

Hammer God 494

Chapter 494 End of an Empire

Emperor Winterfire's Core Spark and his heart shook more and more.

Suddenly, his heart started to hurt as parts of it tore.

The Ether was just too much!

The amount of Ether entering his heart was far too much for it to handle!

It was like a strong farmer was force-feeding his chickens by shoving balls of seed into their throats and keeping them down.

The chicken's stomach expanded more and more, and to deal with the increased density, the farmer had to use more force.

The pressure increased more and more until...

BANG!

Emperor Winterfire's heart ripped and leaked blood.

His eyes opened wide in horror, and his Core Spark quickly retreated to its usual position.

"No!" he shouted in horror as he noticed that bursts of Fire Ether came out of his body.

His body was leaking Ether!

The Ether from the Ether Essences entered Emperor Winterfire's body with more speed, but it was just transformed into Fire Ether, which quickly left his body again.

Within seconds, the Ether Essences lost their power and fell to the ground.

The purple streams vanished.

The surroundings had reached extreme temperatures, but the hot air was scattered by the wind into the surroundings.

That was when Emperor Winterfire noticed that the other six points in his body turned black.

They died!

In horror, he witnessed as the black spots in his body were broken down by his body like any ordinary injury.

Some seconds later, his body recovered.

It looked the same as before the attempted breakthrough.

Emperor Winterfire's heart also recovered, and he returned to his usual condition.

For several seconds, he just looked forward in shock.

He couldn't believe it.

He had seen it!

He had seen his advancement!

He had been so close!

And yet, here he was, feeling just as powerful as always.

Nothing had changed.

The people looking on could tell that something had gone wrong.

Emperor Winterfire didn't seem elated.

It was clear...

The advancement had failed, and the price...

The onlookers looked at the dim Ether Essences, which were slowly collapsing into individual stones.

The price had been enormous.

With nine total Ether Essences, the last couple of years had been a golden age for the people.

Getting their hands on Ether Crystals had never been this easy.

Hundreds of people had advanced inside the Third Realm, and thousands of new people had entered the Third Realm.

Ether Crystals had not been a rarity anymore.

And now...

They had one. When they had still been at war with the Skysand Kingdom, they had four Ether Essences, and they had also managed to secretly harvest the Ether Crystals from some more Ether Essences.

In total, they had had the output of about five Ether Essences.

And now?

One.

One Ether Essence remained.

The one beside the Winterfire Empire's capital.

It was the last Ether Essence they had access to.

Sure, new Ether Essences would appear, but that took several years, and they could appear anywhere.

There was a theory that said that 90% of Ether Essences were actually at the bottom of the Grand Ocean, and there was a high chance that some of them would also appear there.

No one said anything.

Emperor Winterfire just looked at the ground with a mortified expression.

The onlookers weren't sure what they should do.

Minutes later, Emperor Winterfire lifted his head and looked at his most powerful people.

In his mind, he saw images of the future.

He had destroyed the resources of the world.

Without his actions, many more people would have become stronger.

He had taken something that would have benefited millions of people, and his power had not grown for it.

An intense headache assaulted Emperor Winterfire.

A familiar pain.

The second level of Karmic Punishment.

After he had won the war, the prosperity of his people had given him enough Karma to cure the headache.

But now, he had destroyed everything.

The misery he had given the world with this act was worse than anything he had ever done.

His future was dark...

It wouldn't stop at the second level of Karmic Punishment.

The third one would come soon, and with time, he might also be the first human to experience the fourth one.

It was over.

His life was over.

Silvester must have felt the flow of Ether.

Right now, Emperor Winterfire was still safe since Silvester probably believed that Emperor Winterfire had reached the Fifth Realm.

But that wouldn't last.

Silvester and his son would arrive, and then...

It would all be over.

Emperor Winterfire felt a dark hole opening up in his chest that swallowed all brightness in the world.

It was over.

He had missed his chance.

He had gone past his peak, and he would never reach his peak again.

It was all downhill from here.

His life no longer had any meaning.

Might as well just end it.

Emperor Winterfire summoned Yin-Fire in his Center and removed his will from it.

His Center was freezing, but he barely felt it. He closed his eyes in acceptance.

The Yin-Fire raged.

And then...

It calmed down.

Emperor Winterfire gasped in horror as he instinctively regained control over it.

Some seconds later, he put his head in his hands, and finally...

Tears came out of his eyes.

"I..." he whispered in a shaky voice.

The onlookers looked at Emperor Winterfire in horror.

"I..."

"I can't kill myself," he said, lifting his tear-stained face to look at his followers.

The onlookers felt his pain.

"I can't do it!" Emperor Winterfire shouted.

"Imperial Majesty," one of them said, stepping forward. "Please, you must-"

The person turned into an ice statue as a burst of Yin-Fire came over him.

The others looked at the frozen statue in horror.

Emperor Winterfire hadn't even looked at the man when he froze him.

At that moment, terror appeared in their hearts, and they fled.

But then, a silent wave of Yin-Fire spread across the surroundings.

White.

The world was covered in white.

A frozen and silent wonderland of winter.

Beautiful ice statues frozen in horror adorned the winter garden.

The crystallized trees didn't make any sounds in the light breeze.

Emperor Winterfire watched in pain as his headache intensified.

Then...

He ran.

He didn't know where.

He just ran.

It didn't matter where.

Anywhere but here.

Hours later, the aftermath of the failed advancement was found by some people.

Over the next days, the Winterfire Empire collapsed.

Uncertainty ravaged the world.

There was no leader.

Their glorious empire was gone.

Now, there wasn't even a Kingdom left.

Just a couple of scattered organizations.

What followed was a chaotic era of civil wars.

And Emperor Winterfire?

Nobody knew where he was.

They wished their Emperor back, but he was gone.

And he would never return.