called on his cultivation base, and struck the War Drum of Humankind.

BOOM!

The sound of the drum swept through the canopy of heaven, shaking the hearts of the humans. Streams of destiny floated out of all humans, which then joined the dragon of destiny aura above.

As the dragon grew larger and stronger, it threw its head back and roared at the heavenly daos. Also within that roar were the heroes and sages that had acknowledged allegiance to the empress. Flickering light glittered off of them, along with a boundless sense of slaughter. A magnificent army was attacking the heavenly daos! In life, they had fought for humankind. In death, they were dao protectors to the empress!

“DIE!!”

Heaven and earth went dim. The five heavenly daos shivered in unison, and their power of sealing began to show signs of imminent collapse.

Xu Qing felt hidden injuries disappearing thanks to the backlash baptism. In fact, his fleshly body power seemed to be on the verge of rising to a higher level. And the sense of fusion between his body and soul imparted a sense of profound completeness to him.

It was a sudden feeling, and now was not the time to ponder the situation. Therefore, eyes glittering, he struck the drum a third time.

BOOM!

The sound of the drum shattered heaven and earth, reaching the hearts of humans in the Imperial Region, the seven counties, the Holytide Region, the Nightspirit Region... and humans stranded and wandering everywhere in Revered Ancient. It didn't matter what they were doing at that moment. They all felt their blood stirring and their wills rising.

As the saying goes, *a single spark can start a prairie fire.*

The wills of humans throughout the Revered Ancient mainland responded to the sound of the drum. Together, they combined, resulting in the will of humankind releasing a powerful shout.

“Jian!” [1]

It was a very extraordinary word. In ancient times, it was the name of the underworld. Later, after the heavenly daos were established, and with the exception of a few that were made from inanimate objects, they were all created from heroic spirits who had died in battle. Therefore, the Summer Immortals took to using “Jian” as the official name that collectively described the heavenly daos. Supposedly, when a person died, they became a ghost. When a person saw a ghost, they feared. When a ghost died, it became a jian. When a ghost saw a jian, it retreated. That was what the heavenly daos were.

As of this moment, the wills of all humans shouted that word, from earth to heaven, from human to dao. It was an attack on the heavenly daos!

The heavenly daos of Revered Ancient existed because of the wills of countless species. They protected the living things in the world. And now... humankind, which had once been the most powerful species, and which had conquered Revered Ancient multiple times, shouted that true name as an attack. And the essence of the heavenly daos trembled.

The five heavenly daos under the control of the holy lands needed to obey the demands of their essence, and thus, they shivered and fell back!

The empress' eyes began to shine brightly.

Back when the three gods achieved their breakthrough, they had a host of domain treasures collected by the Firemoon Darkheavens, as well as the Everlasting Dagger-Axe. Those were their reserve powers.[2]

As for humankind... they originally had a lot of reserve powers. Unfortunately, their years of decline resulted in having few of them left over. However... the will of humankind still existed in the brutal Revered Ancient.

The war drum aroused that will. The sound echoed out to shake the cosmos.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing's energy was building up, and he felt more complete than ever as he launched a fourth blow.

BOOM!

The sound of the drum resonated with the shout of humankind's will, the destiny aura, all the lands, and the blood of the people. And... it connected to the ancient past and ancient glory, as something appeared.

It was a territorial map! It had been drawn out of time itself by the sound of the drum.

The regions of Revered Ancient all housed many species. The species of Revered Ancient all had to bow in worship.

The empress extended her hand to take the ancient territorial map.

"Years ago, we humans took the lead in forming the heavenly daos. Other species provided assistance in the creation process. For you heavenly daos to come here today... is a show of disrespect to your superiors!

"Never forget that we humans have a heavenly dao of our own. Other than the heavenly daos formed from the Summer Immortal ancestors, ours ranks first! When the broken

face came and Dark Serenity left, that heavenly dao went to sleep, and has remained asleep until now. Today, the time has come to awaken it!

“Xu Qing. Strike the drum!”

As the empress’ words boomed like thunder, she waved her hand, sending the territorial map flying toward Xu Qing. Along the way, it transformed into a huge mallet.

Xu Qing took a deep breath. As his cultivation base filled his body with power, his energy and blood surged, and he reached out to grab the mallet formed from the most glorious territorial map of human history. Then he struck the War Drum of Humankind!

BOOM!

It was the fifth beating of the drum! The sound echoed throughout Revered Ancient, like a roar from ancient times.

Everything turned gold. And then, a seven-clawed golden dragon appeared within the clouds.

1. The Chinese character used here is unusual and rare. It’s dictionary definitions include: a spirit dying a second time, the ghost of a ghost. Because of how it’s defined in the narrative itself, I’m leaving it transliterated. 𠄎

2. The Everlasting Dagger-Axe was mentioned previously in [chapter 902](#). 𠄎

Chapter 954: Gods Cometh

The coiling dragon filled the dome of heaven, unleashing unprecedented might. It was like a starry river, full of life force power. Every scale that covered it was like an exquisitely crafted jewel, glittering with mysterious light. The densely packed scales were arranged neatly, making them like a huge suit of armor.

The dragon’s head was matchlessly majestic. It was like the embodiment of the quintessence of heaven and earth. Its eyes shone like stars, and were full of abstruse wisdom that could see into the depths of all things. Its sharp teeth were fear-inspiring, and it had long whiskers that were like golden bands of immortal energy.

Most eye-catching were the dragon’s horns. It had two long horns curving out from its forehead as if guide markers to provide direction to the species under its care.

Its arrival caused the entire world to tremble. Mysterious. Majestic. Powerful. Those were the defining elements of the dragon. In its presence, the heavenly daos all prostrated, with the exception of the heavenly dao made from the sealing stamp.

This was humankind's heavenly dao! It had long been asleep, and thus, humankind's innate abilities were also asleep. But now... as humankind's destiny aura, will, and blood called out, joined by the ancient territorial map as a mallet to strike the war drum.....

It was awake! It was shaking the world!

An instant later, the prostrating heavenly daos blurred and chose to back away. As for the sealing stamp of humankind, it glittered brightly as it floated toward the golden dragon. The golden dragon swallowed it up. Originally, the sealing stamp was inside the golden dragon. But when the dragon went to sleep, it spat the sealing stamp out. Now they were together again.

The heavenly dao golden dragon surged with majestic energy as it floated above the imperial capital.

All humans in the capital gasped.

Xu Qing's mind reeled. Just looking at the seven-clawed golden dragon gave him a deep understanding of the glory humankind had experienced in the past.

Eyes glittering, the empress said, "Xu Qing, strike the drum again!"

Without the slightest hesitation, Xu Qing took a deep breath and hit the drum as hard as he could with the mallet.

BOOM!

The sixth drum strike reverberated in heaven and earth, causing Xu Qing to tremble as cracking sounds rang out from him. At the same time, his skin started to rip apart in many places. Those wounds weren't fresh. Instead, they were like old scars. As they spread out, it seemed like the Xu Qing of the past must have been ripped apart and then put back together. But thanks to the sound of the drum, all of those scars were disappearing. As they healed, a sense of warmth spread through Xu Qing, and the sensation of wholeness grew even more intense.

Xu Qing shivered. Based on what he could sense of the wounds, some were actually unfamiliar.

All of a sudden, he thought back to that patchwork cloth doll....[1]

However, there wasn't time for deep contemplation. After the sixth strike on the drum, the seven-clawed golden dragon issued a roar that echoed in the minds of all humans.

That roar could bring light to the darkness of night! As it echoed in the hearts and minds of the humans, it seemed to shatter certain chains and break certain shackles. As a result, energy that had long been asleep began to wake up.

Cheers erupted from the mouths of many humans in the imperial capital. Some people began to glow with brilliant light. And their auras were blessed as they not only grew stronger, but also bigger.

They turned into giants of varying heights! The tallest were hundreds of meters tall, while the shortest were dozens. Terrifying fleshly body power surged through them.

The sight caused all humans to breathe heavily. Some of the longtime government officials, who were familiar with the ancient records, looked stunned.

“Humankind’s innate ability...”

“It’s the Spirit Ancestor Transformation!!”

Humankind did have an innate ability! When the seven-clawed golden dragon woke up and roared, that innate ability was awakened within the blood of humankind.

The holy lands’ second counterattack had been neutralized. The empress pulsed with godly fluctuations, and the godfire on Planet Ancient Emperor was burning with great intensity.

However, that was when a cold snort echoed through the sky and slammed into the humans like a bolt of lightning.

Revered Ancient had five top species!

Two of them led the pack by a wide margin. The remaining three were all roughly on the same level. They were the Firemoon Darkheavens, the Redland Nobleplexuses, and the Netherworld Chasmcorpses!

Following the cold snort, a sea of flames spread through the sky, covering everything. Looking up, it was only possible to see red flames.

Within that sea of flames was a god. This god wore a fiery-red robe that itself looked like fire. It had exquisite fire motif designs that accentuated hīs status and glory. Hē was tall and burly, like a mountain, with broad shoulders that could hold up worlds. Hīs hair was as red as fire, almost like lava gushing out of a volcano. Each strand of hīs hair seemed to burn wildly, and seemed alive as hē strode forth. Hīs expression was cold and apathetic. Hīs eyes seemed devoid of emotion. However, hē seemed confident and relaxed, as though hē knew hē could trample anyone in hīs presence.

Hē was one of the three gods of the Redland Nobleplexus people. Hē was the god Blazeblade.

“Humankind is not permitted to achieve godly ascension,” hē said in a voice that brooked no disobedience. It echoed out with the force of law, sealing heaven and earth, and landed on the empress, the godfire on Planet Ancient Emperor, and the five corpses of the past emperors. Instantly, the godfire dimmed, and the corpses of the emperors seemed less lifelike. The orders of a god surpassed magical laws.

At the same time, darkness as black as ink spread out over the sky above human lands, dividing it into two parts. In the night part of the sky were countless corpses piled up like mountains. They emanated a noxious stench, as well as terrifying mutagen and godly might.

Standing atop all the corpses was another god. This god wasn't humanoid. Instead it looked like a lump of rotting flesh, oozing all sorts of disgusting fluids. It was also covered with eyes, and all of them were looking at the empress.

Terrifying fluctuations rolled off of it. This was the god Nightcorpse.[2]

Because of that godly might, the seven-clawed dragon roared, and the human lands blurred. It was as if an apocalyptic fog were covering the world.

“The Redland Nobleplexuses and Netherworld Chasmcorpse,” the empress said calmly.

The god Blazeblade took a step forward, sending masses of fire rushing toward the empress. In the western sky, which was as dark as night, countless corpses surged, almost like a gigantic ball of flesh that rushed toward the empress. It looked like a battle with gods was about to begin.

But then, a shining moon split the sea of flames and the dark of night. Moonlight shone down, sending the flames lurching to the side, and causing the dark night to melt. Along with the moonlight came a god as beautiful as an immortal but as cold as frost.

It was one of the Firemoons' three gods.... It was High God Moonfire!

After shē appeared, the canopy of heaven glittered with the light of heavenly bodies. Starlight descended everywhere, along with a soft chuckle. As that happened, a clay fox materialized in midair. Seated atop the clay fox was a god, spectacularly beautiful, and matchlessly flirtatious. Naturally, it was High God Starfire.

Two Flawless Gods had appeared to block the path of the sea of flames and the darkness of night.

Smiling, Starfire said, “Who said humans can't achieve godly ascension?”

The sealing created by the orders of Blazeblade began to crumble.

“You may!” Moonfire said coolly.

The sealing mark collapsed. The godfire on Planet Ancient Emperor raged, and the corpses of the past emperors once again looked lively. The entire time, the empress’ face didn’t register an ounce of surprise.

1. The doll first appeared in [chapter 938](#) and was described in [chapter 939](#). 📖

2. In reality, the author does not use this name until later. He switches back and forth between a variety of different descriptors before ultimately settling on a specific name. For many chapters, it’s not even clear if this god is supposed to have a name. However, several chapters down the line, the author specifically does identify the god’s name and use it multiple times. I’m bringing the name in a bit early for a smoother reading experience. 📖

Chapter 955: Looking to Die? If So, Come Here!

The scene developing in front of Xu Qing confirmed his previous theory. Back when the three gods achieved their breakthrough, a mysterious cultivator arrived to block a sudden attack in the form of a giant hand. That mysterious cultivator was the empress.[1]

No wonder things went so smoothly when the Firemoons called for a ceasefire. I felt all along like I was just serving to provide an excuse for them to do what they already planned to do. And now it makes sense why High God Starfire was around in the imperial capital.... Even back then, shē and the empress were working out a deal.... [6]

The entire situation just made him feel increasing admiration for the empress.

I hope... that she succeeds. Xu Qing couldn’t think of any reason not to wish her well, especially after what he had experienced in striking the drum.

The empress was supremely confident and a model ruler. No matter what happened, she could deal with it. She could overcome any problem, and look calm the entire time.

Back before joining Seven Blood Eyes, Xu Qing’s understanding of the world, and his experiences, were very limited. Perhaps back then, he would have understood her calmness in a different way.

But given everything he had been through, he knew that, because of her status and position, she couldn’t afford to reveal any emotions. In everything she did, she kept humankind as a whole in mind. She was the ultimate source of inner strength for all humans in Revered Ancient. If she became afraid, humankind would be afraid. If she got alarmed, humankind would be alarmed.

What was more, it was impossible to determine how many experts from the top species were watching this spectacle play out among humans. The same went for gods. It was easy to imagine how every facial expression, word, and action would be noticed and analyzed by such people.

And if omniscience were applied to that, it could lead to extreme danger. It would truly be *walking on thin ice*. That was why she had to remain calm.

As Xu Qing contemplated those things, deafening booms rocked the dome of heaven, and the sensation of cracking grew more intense. The world seemed like a furious sea, with humankind as a lone rowboat, struggling against the wind and waves to stay afloat.

Intense rumbling could be heard from the sea of flames above. Within it, moonlight spread, becoming pulses of godly authority. At the same time, High God Moonfire's domineering aura and extreme coldness crushed everything around it.

A battle of gods, especially gods the likes of Moonfire and Blazeblade, was something that ordinary people couldn't observe with the naked eye. And other senses would be distorted as well. In the canopy of heaven, the sea of flames and the moonlight mixed together to make an abstract painting. Within that painting, it was possible to see the moon spreading and the flames retreating. The difference between 'flawless' and 'tribulation fire' was clearly evident. Truth be told, if Moonfire wished, shē could crush a tribulation fire god with ease. Obviously, shē didn't wish that.

It was the same with the clay fox. As shē strode through the darkness of night, clay and mud flowed above and below hēr, as if turning everything into a statue. In front of hēr, Nightcorpse fell back repeatedly.

Apparently, these two gods had come to act as dao protectors. They would obstruct and launch a few blows. That was enough. It wasn't that they weren't capable of killing two tribulation fire gods. Rather, humankind wasn't in the place to pay for a service like that. That would surpass the deal that was in place.

The empress watched it all happening. Apparently, she had predicted in advance that she would have to face Blazeblade from the Redland Nobleplexuses, as well as Nightcorpse from the Netherworld Chasmcorpses. And her action in helping the three gods during their breakthrough had been like a dry run for the difficulties she knew she would face later.

Today, the three gods were paying her back for the help she had provided in dealing with that huge hand. Though the three gods weren't going all out, their attitude was clear. The empress knew full well that they were just fulfilling their end of a bargain.

Historically speaking, the Firemoon Darkheaven people had always been enemies of humankind. But as far as humans were concerned, enemies... could be turned into

allies. In that regard, the background of the three Firemoon gods made them even more suitable than other Revered Ancient gods.

The empress looked away from the canopy of heaven and toward the five vortexes orbiting Planet Ancient Emperor. Specifically, she focused on Emperor Eastglory. Years ago, he was the emperor who had followed the orders of the holy lands to wage war on the Firemoon people, all in the hopes of learning about their three gods. Although he had reported the results to the holy lands, he had also passed on the information to his successors. The empress looked toward the horizon. Her godfire was reaching a very critical point.

“There’s one more element to this deal,” a resonant voice said from off in the distance.

The sound of the voice shook everyone to the core. The sky dimmed, and the ground seemed like it might vanish. The entire world shook. It was as if some terrifying entity were coming. The air shattered as a rift opened so large it seemed endless.

Out of that rift blew what seemed to be a north wind. It was so freezing cold it could exterminate life force. It grew in intensity, whimpering loudly, like a storm that could crush time itself. It looked extremely ghastly.

Both Blazeblade and Nightcorpse trembled as thēy looked at the tempest. Thēy both watched as two figures emerged.

One of them was large, the other small.

The large one was fully 3,000 meters tall and clad in a golden suit of bone armor that seemed to be a part of hīs body. Hē pulsed with a very clear sense of holiness. Hē wore a helmet, but there was no face covering. However, that only made hīm seem more gruish, as... hē had no facial features at all! There was only a black hole! Behind hīm were innumerable golden lightning bolts that spread out to form a pair of wings! A terrifying pressure pulsed off hīm as hē arrived.

Hē was followed by a smaller figure who appeared to be a servant clad in a gray robe. The servant pulsed with gray fog filled with howling sounds. Astonishingly, hē was actually a High God! Although he hadn’t reached the level of tribulation fire, he was clearly at the top of the karma fire level. The fact that someone like that was a mere servant only served to highlight the astounding level of personhood of the figure in the golden bone armor.

“Tempest of the Northfate Kings!” the empress said calmly.[2]

In the Revered Ancient mainland, the Northfate Kings were the number-two species. Though they weren’t quite as strong as the number-one species, they had long been far superior to the Firemoon Darkheavens. Considering Revered Ancient as a whole, they were one of the most powerful species in existence.

As for this god, hē was one of the leaders among all the gods of all the species. Hē was at the peak of the Flawless God level! When hē arrived, Blazeblade bowed hīs head, Nightcorpse backed down, and Starfire and Moonfire looked at hīm with serious expressions. Though the latter two were also Flawless Gods, Tempest was obviously a lot closer to being an Altar God than thēy were.

“It is not impossible for a Revered Ancient cultivator to convert to being a god,” Tempest said. “However, Northfate has other important matters to handle at the moment. Empress of humankind, you will delay your godly ascension ceremony for 3,000 years. After that period of time has passed, you may resume the process.”

Hīs voice echoed through Revered Ancient, becoming a directive that sealed heaven and locked down earth. With that, hē looked at the empress in a way that made it seem like hīs every word was an order that wasn’t even possible to ignore.

The empress didn’t say anything. But her godfire on Planet Ancient Emperor didn’t diminish. In fact, the fluctuations pulsing out of her grew more intense. The rumbling sounds were only getting louder.

Seeing that, the leader god from the Northfate Kings lifted hīs hand. The tempest around hīm screamed even louder as it accelerated toward the empress and Planet Ancient Emperor.

But at that exact moment, a sun appeared between the empress and the leader god. As it cast dazzling light into heaven and earth, the tempest stopped moving. Then a figure emerged from the sun. Its body seemed to be that of a woman, but it had the face of a man. It had the sun behind its back, and the ghosts of countless species beneath its feet.

This was High God Sunfire, the strongest of the three Firemoon gods. Not only did Sunfire block the attack of the Northfate King leader god, shē also waved her hand to send a seven-colored god talisman flying toward the empress.

“We three gods of the Firemoons value promises more than anything else. Though we won’t do anything we didn’t agree to do, when it comes to things we agreed upon, we never back down. We did everything we could to help the grand steward, but he still failed. Therefore, that talisman belongs to you now. Our deal for the future remains the same, empress of humankind!” With that, Sunfire started walking right toward Tempest. “Northfate Kings, this is the east of Revered Ancient, not the north, where you hold sway. You... have stretched your hand too far.”

The sun behind Sunfire flared, sending blinding light out to cover the frowning Tempest.

As the seven-colored god talisman neared, the empress grabbed it. None of the humans present recognized that god talisman. Except for Xu Qing, who recognized it

immediately. He and the Captain had used a talisman exactly like it in the past. It was... the very same talisman that had been formed by the grand steward when he died.[3]

It was made from the authority of a god domain, and contained the converged power of a god domain upgrade. After the god domain vanished, the talisman remained behind. It was useful... because it contained astonishing power, and could be very useful during godly ascension.

The empress' eyes gleamed brightly after she took the talisman. After looking at it closely to confirm it was safe to use, her eyes flashed with determination. She waved her hand, and the talisman disappeared, to reappear a moment later in the depths of Planet Ancient Emperor.

The talisman crumbled, turning into fuel. At the same time, Planet Ancient Emperor rumbled loudly, and the godfire there experienced a tenfold increase in intensity and heat.

The godly ascension process was immediately accelerated dramatically. Shocking fluctuations rolled out from the corpses of Dark War and the other past emperors. There was now nothing stopping the process from completing.

But then, as Sunfire's sun shone brightly, a gray figure shot out. It was Tempest's karma fire godservant.

Sunfire could have easily stopped the godservant. But as shē said, shē would only operate within the parameters of the deal. And the deal had already been completed. As for how humankind would deal with developments going forward, that was up to them. The three gods were also interested in seeing what reserve powers humans had, and whether they truly qualified to work with them going forward.

Of course, if the empress asked for help, they could theoretically strike a new deal.

But the empress said nothing. Her face remained calm as the gray god closed in on her. That was when an ancient figure suddenly shot forth from next to the empress. It was the old court eunuch who had been protecting her from the very beginning. As he flew forth, he transformed, as his entire body turned semitransparent. He actually wasn't human. He was a Gruegloom![4]

His species was a very rare one, and each individual member was an independent entity. Early in his life, he had taken advantage of the special characteristics of his species to live as an assassin. On many occasions, he had nearly died. On the worst of those occasions, he made it out alive, only to pass out later. The empress, who was a young girl at the time, came across him and saved his life. From that point on, he became her follower.

In the years that followed, he watched as she grew up and reached incredible heights. Without even realizing it, he came to deeply care about her. When she eventually became empress, she gave him boundless good fortune. By allowing him to make use of the destiny aura of humankind, as well as certain reserve powers and priceless secret magics, he was able to break through his personal barriers and eventually reach the nine-world level.

Unfortunately, because of that process, he was much weaker than people who reached the nine-world level on their own. And he couldn't progress any higher than that. Though his bloodline wouldn't let him reach the Imperial Sovereign level, being a nine-world Smoldering God was essentially the peak of the modern cultivation system. As a result, he felt no regrets.

And now, as he saw that little girl he had followed for a lifetime just about to reach the ultimate peak, he decided to use his own life to defend her one last time. All of a sudden, he burst into flames, all while pulling out a violet skull.

The skull emanated a perverse energy, and contained boundless resentment and rancor. It even seemed to cause noiseless howling to fill the world, like the final expression of someone's anguish before they died. Thunderous rumbling echoed out as a host of countless heavenly daos appeared. All of them also seemed to be wallowing in grief as they looked at the skull.

They looked at... the spectacular and peerless skull of someone who had once been the last hope of Revered Ancient. It was the skull of the past life body of the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan! It contained shocking power that ordinary cultivators could never use. Only a nine-world Smoldering God could possibly qualify to do so. The court eunuch was burning his own life force, and the innate ability of his species, plus all of his cultivation base, to tap into a bit of the skull's power.

In the blink of an eye, he vanished. His spiritual souls were gone, and his physical souls had dissipated. He had been destroyed in body and soul.

Meanwhile, the skull shone with boundless and shocking violet light. It contained an endlessly insane howl that seemed to come from the depths of time itself, from tens of thousands of years in the past! That howl contained resentment, defiance, grief, madness, and unending hatred, all of which turned into a destructive tempest that shot toward the gray godservant.

The godservant suddenly sensed a deadly crisis, and backed away in retreat. However, he wasn't fast enough. The tempest swept over him.

Instantly, the godservant began trembling, and then he unleashed a desperate scream of anguish. It was as if he were experiencing the exact same death that had been experienced by the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan.

Then he exploded. A god had been killed.

The empress looked up at the spot where the court eunuch had disappeared, and her face, which had remained expressionless for so long, suddenly looked sad. She sighed as she thought back to the time she had asked a question of Xu Qing.

“You also encountered their grand steward. What was your impression of him?”

Xu Qing had answered, *“If you can’t control your own life, how can you guide the fate of a species? In the end, such thinking is as unrealistic as flowers in a mirror or the moon in the water. One moment you’re on top of everything, the next, you’re dead.”*

The sorrow on her face disappeared, and in its place was determination.

The godfire grew more intense!

The corpses of the past emperors in the five vortexes seemed livelier than before. In fact, as they sat cross-legged, their hands were moving in incantation gestures. However, those incantation gestures were not those used by cultivators, but rather, those used by gods.

The first to form godly authority was Emperor Eastglory. His eyes opened, and they were pitch black and pulsed with a sensation of destruction and power. It was a godly authority that was related to battle.

Next came Emperor Mirrorcloud. His eyes opened, and he looked confused. Then he became calm, and a sensation of protectiveness spread out from him to fill the world and cover all humans.

After that was Sageheaven. Soft, gentle light spread out from him. It didn’t contain any attack power, but rather, was something that could nourish the body and soul. It was a godly authority related to healing!

Next, godly authority erupted from Emperor Dao Life. It was a godly authority that was very different from all the others. As a result, the vortex he was in pulsed with curses, poison, and pestilence. It was a power of damnification! A corrupting and terrifying aura spread everywhere.

Next was Dark War! His godly authority was even more terrifying. It was boundless death, like the netherworld itself!

When the five emperors’ embryonic godly authorities appeared, it indicated that the godly authority ceremony was nearing its conclusion.

Meanwhile, the empress was also starting to pulse with godly authority. And yet, before that could happen, another obstacle manifested! A cold voice suddenly filled the Imperial Region.

“Grand Emperor Swordsage, I’m very curious to see your final move!”

As the voice filled human lands, a red glow rose up. Countless mountains collapsed and turned into a red fog. Rivers reversed course as their waters turned crimson. Everything in the Imperial Region started turning red. From a distance, it almost looked like the hem of a garment.

A god was coming, with a red robe and a body so immense it could prop up heaven. The god covered the lands and terrain, filling the sky with red. A single step was all it took for the god to appear in the sky above the imperial capital. Hē looked like a handsome middle-aged man with long hair, every strand of which glowed with bright light. Hē pulsed with godly authority that could dim the sun and moon, striking fear into the hearts of other gods. Even more shocking was the fact that there was an illusory sword stabbed into hīs chest. It went completely through hīm, and was dripping with blood, which was why hīs robe was crimson.

At a single glance, Xu Qing could tell that the illusory sword was none other than The Emperor’s Sword!

Voice hoarse, the man in red said, “Time slips by. Things change. But sadly, Grand Emperor Swordsage, you are not the same as you were in years past.... Back when we fought, I fell from the Altar God level, and still have not recovered. Today, the day in which you perish, I have come to see things through and sever our karma!”

The next instant, another ancient voice spoke from within the imperial capital, filled with immense power that could surpass time itself. It surpassed the sounds of nature, and became the only thing in the world. It spanned time, and was immeasurably holy. As the voice spoke, the heavenly daos all bowed their heads. All living beings prostrated.

“Yu Liuchen. Looking to die? If so, come here!”[5]

The voice came from the Swordsage Division in the imperial capital, and was filled with a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering aura.

Even the Firemoon gods were shaken.

A huge beam of light appeared, made of countless streams of sword energy. Shooting out of the Swordsage Division, it headed right toward the man in red. It became a path.

All hē had to do was step onto it. But hē hesitated.

1. The mysterious cultivator showed up in [chapter 903](#). ↩

2. Similar to Nightcorpse, it's not clear in Chinese whether this god has a name or not. Even later context is vague in this regard. In other words, it could be a name, or it could just be a descriptor that he is 'a god in a tempest.' That said, he is listed beside the other three gods, and the sentence structure and context implies that it is his name. In addition, the author refers to Tempest with an invented title that essentially implies that he is a leader of some sort (presumably a leader amongst gods in Revered Ancient, but it could theoretically be referring to his leadership position in the species he represents or maybe in a faction). The title is never explained and is only used a couple times. Plus, it's been clearly established how high-ranking and powerful he is. For ease of translating and reading, I'm going to just use his name. 📖

3. The talisman was formed by the grand steward in chapter 903. Xu Qing formed one in chapter 904. 📖

4. Grueglooms were introduced in chapter 206. Their species ability was also described in that chapter. 📖

5. Yu Liuchen. Yu is not on the list of 100 common surnames. It means "jade." Liu means "precious stone, colored glaze." Chen means "dust, dirt" and in xianxia often is related to "mortal" things. Madam Deathblade says, "It sounds like the name of a pure-hearted individual living in the dust of the mortal world." 📖

6. The clay fox showed up in the imperial capital in chapter 753 but didn't have any screen time until 755 she was in a few other scenes after that. 📖

Chapter 956: I Am At the Peak of the World, and I Question the Immortals

Yu Liuchen once had a god altar. Years ago, when hē followed the broken face to the Revered Ancient mainland, the world had been a very different place. Being an Altar God, countless other gods would tremble and prostrate to hīm. If hē felt like it, hē could easily cause a Flawless God to be full of flaws, and experience profound tribulation. And that tribulation was hīm. It was even truer with other living beings besides gods. From the earliest times, hīs godly name shook Revered Ancient and prompted countless gods to bow their heads reverently. What was more, hē had actually reached the peak of Altar God, qualifying hīm to break through to becoming a True God.

But then a middle-aged man with a seven-foot-long bronze sword strode over the horizon and entered hīs god domain. If hē hadn't detonated hīs god domain at a key moment in the battle, hē likely would have perished. Though hē escaped that battle with hīs life, hē ended up severely injured, with hīs god altar shattered into pieces.

Afterward, hē had no other choice than to go into hiding and spend hīs time in a deep sleep. Hē never dared to show hīs face in the world again. And despite being someone who didn't feel any emotions, hē did feel fear when thinking about that figure with the sword. It was an instinct. Over the countless years that had passed, that fear became so deeply rooted that hīs cultivation base couldn't recover. It was... a mental tribulation.

Therefore, when hīs omniscience detected Grand Emperor Swordsage facing his own deadly tribulation, hē came. Hē wanted to see him on his way. But when the Grand Emperor spoke just now, his words became a final obstacle to overcome....

In the end, hē was deeply afraid of the only Grand Emperor who chose to stay behind when all of the other powerful experts left Revered Ancient.

Hē knew that, though this Grand Emperor was never a Summer Immortal, he definitely qualified to carve out a holy land for himself beyond the heavens. To a certain extent, he was unfettered, and didn't need to trouble himself with the red dust of the mortal world. But unexpectedly, he chose to stay behind to safeguard humankind.

In a world full of gods, he had remained, for tens of thousands of years. And humans had managed to survive through all that time. In fact, were it not for this Grand Emperor, it was entirely likely that humans wouldn't even exist. And even if they did exist, they would have been scattered and weak. They would have been a minor species subsidiary to other species, and they definitely would not have any of their own regions. During that time, the Grand Emperor slaughtered many gods. Sadly, the price to pay was immense.

His true form had long since perished, and the only thing left behind was a clone.

“Grand Emperor Swordsage, you are the cultivator I admire the most in the Revered Ancient mainland. There is no other.” Yu Liuchen's gaze followed the road of sword energy all the way to the Swordsage Division. Passing through all barriers, it eventually reached a figure seated cross-legged in a private chamber. “But are you strong enough for one more sword move?”

Yu Liuchen's red robe spread through heaven and earth, casting bright red light everywhere, and making hīm seem like the lord of all the cosmos. As the words left hīs mouth, hīs energy began to build dramatically. As the wind blew, the entire canopy of heaven turned the color of blood. As of that moment, everything paled in comparison to hīs aura, from the sea of flames to the darkness of night, to the three gods of sun, moon, and star.

Yu Liuchen lifted hīs foot to begin walking. A sea of blood raged in hīs eyes, and hīs robe spread. Then hē stepped forward. Hīs robe now covered the entire imperial capital.

But then the grand spell formation of humankind rumbled to life, sending out powerful fluctuations to resist Yu Liuchen. The spell formation was designed to fight back against any invader with power commensurate to the invader's level. At the moment, the threat level was about as high as it could possibly be, so the spell formation erupted with greater force than ever in the past.

Blinding light shot out, filled with innumerable magical symbols. As a result, a barrier of light sprang up to block Yu Liuchen's path. What was more, planets appeared within the spell formation, a total of forty-nine of them.

They were all Dawning Suns! It was the entire stockpile of Dawning Suns that humankind had on hand. After all of the catastrophes humankind had experienced, they essentially had no reserve powers left, other than Grand Emperor Swordsage and the Dawning Suns.

The fluctuations coming from the Dawning Suns caused wild colors to flash everywhere. And yet, Yu Liuchen just laughed.

"Apparently you aren't strong enough for a final sword move."

Without any hesitation, hē lifted hīs other foot and prepared to step onto the path of sword energy. But then, a roaring sound filled the blood-colored canopy of heaven. A ripping sound echoed out as the color of blood was shredded apart. A roar echoed out from humankind's heavenly dao, the seven-clawed dragon, and it shone with dazzling light that made it seem like a golden sun.

Then the heavenly dao shot into motion... toward the imperial palace! Its target seemed to be the shadow cast by the statue of the Grand Emperor there.

Purple smoke was currently rising up from that shadow. Amidst the thick, swirling smoke, a bell floated up to hover in midair over the plaza.

It was the Immortal Questioning Bell.

The bell had a history going back to the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. It normally existed in a spot between yin and yang, and would only appear when the sun rose. It couldn't be moved to another location, as it was part of the imperial capital. Put more precisely, it was part of the imperial palace, with a history as long as the capital itself. Its purpose was to confirm the condition of the heart.

From the very beginning, whenever a government official was called into question, they could ring the Immortal Questioning Bell to certify the state of their heart. Ningyan had used the bell for that purpose in the past.[1]

Over all the countless years it had existed, the bell had never been used for any reason other than that. Gradually, most humans forgot about its existence, and those who did remember it just considered it a mysterious old artifact.

But today, it was being awoken by humankind's heavenly dao. In fact, the heavenly dao was merging with the Immortal Questioning Bell....

The bell shivered, as if it were waking up from a very deep sleep! The carvings on the bell, which depicted mountains, rivers, and countless living beings, all seemed to come to life. They flowed across the surface of the bell, which glittered with dazzling light that illuminated everything around it. A wild and ancient aura also spread from the bell. The dome of heaven shook. The blood energy cracked. The cosmos shifted.

That aura, accompanied by the shocking imperial aura, made the most unsurpassable will in heaven and earth. It could crush even the most ancient and domineering will, and formed a resonance with the dao of Revered Ancient itself.

It was... the aura of an Ancient Emperor!

However, it was not the aura of the person that everyone had heard of, Dark Serenity! This aura was even more ancient than that. Dark Serenity was not the first Ancient Emperor in Revered Ancient. Before him, Revered Ancient had countless other Ancient Emperors. For instance, there was Emperor Ancient Spirit. And there were Ancient Emperors from other species that had ultimately conquered Revered Ancient.

According to the oldest legends, before the Summer Immortals left, they personally appointed the very first Ancient Emperor in Revered Ancient. And that Ancient Emperor was human. The bell came from him! The aura spread out, shaking heaven and earth, rocking all of Revered Ancient.

Yu Liuchen's expression flickered, and hē held back from lowering hīs foot.

As the Immortal Questioning Bell hovered in midair, it tolled, sending out an ancient sound like something from the distant past, floating right out of the river of time and into the world. The sound of the bell seemed simplistic, but mournful, as if it were calling out to question the immortals that had departed....

When will you come back? Alone in heaven and earth, abandoned in the world of mortals, I question you. When is the hour of your return?

Yu Liuchen's face fell, and a tremor passed through hīm. As the bell tolled, cracking sounds rang out, and hīs blood-red robe began to crumble. It looked extremely ghastly. Hē pulled back hīs foot and simultaneously shot backward by about 30 meters.

“What is that thing??”

Not even the omniscience of an Altar God could reveal anything about the Immortal Questioning Bell. It seemed like it was hidden within time itself, concealed from the perceptions of others. That made sense considering it would only appear when the sun and moon switched positions.

Yu Liuchen wasn't the only one to let loose an exclamation of shock. The god Blazeblade, the god Nightcorpse, and the three gods Sunfire, Moonfire, and Starfire were similarly astonished.

Humankind really didn't have any more reserve powers. That was because Grand Emperor Swordsage had hidden his true reserve power even before the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. Today, at the most critical of junctures, the bell regained consciousness.

The empress' facial expression didn't change. The Grand Emperor didn't react.

As Yu Liuchen's heart raced, the Immortal Questioning Bell tolled a second time. The majestic sound echoed throughout heaven and earth.

Time passes. The living move on. Here in my homeland, I question you. Why the bleak desolation?

Yu Liuchen started shivering dramatically, and his face fell even more. Then the wound in his chest opened up, having been stimulated by the toll of the bell. He involuntarily staggered backward 300 meters.

Then the Immortal Questioning Bell emitted a dazzling 30,000-meter pillar of light, then once again tolled, a third time, a sound full of sorrow. It was the final question asked of the immortals....

The immortal path is slow, fate seems distant. I am at the peak of the world, and I question the immortals... where is the dao?

Yu Liuchen's mind spun as the toll of the bell caused his body to shatter. He recovered a moment later, and kept retreating. After falling back 3,000 meters, he was still unstable as he stared at the bell.

The bell contained an extremely terrifying will convergence, a will of dao-searching and a will of immortal-seeking. It was almost as if, at some point in the past, some peak entity of Revered Ancient had used a boundless cultivation base to strike the bell and question the immortals!

Yu Liuchen was fully aware that if only three tolls of the bell had forced him to retreat in this manner, then a fourth toll of the bell might reverse the scant bit of recovery he had experienced of the years, and actually make his injury worse.

That said, he refused to believe that striking an object as terrifying as this could be done without paying a price. And the price had to be completely enormous. The likelihood that it would be struck again... seemed small.

Yet hē didn't dare to bet on it. Even if hē bet and won, hē wasn't completely confident that hē could face Grand Emperor Swordsage. And if hē bet and lost, hē would be even less confident. Therefore, hē said nothing.

The bell hung in midair, vibrating as though it was preparing for another toll.

Seeing that, Yu Liuchen quickly said, "Today I will do nothing more than observe the ceremony!"

The Immortal Questioning Bell seemed to pause. Then a cold voice echoed from within the Swordsage Division.

"Screw off!" freewebnovel.com

The words surged out with heaven-rending, earth-crushing force.

The words didn't just target Yu Liuchen. They spread out in all directions like thunder that could shake the cosmos, like a massive wave sweeping through the dome of heaven. In an instant, numerous streams of divine will that had converged to observe the godly ascension ceremony were revealed.

They all fled.

Whether or not humankind's Grand Emperor Swordsage was strong enough for another sword move, no one knew. However... none of them dared to bet on it. The astonishing bell was simply too fear-inspiring.

Yu Liuchen looked down at the Swordsage Division. A few breaths of time passed, and then hē blurred and disappeared. Hē had also chosen to flee.

The godfire on Planet Ancient Emperor burned with more intensity than ever.

A great distance away from the Imperial Region was the Holytide Region, in which was Sea-Sealing County.

In the north of that county, there was a sprawling plain filled with snow and wind. Amidst the snowflakes that drifted like goose feathers was a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering pillar rising above the ice plains. It was surrounded by a host of countless tents that formed a city.

It was none other than the Supreme Beginning Netherflight Pillar. A small portion of the pillar was buried in the ground. And beneath it was a mysterious ghastr hollow.

At the very bottom of that subterranean cave was a gigantic eye. The eye was currently closed and unmoving.

Above the eye was a pentagonal log cabin, hanging in the air and secured to the walls by means of five chains. At each of the five corners of the log cabin was a five elements zombie.

Inside the cabin was a brightly-shining lamp. It was a life lamp.

Through the gauzy curtains in the window it was possible to see a young woman wearing a red wedding dress, seated cross-legged. She looked almost like a mortal. She released no cultivation base fluctuations, and did not have even the scrap of an aura of a god. It wasn't possible to see her facial features clearly. But by looking at the shadow cast on the curtain, it was possible to determine that she had just coughed up three mouthfuls of blood.

In a very grisly fashion, her blood turned into paper money, which floated out of the cabin and spread through the ghost hollow, where the countless ghosts would fight amongst each other to devour them.

The timing of her three mouthfuls of blood coincided with the three times the Immortal Questioning Bell tolled in the imperial palace!

The woman wiped the blood from her lips and murmured, "The deal is complete. And yet it's still not time for me to leave."

Then, eternal singing began to drift about.

"In past lives forlorn, always reborn, sever lovesickness and endlessly mourn...."

"In a life of hesitation, in a future of frustration, who is it that waits for me in reincarnation...." [2]

The five elements zombies at the corners of the cabin swayed in time with the singing.

Meanwhile, another chanting song echoed out in the Heaveneater Region.

It didn't take long for the Torchlight invasion to end. With the Torchlight god domain having taken over the dome of heaven, almost all living beings in the Heaveneater Region had become a sacrifice of blood. It didn't matter if they were cultivators or mortals. And it didn't matter what species they were.

This was a full-scale attack by Torchlight, and it was also the first time the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan revealed how truly strong he was.

Death struck the region like an unavoidable lightning bolt. Countless corpses and innumerable amounts of blood were gathered in the lands around the Heaveneater imperial palace. Fresh blood mingled with the mud. Deceased soul swirled everywhere. And the slaughter continued.

However, the slaughter itself wasn't the point. As the blood and corpses gathered around the Heaveneater imperial palace, a grand ceremony was taking place. It was being carried out by the god domain's huge ball of flesh that hovered in midair.

There were five vortexes surrounding it, within which sat five cross-legged corpses. They were the past emperors of the Heaveneaters!

Taking it all in, it looked... almost exactly the same as the ceremony being carried out in the human's imperial capital! There was an imperial capital. There was an imperial palace. The ball of flesh was like Planet Ancient Emperor. And there were five past emperors as corpses.

A shadowy projection filled heaven and earth. Within it was visible the empress and her godly ascension. Everything within the image was being duplicated below!

Countless Torchlight cultivators were present, along with a host of black-robed figures, all of them prostrating with zeal in their eyes.

A chant drifted out.

"The energy of the ultimate yang of the two polarities merges into the ancient eyes of the gods, becoming the glittering light of the starry sky over Revered Ancient...."

"The netherworld souls in all parts will drink of the water of time, creating a tide to awaken from the dream of ancient times...." [3]

1. Ningyan used the bell in [chapter 771](#). ☞
2. This song first appeared in [chapter 364](#). It was repeated in a few subsequent chapters, notably [676](#). ☞
3. The words in the first line are a repetition of what we heard in [chapters 800](#), [801](#), and [952](#). The second line is new. ☞

Chapter 957: Why Bother?

Sunset neared.

The empress' godly ascension was an astonishing event in which many individuals played an important part. They included the empress herself, the Crown Prince of Violet

and Cyan, along with everything he had prepared in the Heaveneater Region. The three gods of sun, moon, and star played a role as it related to their future plans as well.

The holy lands also revealed their stance. There were other parties as well, ones who had made deals with the empress, but didn't show their faces.

For example, there was the young woman in the wedding dress in the ghastr hollow.

It was easy to imagine how complicated it had been to orchestrate everything. There was little need to mention how much karma had been involved, including the predestined fate of the Grand Emperor.

Grand Emperor Swordsage had killed countless gods in his life, and seriously injured even more. Once it became possible to predict that he would perish, it was only natural that the karma would attract many gods.

All of the different interests at play made the situation very complicated. Something as shocking as this was a rarity in Revered Ancient! It attracted the attention of the entire mainland!

And down to the very end, Grand Emperor Swordsage never used his legendary final sword move. That sword seemed to hang above the heads of numerous parties. There were top species and gods as well who feared it. None of them wanted to risk being killed by it.

That was why someone as strong as Yu Liuchen ultimately chose to flee. Although it seemed like hē had been stopped by the Immortal Questioning Bell, in the final analysis, what hē was really scared of was Grand Emperor Swordsage. Hē didn't want to tempt fate!

If no one else chose to probe for information, then the ceremony, which was nearing its end, would conclude with the empress' success.

At that point, the peak Imperial Sovereign empress would become a god. In addition, the five past emperors would be gods. And then it would be impossible for anyone to test out Grand Emperor Swordsage. Right now, the only thing to do was see if there was anyone else out there who wanted to prohibit the empress from becoming a god.

And thus....

In the imperial capital of humankind, most of the commoners were nervously looking up at the empress in the canopy of heaven.

In the east of the city on Nine-Nexus Boulevard, there was a bookshop that had been around for generations. Someone inside the shop sighed. Given how unique of a day it was, the shop didn't have any customers. A handful of employees were gathered at the entrance, where they sat looking into the sky and quietly discussing what was happening.

Behind them at the counter was the shopkeeper, whose name was Zhao Youde. He wore a long, yellow robe and was reading from a bamboo slip. He looked up.[1]

The sigh came from his mouth.

There was nothing out of the ordinary about Zhao Youde's physical appearance. He had graying hair that, as the wind blew through the shop, swayed like reeds in autumn. He was old. Time had left his face full of wrinkles, and yet, he also seemed kind and benevolent. His eyes did not sparkle brightly, but there was something profound about them. And right now, they seemed a bit helpless.

"What's the point?" he murmured.

Zhao Youde was the seventeenth-generation shopkeeper in this bookshop. He was also the owner, and lived in the back courtyard. He had a wife who died of illness years ago. Other than that, though, there wasn't much about his life to complain about. His parents were still alive, his children were all very obedient, and business was good.

As a mortal, he had every reason to be content with his life. He enjoyed reading, especially classic writings. Given all that he had read and pondered, he had quite a grasp of different philosophies. Normally speaking, he called on those philosophies to guide his life. He also loved to give advice to those around him. All of his neighbors showed him a great deal of respect.

He liked his life. But today, he knew... that things were about to end. Sighing, he clasped his hands behind his back and walked out from behind the counter, his posture somewhat slumped. He looked around the bookshop one last time, then shook his head and walked toward the door.

Upon reaching the threshold, the employees sitting there looked at him in confusion.

"Boss, there are a lot of people on the streets. It's pretty chaotic. Sir, are you...?"

Zhao Youde stopped and looked at the employees, his expression one of reminiscence.

"Twohound, you look more and more like your grandfather every day. And you, Lil' Locust. Going forward, you need to spend more time reading and studying. Your families.... have been with me for generations. I'm leaving the shop to you. Take good care of it."

The employees were stunned. The two he had called out by name rose to their feet to speak. Before they could, the shopkeeper had vanished.

Zhao Youde walked along Nine-Nexus Boulevard beneath the setting sun. He was invisible as he headed toward the imperial capital.

He walked along, sighing. "What's the point...?"

Zhao Youde sighed again. He liked the world of mortals. He liked humankind. Over the countless years that had passed, he had assumed different identities as he ran the bookshop, and had interacted with many human customers. He had a lot of fond memories about them. He had long assumed that life would just continue in that way.

"The holy lands have made mistakes. But there's no reason to rebel against them.... Ai."

His parents and children in the back courtyard of the bookshop all seemed like real, living people. But then he sighed, and they shivered and issued similar sighs. All of them blurred and vanished, becoming motes of silver light that swept invisibly along Nine-Nexus Boulevard until they reached Zhao Youde. They merged into him.

He stood up a bit straighter. His aged face gradually started looking younger.

Then a terrifying cultivation base power surged within him. Foundation Establishment. Nascent Soul. Void Returning. Smoldering God, and then... Imperial Sovereign! The rise in power stopped when he was at the peak of the half-Imperial Sovereign level! That was a shocking level of power, yet he didn't reveal any of it externally.

As he walked in the afterglow of evening, he looked unusually lonely. He was thinking about his life. He had been born in the holy lands, where he had been given a mission in Revered Ancient.

That mission was to kill Emperor Dao Life! He had succeeded in that mission, but afterward, had been unable to leave. And thus, he settled down among humankind. During the entire time since then, he had never revealed who he was. He had remained in hiding. The reason was that he feared Grand Emperor Swordsage.

With yet another sigh, Zhao Youde took a step forward. That step took him out of the imperial capital, past the imperial palace, and onto Planet Ancient Emperor. His target... was the godfire on the planet!

He had no desire to fight with the empress. Nor did he want to personally see how strong Grand Emperor Swordsage was now. He had to live up to his ideals by... extinguishing the godfire.

He appeared without any introduction or fanfare. There was no thunderous rumbling. No shocking fluctuations. It was almost as if he was invisible. But the moment he appeared and lifted his hand, the empress detected his presence. Everyone looked over in shock.

He was reaching out to pluck away the godfire!

Yet before he could, a calm voice echoed around him.

“Shopkeeper Zhao, that fire is not to be extinguished.”

Along with the voice appeared a figure. He wore a violet robe, had violet hair, and facial features that looked like a work of art. They were incomparably exquisite, with long, arched eyebrows that resembled distant mountains. As for his eyes, they were full of wisdom and profundity.

It was none other than the imperial preceptor! The Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan.

He appeared in front of Zhao Youde, with his back to the godfire. Yet not even the fire could diminish his presence. He actually looked like a scintillating heavenly body illuminating the sky of Revered Ancient. His lips curved up so that he always looked like he was slightly smiling. As he spoke in his calm voice, he lifted his right hand and pushed it out.

Zhao Youde’s hand never completed its movement. The arrival of the imperial preceptor caused many human cultivators to breathe sighs of relief.

The imperial preceptor was mysterious, and yet that fact made him seem capable of almost anything.

Xu Qing didn’t say anything. He wasn’t surprised at all that this person had come. He looked on calmly. He was very interested in seeing just how powerful the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan really was.

Upon realizing that Xu Qing was looking at him, the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan looked away from Zhao Youde. He smiled warmly.

“Did you receive my gift, lil’ bro?”

Xu Qing looked down, his face completely expressionless. frëewebnqovel.com

The crown prince smiled again, then looked back at Zhao Youde. “I saw the time that belongs to you.”

Zhao Youde’s face fell. He was half a step into Imperial Sovereign, and back in the holy lands, he had been a powerful overlord. Other than the empress and Grand Emperor Swordsage, there wasn’t anyone among humankind that he feared. Until now. In facing

the imperial preceptor, he suddenly came to the realization that he couldn't see this newcomer clearly. He had never noticed him before.

"Since you're interested, lil' bro," the crown prince continued, "you should watch closely. I'm going to sever his time and free them."

As the crown prince's voice rang out, the area around Zhao Youde began to ripple. His life and his past were not under his control. They were like a painting with him in the middle. It contained an image of him killing Dao Life. It also showed scenes of the bookshop, his incarnated family, and the times when he was an ancestor or a son. All of his life in the Revered Ancient mainland was revealed.

As Zhao Youde's face sank further, the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan waved his hand to manipulate time. In the blink of an eye, the countless versions of Zhao Youde in the past, no matter what they were in the middle of doing, bowed their heads. Within the past, it was possible to see the present.

Next, all of the versions of Zhao Youde lifted their feet to step forward.

Intense rumbling echoed out. The aura of a great dao descended. The great River of Time appeared out of nowhere.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered. It wasn't his first time seeing the River of Time. Back in the Moonrite Region, Princess Brightblossom, who was adept at manipulating the magical laws of time, had also summoned it.[2]

In comparison, though, the version Princess Brightblossom had summoned was more like a little creek. The version right now was like a mighty river flowing from ancient times. It covered the imperial palace, the imperial capital, and in fact, the entire region. In the blink of an eye, the entire world was covered by the River of Time.

Within that river were innumerable versions of Zhao Youde, almost like fish in water. They traveled from the past and into the present, where they hovered in midair. Then all of them faced Zhao Youde and attacked.

"Pay attention, lil' bro," the crown prince said gently. "Each of them is a past version of Shopkeeper Zhao. If they kill him, then Shopkeeper Zhao will no longer exist. If he doesn't exist, then his past will be *as unrealistic as flowers in a mirror or the moon in the water*. In contrast, if Shopkeeper Zhao kills them, then it's equivalent to him killing himself in the past. Without a past, there can't come to be the present. If it were you, lil' bro, what would you do?"

1. Zhao Youde. Zhao is #8 on the list of 100 common surnames. You means "to have." De means "virtue, goodness, morality, ethics." Madam Deathblade says it sounds like the name of a virtuous person (I guess that's kind of an obvious conclusion....) ㊦

2. Back in the Moonrite arc, Princess Brightblossom used the River of Time in too many chapters to list as references. Back then, the wording led me to mistakenly think that it was “a river of time” not “the River of Time.” I’ve since gone back to change those references to reflect the fact that, as directly stated in this chapter, she was indeed tapping into THE River of Time. ☞

Chapter 958: Raise the Sword

Fiddling with time. Severing the past. Cultivators could do such things, but not with such finesse as this. That was because this was the authority of a god. That was because this was true omniscience. In the eyes of gods, it was easy to see a person’s life, including all of their past.

The River of Time seethed as it filled the world of mortals. Countless past versions of Zhao Youde were all racing in his direction.

However, in the cultivation system, Imperial Sovereigns were second only to Quasi-Immortals. And this was Zhao Youde, who had spent years among humankind, and was now at the peak of being a half-Imperial Sovereign. His cultivation base made him almost as strong as a god.

Upon facing this inexplicable godly authority, his expression turned dark, and then he stretched out his right hand toward the canopy of heaven and made a grasping motion. The movement of his hand caused the dome of heaven to shift, as if a new heaven were being brought in.

A vast starry sky began to take over. The starry sky was so massive it covered everything. It was almost as if it planned to take this section of Revered Ancient away, as if... it was becoming a universe for Zhao Youde alone. Within that universe, there were countless past versions of himself, and yet, there were far more stars and heavenly bodies than that.

The countless heavenly bodies all twinkled brightly, and in response to Zhao Youde’s thoughts, they lit up and were extinguished.

The extinguishing of countless heavenly bodies caused the unique universe to quickly teeter on the verge of collapse. As it collapsed, it sank in on itself, giving rise to a massive gravitational force. It was like an actual universe transforming into a majestic black hole.

All of a sudden, all of Zhao Youde’s past lives were sucked up by the gravitation hole, and devoured by the collapsing universe.

Not one was left over!

Severing time. Causing past lives to try to devour the true self. It was something difficult to comprehend. If none could be allowed to perish, there was only one way to resolve the situation. Crush. Seal. And return everything to the beginning.

All of this takes a bit of time to describe, but actually happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off a piece of flint. After all of the past lives were sucked into the collapsing universe, Zhao Youde closed his hand into a fist.

Heaven and earth went back to normal. His universe shrank down, turning into a black pearl that dropped down in front of him. Without any hesitation, he looked up at the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan. At the same time, he flicked the pearl out.

It flew up into the sky. At the same time, he vanished, to reappear high in the air atop the pearl.

“Be crushed!” he said grimly.

The black pearl exploded, spreading out to again overtake heaven.

However, this time it turned into a river of stars. It shot down, heading toward the crown prince’s River of Time, to crush it. It was a river of stars versus the River of Time.

The Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan smiled. “How amusing. You can crush your own time. But what about my time?”

The crown prince reached up and touched his forehead. The moment he did, the air around him distorted as his own past appeared. The biggest difference was that it was blurry and impossible to see clearly. It was only possible to sense endless rancor and madness, accompanied by extreme defiance. All of that turned into the most extreme howl imaginable.

However, the crown prince looked as warm and gentle as always. Lifting a finger, he casually made a beckoning gesture at the surrounding blurry images. Astonishingly, he was severing a section of his own time from a past life, then depositing it into the River of Time. The majestic river surged violently. Immense waves rolled across its surface.

Within the water there appeared an enormous finger of white jade. It seemed capable of destroying anything as the water parted around it. Sweeping up past-life power, it shook the daos of heaven and earth as it emerged from the river. From a distance, it seemed capable of propping up heaven and earth.

The finger then accelerated toward the river of stars.

The river of stars trembled and shone with dazzling light before ultimately collapsing, revealing the grim-faced Zhao Youde. The shocking finger of white jade continued onward without stopping.

Just before it was about to hit, Zhao Youde took a deep breath and went into a double-handed incantation gesture. His fingers blurred as he went through a whole host of hand signs. Then he stopped with both hands in front of his chest with thumbs and index fingers touching to form a diamond shape. He pushed his hands in the direction of the incoming finger of jade.

Instantly, his universe erupted. The power of a great dao within the river flowed out to meet the finger. That great dao contained spatial power.

This was Zhao Youde's dao, and it was also the reason why he had been able to remain undetected among humankind for so long. The destructive power of the great dao caused the white jade finger of the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan to tremble.

In an instant, the sky transformed into a painting. The painting was blurry, as though it might collapse at any moment.

Breathing heavily, Zhao Youde shoved out again with his double-handed hand sign. The picture that depicted the white finger superimposed with the power of the great dao. It turned into a white thread.

Eyes bloodshot, Zhao Youde shoved his hands out a third time. The white thread then shrank down into a white dot!

Zhao Youde was about to shove his hands out for a fourth time when, all of a sudden, heaven-shaking, earth-shattering fluctuations rolled out of the white dot, accompanied by deafening rumbling sounds. Then it detonated.

The white jade finger shredded the space around it as it emerged from inside. It was now right in front of Zhao Youde. Blood sprayed out of Zhao Youde's mouth as he stumbled backward. A very serious look could be seen on his face as bloody wounds opened up all over him.

"Jade Capital Immortal Finger! You... you're the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan from back in the day! But now... you're not human or cultivator or god! You're not alive or dead. You don't exist!"

Zhao Youde's pupils constricted.

Similarly shaken were all of the cultivators looking on. Everyone knew that the imperial preceptor was incredibly mysterious. But his battle prowess already surpassed anything they could imagine. And now his true identity had been stated outright....

The words "Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan" struck everyone like lightning. Not everyone was aware of who the imperial preceptor was. As a result, the vast majority of the government officials were astounded.

Xu Qing stood there with a cold look on his face. He had seen what he wanted to see, and it confirmed his suspicions.

The empress, in contrast, wasn't paying attention to the crown prince. Her godfire had reached a critical point, and majestic godly authority was now erupting.

Grand Emperor Swordsage remained silent.

Seeing that, Zhao Youde spun to leave. He now realized that there was no way he would be able to extinguish the godfire.

But the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan didn't seem willing to let this half-Imperial Sovereign simply leave.

"First a universe, then a great dao," the crown prince said softly. "You see, the reason I spoke at such length with you is that my ultimate goal was to get a glimpse at your destiny. Now I've seen it."

He reached up toward the dome of heaven and made a grasping gesture. Blood erupted out of Zhao Youde, then floated over to the crown prince's palm. Squeezing his hand closed, he forced the blood into the shape of a red thread.

Next, as everyone watched, and as Zhao Youde's face fell, the crown prince put the thread into his hair. It became one with him. He absorbed it.

Then a gruish and unbelievable scene played out in front of all present.

Zhao Youde shivered from head to toe and let out a scream of anguish. He became incomparably weak, as though something very precious to him was suddenly gone.

The destiny the crown prince had seen had been taken away.

In that moment of crisis, Zhao Youde reached up and touched his forehead. His body turned into a painting, then a thread, then a dot. And then... he disappeared.

"Some of his providence was taken away!" Sunfire said. It was something profoundly mysterious that only a Flawless God could see the truth of. "Using destiny to absorb the enemy's providence.... That's a god magic with a different approach but the same outcome as the technique the Father God is using to devour Revered Ancient." Sunfire looked at the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan with a very serious expression. "That must be how you plan to recover your cultivation base from your past life."

The crown prince smiled but didn't say anything in response. Then he lifted his foot to step up into the canopy of heaven.

There was no way he was going to let a specimen like Zhao Youde get away. With that, he disappeared to pursue Zhao Youde.

Everything went calm above human lands. The gods who had come to interfere, whether Blazeblade, the night god, or the gods from the Northfate Kings, all backed away quietly. There was no way to stop the process now. Fighting was pointless.

The godfire on Planet Ancient Emperor was now ninety percent golden. The past emperors in the five vortexes were experiencing a constant rise in godly authority. The empress was also in a similar position. There was now only one incense stick's worth of time left in the ceremony.

That was when a piercing sound filled the sky. It was the sound of a great wind blowing over Revered Ancient. It came from the humans' imperial capital.

Someone outside of Revered Ancient and within the Dark Serenity holy land, looked in the direction of Revered Ancient and slashed down with a saber.

That saber spanned the starry sky, severed the ancient from the modern, and contained boundless momentum. It had the power to crush everything in its path, as if it wished to exterminate heaven and earth. And it appeared in the sky right above the humans' imperial palace in Revered Ancient.

It created a massive rift some 500,000 kilometers in length. The projection of the blade was like a true heavenly saber. The sky shifted colors and winds blew as a stifling will appeared.

There was one force that wanted more than anyone to stop the empress from reaching godly ascension. They wanted it more than the gods of Revered Ancient and more than the top species of Revered Ancient. That place was a holy land among many holy lands. It was... the Dark Serenity holy land!

Thus arrived the might of a Grand Emperor! Thus came the saber of a Grand Emperor!

From within the wind came a sigh.

Inside the Swordsage Division, a withered figure opened his eyes. His final sword move could be used on a god. Or it could be used... on a holy land!

"You finally made your move," he murmured in a voice hoarse with ancient age and filled with complicated emotions.

Then....

The Emperor's Sword in Xu Qing thrummed with unprecedented vibrations. And boundless sword light erupted from him and up into the sky.

Chapter 959: Grand Emperor!

In the imperial capital, inside the Swordsage Division, was a private chamber. Inside was Grand Emperor Swordsage, who had remained with humankind to defend it. He sighed.

A blurry soul shadow emerged from his withered frame and took a step forward. He was middle-aged, not burly and tall, not bold and powerful. But there was something unshakable about him, as if he had accepted the responsibility of supporting all heaven and earth, thus earning him the ultimate level of respect. He took one step, which took him outside of the Swordsage Division and all the way to Xu Qing's side on Planet Ancient Emperor.

As of this moment, wild colors flashed in heaven and earth! As of this moment, humankind was shaken. For the first time, emotions flickered across the empress' face. All gods in the area were paying very close attention. In that instant, the sky and the lands... became a mere backdrop for the voice which spoke and the sword will that emerged.

"Young friend," he said, "let me use your body this once. And I need to borrow your sword."

Xu Qing's mind spun as The Emperor's Sword within him emitted a sword resonance that resounded to the highest heaven. Then, he shivered as a warm sensation spread through him. He sensed a will as majestic as the starry sky fusing with him. It wasn't domineering, and it didn't harm him in any way. It was just temporarily making use of his body. He didn't resist, and in fact, just let the will spread through him.

As all gods and all people looked on, Xu Qing... slowly looked up. His eyes were profoundly ancient.

There was also something boundlessly majestic about him. As the wind blew and the cosmos shook, the canopy of heaven seemed to list, and mountains and rivers shook. The heroes prostrated, and the sages all bowed.

A majestic stream of human destiny aura converged around Xu Qing, becoming like a dragon that coiled around him endlessly.

As the dragon converged, it formed a 3,000-meter body around him! He had mountains for bones, rivers for blood, the lands as skin, sprawling forests as hair, and the canopy of heaven as armor. Flesh of destiny aura formed the ultimate Grand Emperor body, with all living things bolstering it as the soul.

The Grand Emperor was back in the mortal world.

Facial features formed. They were like an ancient bronze statue, with eyes that sparkled with life, almost as if the brightest heavenly bodies on the night sky were shining. As he stood there, the dome of heaven went dim, and all the gods present faded. He was the only Quasi-Immortal to ever appear in Revered Ancient!

And after Dark Serenity left, he was the only Grand Emperor to stay behind!
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He had protected humankind for tens of thousands of years. He had slaughtered countless gods. And though he was only a clone with a bit of life left, he was still the same Swordsage who had carved out generations of peace for humans. He was fully deserving of the title Grand Emperor of humankind! This was a level of majesty unsurpassed!

Grand Emperor Swordsage had come to the mortal world!

“Grand Emperor!” the empress said with unprecedented reverence as she bowed her head. However, her eyes were full of sorrow, as she knew that for the Grand Emperor to appear like this meant that he was about to perish.

With his last breath, he would serve as the dao protector to safeguard humanity.

The government officials could hardly breathe, and their hearts raced as they dropped to their knees. The scene playing out in front of them was almost unbelievable, and every single one of them felt deep respect for the Grand Emperor.

The commoners in the imperial capital reacted similarly, calling out, “Grand Emperor!” as they kowtowed with utmost piety.

Seeing what was happening, the three gods chose to bow their heads.

The gods from the Netherworld Chasmcorpses, Northfate Kings, and Redland Nobleplexuses didn't dare to do anything rash. They were gods, but the might of Grand Emperor Swordsage was something all of them were familiar with. And they had all witnessed him killing gods in the past.

As Grand Emperor Swordsage received respect from everyone, he glanced over the humans he had safeguarded for tens of thousands of years. Then he lifted his right hand. His hand closed, and The Emperor's Sword rumbled out. He grasped the hilt.

Sword energy severed space. The sword light shone through all time. The thrum of the sword contained longing, grief, and a reluctance to depart....

“Time for one last journey, old friend,” Grand Emperor Swordsage said with a smile. He took a step up into the dome of heaven, and the sky shattered. However, there was no thunder. It was almost as if thunder didn't dare to show up.

The Grand Emperor strode forth alone toward the 500,000-kilometer saber projection. His every step contained profound power that could shake the cosmos. The might of his gait caused all humans to suddenly feel a profound sense of peace and respect.

With the Grand Emperor around, humans were safe. He looked like heaven itself, with the setting sun framing him against the dark of night. To humans, he seemed like an expression of radiance and light.

Countless people were shaken to the core. Almost all of them had grown up hearing stories of Grand Emperor Swordsage, and had looked to him as an example. To them, Grand Emperor Swordsage was the greatest human imaginable. An eternal legend.

As everyone looked on, Grand Emperor Swordsage reached the peak of heaven and the destructive heavenly saber, which represented the punishment of the holy lands.

There he stood, with sword in hand. With that sword, he severed heaven!

The sword light raged, the heavens cracked. The sword glow flickered, and illuminated the ancient past! The sword projection could shock gods. The sharpness of the sword astonished the heavenly saber!

The heavenly saber and The Emperor's Sword clashed high above Revered Ancient. Infinite sparks exploded. Magical laws were destroyed. A force that surpassed the universe erupted, like predestination itself. It created a dazzling field of light. A majestic rainbow spread across all of the regions of Revered Ancient, unstoppable, full of ancient might, never-ending, capable of overlooking all obstacles.

That light united Revered Ancient. In the blink of an eye, the sky above Revered Ancient was as bright as day. Dazzling light was even visible outside of Revered Ancient. It illuminated the surrounding starry sky, and even shone around the broken face.

From a distance, the rainbow was like a huge dragon shaking the sky, releasing wild energy that caused the heavenly daos to tremble, and resulted in all species in Revered Ancient craning their necks in shock.

In the end, The Emperor's Sword and the heavenly saber destroyed each other. They became a massive cloud of stars that pulsed in and out of existence. Vortexes appeared everywhere. It was like a huge scroll painting that formed the heaven over Revered Ancient. It remained in place for a long time before fading away. Countless rumbling noises echoed out into the hearts of humans.

Then rain started to fall in many regions. The sight caused numerous individuals in the imperial capital to let loose exclamations of shock.

"That's peak Altar God power!" numerous gods murmured.

The Grand Emperor hovered in the canopy of heaven, looking at the cloud of stars. He said nothing. Then, after a long moment passed, an ancient voice echoed from the holy land.

“Swordsage, what is your determination?”

The Grand Emperor calmly answered, “The moment you people departed this place, this day was foreordained. I said nothing in East Victory’s time. I also said nothing when Mirrorcloud rose up. And when Dao Life died, I was silent. But I won’t hold my tongue forever. And I hereby permit the empress to become a god!”

There was no response from the holy land except for a fading sigh.

Chapter 960: The Karma is Severed

The sky was still. The world of mortals was peaceful.

The wind blew for a few breaths of time, then faded away. It was almost as if there had never been a wind to begin with. In the canopy of heaven, the painting of stars turned into a host of scintillating vortexes that spun noiselessly. They would remain there for a time, a reminder of the epic battle that had just taken place.

The holy lands were gone.

The gods from the Netherworld Chasmcorpses, Northfate Kings, and Redland Nobleplexuses were now aware that it wasn’t possible to stop the empress from succeeding. They chose to leave, casting complicated, fearful glances at the projection of the Grand Emperor as they did. Although they still weren’t very pleased, and wished they could interfere, they had no idea of knowing what would happen if they took action.

Sunfire, Moonfire, and Starfire had lived up to the deal. They looked at the Grand Emperor in the dome of heaven, and traces of reminiscence could be seen on their faces. It seemed likely that what they were thinking about, however, wasn’t the Grand Emperor in front of them, nor anything to do with Revered Ancient’s current state of affairs. Perhaps they were thinking of the North Immortal Emperor World, and the North Emperor.

Everything was quiet.

All gazes, including those of the empress, the gods, the government officials, and the commoners in the imperial capital, and even the streams of divine will hidden in the area, were focused on the spectacular figure in midair who had just used his final sword move in stunning fashion.

In that moment of silence, the Grand Emperor slowly turned around. His ancient eyes took in humankind and the world of mortals. He sighed softly. Then his body of destiny

gradually began fading away. He blurred, until there was only an outline remaining, within which was Xu Qing's fleshly body. That fleshly body floated down until it landed on the War Drum of Humankind.

During the process, a blurry soul shadow stepped out of Xu Qing, then floated up into the air. It was the Grand Emperor's soul. It was fading away, never to return. He had safeguarded humans for tens of thousands of years. He had fought countless battles and killed innumerable gods. Today... he was tired.

Exhaustion slowly spread out from his soul.

His life force had actually been extinguished many years ago, leaving him to exist in clone form down to this day. Now, his life was truly reaching its end. Fatigue had set hold in him many years ago, and had only grown stronger over time. He could have had unlimited longevity. He could have existed at the heights of glory. He could have avoided becoming so exhausted.

To do all that, he just needed to put himself above his people. But instead, he chose his people over himself.

Sometimes people make critical choices that lead to dead ends. Whether those choices are correct or not, they can't be undone. The only question is whether they will regret those decisions.

The Grand Emperor laughed. It had been a long time since he laughed.

I don't regret any of it, he thought in his heart. He had lived among humankind, defending them and slaughtering gods. That was a much better life than running away to beyond the heavens to flounder on death's door.

With such thoughts in his mind, the Grand Emperor looked at the imperial capital, the region, and all human lands. In the end, he focused on two people.

One was Xu Qing, whom he had chosen to bear his sword going forward. He had no intention of trying to force Xu Qing to do anything. However he planned to continue onward, he would be free to do so. The sword... could slaughter and kill whoever he wanted it to.

The kid has so much karma attached to him.... His past and future alike will probably leave him more exhausted than I am.

The second person was the empress. As a young woman, she wept while being devoured by Dark War. She had also paid an enormous price for the sake of humankind, and it had struck the Grand Emperor to the core. It made him think of his own daughter, who had been devoured by a god. Thus, he had saved her.

Not all rulers of humankind are such good people.... But at least, upon my departure, she is good.

Anticipation could be seen in the Grand Emperor's eyes as he looked at the empress wreathed in godfire. He wanted to see what explosive result would occur when a peak Imperial Sovereign used destiny aura to convert from the dao of cultivators to the dao of gods. Would she reach the peak of Flawless God, or would she... take a step into the Altar God level??

The ancestral edicts from the holy lands prohibited humans from becoming gods. He had respected those edicts. That was why he had never attempted godly ascension for himself. But what would his people do after he left? When he was no longer around, who would continue to safeguard humankind...?

The Grand Emperor didn't want to consider such questions anymore. He wanted his last moments to be spent in one final act of protection for his people. Therefore, he would try to catch one more fish....

An instant later, as his soul shadow faded, the empress' expression flickered, and Xu Qing's eyes opened.

A figure appeared behind the Grand Emperor, moving in a blur to launch a devastating blow.

"I'll send you on your final journey, Swordsage!"

It was none other than Yu Liuchen! Hē had not truly departed, but had instead been hiding in the hopes of finding an opportunity. And when hē found it, hē took advantage of it! As the faces of all onlookers flickered dramatically, Yu Liuchen's hand descended.

The Grand Emperor's facial expression didn't change, though. He simply threw his hand behind himself.

As he did, boundless power swelled up within him, and the vortexes of stars up in the dome of heaven went wild. Deafening rumbling sounds echoed out. Apparently, everything from before was a sham, and the Grand Emperor had been waiting for this moment to snag a fresh fish!

An even more shocking tempest erupted, creating a mountain-toppling, sea-draining force that bore down on Yu Liuchen.

Yu Liuchen shivered as a massive amount of golden blood sprayed out of hīs mouth. The sword embedded into hīs chest erupted with unfathomable sword energy, which swept through Yu Liuchen, annihilating the flesh and blood that it touched. Yu Liuchen screamed in agony.

“You still have one move left? You people... what are you doing? Why aren't you interfering??”

His voice caused heaven to crack and crumble, and then hē launched himself once more at Grand Emperor Swordsage.

At almost the exact same instant that Yu Liuchen's words echoed out, a great wind sprang up in the sky again. It was icy cold, and wherever it passed, everything turned white and filled with snow.

Clouds. Mountains. Rivers. Living beings. Even natural and magical laws were frozen by the wind. And that was because this was a Flawless wind created by a god.

It came from the godly authority of one of the Flawless Gods from the Northfate Kings.

A god approached within the wind. It wasn't possible to see this god clearly, as if the god did not have a set shape. Within that wind, hē took the form of a huge hand that shot right toward the Grand Emperor.

From a distance, it was possible to see Yu Liuchen coming at the Grand Emperor from one side, and the god of frigid wind from the other. Both terrifying gods stretched their hands out. Then the air shattered as eight additional gods pierced through the air. They had also been hiding this entire time, waiting... to make their move. Their goal was to acquire the life essence light from the last Quasi-Immortal to exist in Revered Ancient.

The humans present saw what was happening. The empress shivered. She wanted to do something, but wasn't even able to move. In this final moment of the creation of godfire, she was at her weakest. There wasn't anyone else who qualified to fly up and join in the fighting.

Xu Qing's eyes were bloodshot. After awakening, he could sense that there was something different about himself, both his body and his soul. The sense of completeness he had experienced when striking the drum had once again appeared, and this time, it was stronger than before.

The Grand Emperor had meticulously healed him of all wounds, be they internal or external, be they visible or invisible. He was now thoroughly complete. Not just that, but the Grand Emperor had removed all final traces of himself from The Emperor's Sword. The sword was also complete now, without any potential calamities lurking within. It was all Xu Qing's!

In addition to that, there was a legacy in his mind.

Swordsage Style!

That was the name of the legacy.

It was the Grand Emperor's final and most precious skill. It was his mantle! It was the very same move he had used to deal with the heavenly saber earlier! It was a kindness so profound that Xu Qing knew he would never be able to repay it. And sadly, he simply wasn't strong enough to help the Grand Emperor in this moment. But that didn't matter. Even if he didn't qualify, he could still bare his sword. However, that was when a placid voice drifted down from above.

"Calm down," said Grand Emperor Swordsage. The tranquility in his voice spread among the humans, and it had the same effect as the countless years he had spent safeguarding them. They became calm.

The empress and Xu Qing alike suddenly felt at ease. Grand Emperor Swordsage didn't look surprised at all. It was almost as if being attacked by a group of so many gods was inconsequential.

He stretched his right hand toward Yu Liuchen and began closing his fingers. That grasp caused Yu Liuchen to shiver from head to toe. Then the illusory sword in his chest emitted a shocking thrum as it burst out of him. It was the first time in tens of thousands of years that the sword had come out of Yu Liuchen's chest.

Glittering with dazzling sword light, and pulsing with astounding sword energy, it returned to the Grand Emperor's hand.

Then the Grand Emperor slashed the sword at the freezing hand! Sword light filled heaven and earth. The hand wasn't remotely strong enough to offer a defense. It was severed. Unending amounts of god blood showered down as the freezing wind shattered. The god from the Northfate Kings turned and fled without any hesitation.

The attack continued, causing every single one of the gods who had sprung out of hiding to tumble backward with blood spraying out of their mouths.

Unexpectedly, the Grand Emperor actually had an additional sword move left! He had left a sword in Yu Liuchen's chest tens of thousands of years ago, and today... he took it back.

Everyone was stunned.

The gods retreated. Yu Liuchen fell back at top speed. However, his eyes were shining, and his previous shock and terror were gone. Hē looked unprecedentedly calm.

"Years ago, you held back from killing me. Now we're even." Hē had come to see the Grand Emperor on his way, and also to give him back his sword! Now, the wound that had prevented his recovery for so many years was gone. Hē turned in place, his red robe swishing as he strode off into the distance. "The karma is severed now, Swordsage.... And now, farewell for all eternity."