

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1162: A Wonderful Morning Glory

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It was halfway through the twelfth month of the year 2999 in the Dao Finale of the Nineshores calendar. That meant there was only half a month left until Immortal Lord Nineshores stepped down and Immortal Lord Aurora was inaugurated. It also meant that the wedding day of Young Lord Aurora and the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores was just around the corner.

Ordinarily speaking, that wedding would be a major event in the Fifth Star Ring, and would cause countless cultivators to make the long journey to the court to offer respects. In fact, all of the Immortal Lords would come as well, along with their apprentices and followers. However, it was a sensitive time, and not an occasion for ostentatious displays. Therefore, Immortal Lord Aurora refused to have any visiting guests, and would instead have a limited number of attendees to a ceremony held in the immortal palace itself.

That said, it was only natural that there would be gifts and decorations. Lanterns were being hung throughout the palace, and colorful banners were put up everywhere. All of the ladies dressed up. That was especially true in Young Aurora Hall.

All of these were things that had happened historically speaking, but interfering with them wouldn't have done much. So Xu Qing just let the master of ceremonies continue with all the decorations and other preparations for the wedding.

He was currently in the main hall furthering his study of the sand of time. If situations arose outside that needed to be handled, he would send Zhong Chi out to deal with them.

Time passed slowly. Eventually, the setting sun cast its warm glow into the sky. Within Young Aurora Hall, the master of ceremonies was putting the last wedding decorations into place.

Zhong Chi was making a final inspection of everything.

Pointing at the embroidered balls hanging from the eaves, he frowned, looked at the master of ceremonies, and said, "There's something wrong with the color of the balls. At first glance they look like they're made entirely from shivering immortal roses. But in the light of the setting sun, you can clearly see that they have imperfections. What's more, the total number is inauspicious! There needs to be an even number! Take them down immediately!"[1]

"And look at the red silk banners! They're not shiny enough. The magical techniques and immortal power aren't flowing through them naturally. Take them down! Also...."[2]

Li Mengtu as Zhong Chi was being very responsible and diligent. He felt that it was important to put on a good show. After all, just the day before, Young Lord Aurora really had said some nice things about him to Little Hui from the Spiritguiding Palace. Given his host's personality, it made sense that he would be profoundly grateful. That said, Li Mengtu was sighing inwardly, as he knew that, historically speaking, the wedding... would turn out to be a bloodbath.

In half a month, the young lord will die violently in this place.... In fact, nobody will make it out alive. Given all the time I've spent with Young Lord Aurora recently, I have to admit that he's a nice person. He's somewhat given to lust, true. But given who he is, that fact that he's only somewhat given to lust... makes him nearly perfect.

Li Mengtu sighed. He had been increasingly struck with the sensation that life in the immortal palace was nice. He didn't have much pressure at all. All he needed to do was take care of the young lord and keep him safe. After all, out in the real world, he had far too many responsibilities. He had to constantly struggle to turn things around, both for his clan, and for himself.

Given that he was one of the Shining Stars, it was no surprise that he had noticed his Master seemed to have sinister intentions. But he couldn't reveal such thoughts. All he could do was work secretly from the shadows to try to change things. If he had to compare the two identities, there was no doubt... that he preferred being Zhong Chi.

As such thoughts ran through his head, he suddenly noticed a floor tile that had a chip in it. Brow furrowed, he opened his mouth to say something about it. However, that was when a brilliant light shone in the evening sky. Then he heard the cries of phoenixes.

All of a sudden, an imperial carriage being pulled by nine phoenixes appeared in midair over Young Aurora Hall. The exquisitely decorated chariot glittered blindingly, illuminating every corner of Young Aurora Hall. The nine phoenixes pulling the chariot were as red as fire, as if the burning sunset had painted them that color.

The chariot was flanked by over a hundred guards with spears in their hands, all of them somber-looking in their black armor. They were Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's honor guard, tasked with keeping her safe.

When the carriage appeared, the master of ceremonies clasped hands and bowed.

Li Mengtu's eyes narrowed slightly, but his expression was one of respect as he hurried forward and offered formal greetings. "Well met, Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix."

A cold snort drifted out from the carriage. Shortly after, two handmaidens lifted the curtain, and a beautiful woman emerged.

She was none other than Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix, the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores! She was not acting like she had been back at the Scourgebolt Cliffs, when her softness was hidden beneath a veneer of anger. Instead... her eyes were piercing, as if she could peer into the depths of one's thoughts. Her expression was calm, but there was a tempest within it.

She was not dressed like usual. She wore gorgeous blue-and-white palace attire. That, coupled with her furious expression, made her seem like someone nobody would dare to mess with. It was as if her mere presence was enough to prevent anyone from acting rashly.

She walked out of the carriage and into Young Aurora Hall. Once inside, she seemed even more majestic than before. That was because she knew her value and position. She also understood how to use her power to safeguard her own dignity and rights. She had a gaze that seemed capable of seeing through lies instantly. And that gaze was now focused on Li Mengtu in his guise as Zhong Chi.

“Has the Hundred Flowers Palace been torn down yet?” she said in a low, powerful voice. Every word seemed like a hammer blow to the heart.

Everyone else present kept their heads bowed. Even Li Mengtu felt the pressure weighing down on him thanks to her words.

It's only been a few days, but this person has definitely acclimated to this identity. There are no clues like there were on the first day. In fact, if this was our first meeting, I would be hard-pressed to be able to guess she's really an outsider.

Quickly collecting his thoughts, Li Mengtu said, “The young lord gave orders a few days ago for the Hundred Flowers Palace to be torn down. Unfortunately, your humble servant has been so busy with your wedding decorations, ma'am, that the whole matter of tearing down the palace skipped my mind.... Your humble servant will start the work tomorrow.”

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix glowered at him. “There's no need to wait until tomorrow. It can be torn down today.”

With that, she strode forward.

Li Mengtu seemed like he wanted to offer a further explanation, and even took a step forward to get closer to her. But her guards pushed him away. All he could do was send a quick voice message to Young Lord Aurora, then hurry after Spirit Phoenix.

“Young Lady,” he cried, “this is manual labor we're talking about. Let me handle it!”[3]

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix just continued onward furiously. She had already spotted the Hundred Flowers Palace, and as she and her retinue neared, they were like oppressive black clouds that caused the evening sky to turn dark. A great wind had picked up, blowing through the Hundred Flowers Palace, and causing all the flowers therein to sway back and forth.

And yet... there was a peony there, lounging in the spot that belonged to the young lord. She wore sheer garments which barely obscured her body beneath. Coupled with the languid expression on her face, she seemed to exude flirtatiousness. Hardly paying any attention to the wind from outside the palace, she sighed.

“Keep singing and dancing, girls.”

The hundred flowers laughed. The immortal music swelled.

Outside the palace, Li Mengtu saw what was happening, and his eyes narrowed. He took a few steps back, doing nothing to interfere.

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's eyes were full of rage, but her voice was as cold as ice. "Wipe this filthy place out of existence!"

The black-armored guards around her surged with frigid energy as they advanced toward the Hundred Flowers Palace. They didn't even need to launch an attack. The frigid energy roiling off of them caused everything to freeze over. And after it was frozen, it crumbled into ashes. As they walked forward, everything crumbled around them.

The master of ceremonies, Li Mengtu, and the Young Aurora Hall guards... did nothing to interfere. That was because, normally speaking... the only person in the Aurora Immortal Palace who had the right to tear down the Hundred Flowers Palace was Immortal Lord Aurora. Not even his four apprentices could do it.

But today... someone new showed up who did have that right. And that was the young lady who was about to be married to their young lord! In fact, she had more right to tear down the Hundred Flowers Palace than even the Immortal Lord. After all, the Immortal Lord himself had previously said that the place should be torn down.[4]

In other words, there wasn't a single person who had the right to stop what Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix was doing.

Thus, her guards marched forward. Rumbling sounds echoed out nonstop. Thanks to the actions of the guards, the Hundred Flowers Palace crumbled into ashes starting from the exterior and then moving in.

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix stood off to the side, watching coldly.

Li Mengtu sighed inwardly. *Young Lord. Ah, Young Lord. I wish I could have done something.*

As Li Mengtu stood there ruefully, the guards reached the interior of the palace. Now visible was the pond, the hundred flowers, and the fox maiden.

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix saw all of them. She saw the colorful gauze garments. She saw the debauchery. She saw the endless curves and long legs. Some of the women were enticing, some were seductive, some were pure, some were mature, and some were simply gorgeous. There were even some nonhumans....

Grinding her teeth, Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix said, "Filthy. Obscene. Dirty. You harlots offend public morality! How utterly shameless, you depraved hags!"

The hundred flowers bristled in rage.

But the fox maiden, looking very calm and composed, simply picked up a grape, put it in her mouth, and looked at Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. She laughed softly.

"Aren't you quite the beauty? Unfortunately, fate is a cruel mistress. If you weren't the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores, I'm afraid you would have ended up just like us. A wonderful morning glory like you would have ended up right here in the Hundred Flowers Palace, vying with the rest of us to attract the attention of our lord and master." The fox maiden sighed as if with regret.[5]

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's eyes became incredibly aggressive. Whether it was she or her host, they were the same in that, from the time they were small until now, no one had ever spoken to them in such a filthy and sarcastic way. The morning glory suddenly didn't seem very much like a morning glory. Glaring at the fox maiden, she suddenly thought back to what Fourth True Monarch had told her.

"A place as filthy as this," she said coldly, "and people as perverse as this... should be driven out of the immortal palace immediately!"

1. Embroidered balls are traditional decorations that are usually made from silk. Here's what they looked like. ❸

2. Red silk banners are another thing you see at Chinese weddings. Here's what they looked like. They often have red flowers made of silk attached to them. The flowers aren't specifically mentioned in this passage, but it would make sense to me that they do have those. ❸

3. The title used (young lady) here is the title she would bear as the wife of the young lord. It's more like "young (lord's) wife" if you directly parsed it out. ❸

4. In chapter chapter 1147 the Immortal Lord said to tear down the Hundred Flowers Palace. ❸

5. There is some wordplay here that doesn't come out in English. In Chinese "morning glory flower" is literally a "cow-leading flower." The "cow-leading" is a reference to the Cowherd from the folktale of the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl. The Cowherd is the male love interest in that story, so there are some obvious implications there. What is literally said is that "you would be a morning glory, who 'leads the cow' for our lord and master." ❸

Chapter 1163: Palace Lord of the Hundred Flowers Palace

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Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's eyes burned with rage, and her face was grim and fierce. She was really not used to hearing obscene talk. Although the person possessing Spirit Phoenix did not come from as prestigious a background as the real Spirit Phoenix, she was still from a rich and noble family. And thus, killing intent was raging in her heart.

It wasn't that she wanted to kill the hundred flowers. Nor did she want to kill the fox maiden. She wanted to kill... the consciousness that was possessing the fox maiden!

Fourth True Monarch had explained that, just like her, the fox maiden had been possessed by an outsider. She wasn't sure exactly who it was. But she was determined to find out for sure after she left this place.

In response to her orders, the black-armored guards surged with killing intent and martial auras as they advanced. Instantly, a tempest screamed in all directions, with the goal of crushing everything in its path and destroying all of the hundred flowers.

However, the ladies of the Hundred Flowers Palace, though seemingly delicate, had all been selected directly by Young Lord Aurora. And all of them were extraordinary individuals. They didn't just have good looks. They had dazzling talent, and none of them had weak cultivation bases. If they did, they couldn't deserve to be named among the 'hundred flowers.'

And what was even more noteworthy was that the fox maiden was in charge. Almost as soon as the black-armored guards unleashed their baleful auras, the ample-chested fox maiden sat up and crossed her legs.

Glaring, she said, "Every single one of us girls is a chosen cultivator. And every single one of us has been taken good care of by the young lord. We who live in the Hundred Flowers Palace are able to stand aloof from worldly affairs. How could a morning glory like you possibly claim that we're filthy?"

"Who cares if you're getting married to the young lord? It's not a real marriage, anyway! So how can you drive us away to anywhere? I'm very curious to see how you plan to get rid of us. Do you intend to just slaughter us right here and now??"

The fox maiden snorted coldly, whereupon the cultivation bases of all of the surrounding hundred flowers surged. Magical techniques and divine abilities formed in an instant. All of a sudden, Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix and her retinue found themselves facing stiff opposition. The proverbial swords were drawn and arrows nocked. Killing intent flared. Things looked like they were about to get violent very quickly.

Some distance away, Li Mengtu shivered as a voice spoke into his mind. It was Xu Qing. After getting his instructions, Li Mengtu rushed forward to stand in between the two parties.

"The young lord has given orders!"

All eyes shifted to stare at him.

Taking a deep breath, he said, "The young lord says the following: *'I am too ashamed to come in person. As I think back to the years of immortal music, and the company of the hundred flowers, I sigh in my heart. But all good things come to an end.... My father's orders cannot be disobeyed....*

"However, the hundred flowers have done nothing wrong. All fault lies with me. No one is to cause any harm to my hundred flowers. And each of the hundred flowers will be bestowed with 100,000,000 pieces of immortal jade, 100,000 immortal pills, 100 immortal treasures, and 10 pieces of immortal destiny....

"I wish all hundred flowers a safe and happy future. And now, you may take your leave."

After Zhong Chi delivered the message in full, he was left with a racing heart. He knew what had happened in real history. The Hundred Flowers Palace had been torn down and all the women departed. In some ways, the big wedding ended up giving them a chance to survive calamity. The history books didn't go into detail about how many actually left the immortal palace and thus escaped death.

However, Li Mengtu did know that, historically speaking, the Hundred Flowers Palace didn't end up being torn down until four days before the wedding. But now, it was happening much earlier than that.

After the young lord's message was delivered, the hundred flowers stood there silently. Soon, a feeling of grief filled the area.

Finally, the fox maiden sighed and looked around. "The young lord is being generous with us. Considering his sincerity, and the fact that the wedding approaches, plus the orders of the Immortal Lord, all of you... should leave his forsaken place. Now we follow through with the plan. There is no Hundred Flowers Palace here anymore, but there will be a Hundred Flowers Palace out in the Fifth Star Ring!"

Instantly, space-time began to ripple. In real history, the Hundred Flowers Palace had only existed in Young Aurora Hall in the immortal palace. It had never existed anywhere else. Considering what Starfire was capable of, and how long had spent in the Hundred Flowers Palace, there was no way was unaware of that fact. Obviously, had worked out a plan with the hundred flowers.

If the Hundred Flowers Palace ended up torn down, then they wouldn't really just disperse in defeat. They would go into the outside world and form their own sect.

And the name of that sect would be... the Hundred Flowers Palace! There would always be a Hundred Flowers Palace that belonged to Young Lord Aurora. And in the records of the Hundred Flowers Palace, the fox maiden would be listed as the first palace lord of the place! The story would pass down through the generations!

As a result of this, waves were spreading in space-time. And though Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix had canon, she couldn't detect that. But she was fully aware of the significance of these words in terms of historicity. Her expression suddenly became very serious.

Meanwhile....

Xu Qing stood in Young Aurora Hall, his hands clasped behind his back as he looked out the window, a melancholy expression on his face. Of course, inside, he was completely calm.

Although he didn't know history as well as Spirit Phoenix or the person playing the role of Spirit Phoenix. But he could sense the waves in space-time. From the moment Spirit Phoenix arrived, space-time had been rippling, which made it obvious that history was changing. That said, the changes were minimal.

At that point, he came to realize that Fourth True Monarch was probably behind the whole thing. He could allow some minor waves in space-time if it meant he could seize the initiative. His target had obviously been the fox maiden.

But now, the space-time waves were much larger. And Xu Qing knew why; it was Starfire's doing. Starfire obviously wasn't going to bet everything on Sir Vilespirit.

"How interesting..."

A quiet voice drifted through the hall behind Xu Qing.

He wasn't surprised at all to hear it. He slowly turned around.

A figure was materializing out of thin air. He had eyebrows like swords and eyes like stars. Clad in a violet-gold robe, he stood as tall and straight as a pine tree. Atop his head was a violet-gold crown inlaid with jewels and decorated with lifelike dragons and phoenixes. There was an otherworldly air to him. He was none other than Fourth True Monarch!

"What are you doing here, Elder Brother Fourth?" Xu Qing said with a wry smile. "Don't tell me you're here to make fun of me."

"This is all due to Master's orders, little Junior Brother," Fourth True Monarch said warmly. "There was nothing I could do to stop it. I just came to keep you company. I was worried you would be upset."

He didn't seem to be acting aggressively in any way, and in fact, came across as very sincere.

Of course, in reality, Sir Star Ring was closely scrutinizing the young lord. That was just how he acted on instinct.

Looking depressed, Xu Qing shook his head and declined to say anything.

"That said, little Junior Brother, I have to admit that fox maiden you won from Li the Chosen was quite intriguing...." Sir Star Ring seemed to randomly look at Xu Qing's eyes. He had known from the very beginning that many outsiders would focus their attention on the young lord, so it was no surprise that the fox maiden ended up with him. He also knew that it was impossible for the consciousness of an outsider to possess either the young lord or Immortal Lord Aurora. However, after his previous failure, he couldn't help but start wondering if that was true.

With a stunned expression, Xu Qing looked Sir Star Ring up and down in his guise of Fourth True Monarch.

That reaction caused Sir Star Ring to similarly react with shock. He was just about to say something, but Xu Qing beat him to it.

"Elder Brother Fourth," Xu Qing whispered, "you never paid attention to anyone in the Hundred Flowers Palace before. But now you're talking like that...?"

Sir Star Ring's guard instantly went up. The rumors about him were still circulating, so the last thing he wanted was people from this space-time to start suspecting him of something.

But then Xu Qing laughed. "Elder Brother Fourth, don't tell me you've suddenly set your heart on mundane matters? Well, that's fine. To tell you the truth, the hundred flowers have accompanied me for so long that I can't bear to part with any of them. But the fox maiden just arrived. If you like her, then you can have her. Take her as a handmaiden."

Although Xu Qing was speaking casually, there was no way Sir Star Ring could accept the offer!

First of all, it wasn't something Fourth True Monarch would do. What was more, the fox maiden wasn't fated to do that.

That said, even he was tempted. If he had the fox maiden as a handmaiden, then he could drive the outside consciousness from her to forestall future misfortune. However, even as such thoughts passed through his mind, he realized Young Lord Aurora was looking at him closely....

He shivered inwardly. *In my host's memories, Young Lord Aurora doesn't act this simplistic. Is it because he's suspicious of me now...? It's true that I'm not exactly acting like a true monarch.*

Having reached this point in his train of thought, Sir Star Ring laughed. "Please, I hope you never make a suggestion like that again."

Xu Qing also laughed. "For a second there, I thought... that you were going to say yes!"

He really was Young Lord Aurora. And Fourth True Monarch was really no one else other than Fourth True Monarch!

After the young lord's message was delivered to the Hundred Flowers Palace, the entire situation was defused. All of the gifts the young lord had said to be delivered were taken from the inner court of Young Aurora Hall. The fox maiden calmed everyone down, and they left.

Before long, the fox maiden was the only one left behind in Hundred Flowers Palace. She lounged there lazily, looking like she had no intention of leaving.

Frowning, Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix looked at her. "If you don't get the hell out of the immortal palace within ten breaths of time, then I'll have you cast out with force!"

Starfire smiled charmingly. "Oh honey, you look so cute when you're mad! No wonder the young lord was willing to kick the rest of them out."

Spirit Phoenix stewed in her rage for ten breaths of time. Then she turned and left. Along the way, she ordered, "Escort her out!"

The black-armored guards advanced. From the majestic pressure that emanated from them, they were obviously about to take action.

But then, a cold voice erupted like thunder outside of Young Aurora Hall.

"What do you think you're doing to my apprentice??" All of a sudden, Gongsun Qingmu from the Scourgebolt Palace appeared in midair. Looking very angry, he continued, "That fox spirit is my apprentice! This is her identity medallion, which has already been officially registered at Scourgebolt Palace!"

The fox maiden grinned, stood, and bowed to him. "Master."

Spirit Phoenix stopped in her tracks. The black-armored guards froze in place. None of them had the power to drive someone out of the immortal palace who was officially registered there!

Even stronger space-time waves rolled out.

Looking in the direction of Young Aurora Hall, Sir Vilespirit in the guise of Gongsun Qingmu coldly said, “I know you’re there, True Monarch. You just killed one of my apprentices. And now you’re causing trouble for another of my apprentices? Why does it seem like you’re targeting me over and over again?”

In Young Aurora Hall, Xu Qing looked surprised. He turned to Sir Star Ring.

Sir Star Ring’s expression did not change, but inside, he was uncharacteristically uneasy. He suddenly felt more loathing than ever for Sir Vilespirit.

Once this thing is over, and we’re back in the eastern planetary system, I’m going to personally track him down and kill him!

Chapter 1164: Mi Ming

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The situation with the Hundred Flowers Palace was resolved by the time the sun set. The hundred flowers had been dismissed, and were already long gone, pursuing their collective dream.

But the fox maiden... was still around. She was now an apprentice of Gongsun Qingmu, and thus had an identity medallion from the Scourgebolt Palace. What was more, she would soon be the palace lord of the Hundred Flowers Palace.

With those dual identities, Starfire was very close to accomplishing goal. As of now, was free to come and go as pleased at Young Aurora Hall. As an official cultivator of the immortal palace, it was nothing out of the ordinary for to pay a visit if wanted, unless Xu Qing expressly forbade it.

Considering was an old friend of Young Lord Aurora, the only thing Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix could do now was flick her sleeve and stalk off. She seemed angry, but that was only half-real. The half of it that was real came because of the things the fox maiden had said to her. The other half was an act for the sake of the agreement she had made with Fourth True Monarch. It was business, nothing more.

Regardless of how things worked out, thanks to that agreement, she was now under the protection of Fourth True Monarch. As for whether or not Fourth True Monarch got what he wanted out of the deal, that didn’t really have anything to do with her.

In the guise of Fourth True Monarch was Sir Star Ring, who briefly pulsed with a dangerous aura before saying a few random words and leaving Young Aurora Hall. He was planning to temporarily refrain from doing anything further regarding this matter.

And then, the space-time waves made more sand of time in front of Xu Qing. *Not exactly very much.*

He scooped up the sand and looked at the spot where Fourth True Monarch had just left. His eyes glittered.

I need to get rid of him. Soon. He's smart, and considering he's been beaten twice in a row, his third move... is going to be difficult to deal with. If he's still around on the wedding day, he might cause too much trouble for me to handle. That said, it won't be hard to take care of him.

He rolled the sand in his palm as he considered the matter. *So, how do I drive the outsider's consciousness from his body....*

Five days passed. There were now only ten days left until the wedding.

As the end of the month neared, the sky over the Fifth Star Ring didn't just feature the rosy glow during evening. Nor was it dark only at night. Sometimes, the sun would set almost as soon as it rose. And sometimes, rosy clouds would obscure the sun at high noon, making it seem like evening.

At the moment, the sky was bright on one side and dark on the other. Strangely, there was no moon on the dark side and no sun on the bright side. The sun and moon no longer cycled regularly. There were similar oddities in the weather patterns.

Mortals found the whole thing to be shocking, confusing, and even terrifying.

It was different with the cultivators. Although not all of them had experienced such things before, the ancient records provided a clear explanation. When one epoch led into another, and Immortal Lord succession occurred, the star ring would shift course and fundamentally restart. It would last ten days before the restart and seven days after, for a total of seventeen days in which the heavenly bodies blurred and the workings of heaven were thrown into chaos.

During the first ten days, everything sank into a state similar to primal-chaos. It was a time in which thoughts blurred and daos could not be sought. During the final seven days, heaven and earth were reestablished. All living beings benefited from immense blessings, being cleansed and able to bask in auspicious signs. The transformations to heaven and earth signified that the handover process was reaching a conclusion.

The dao of Immortal Lord Nineshores was being stripped away from the Fifth Star Ring, while the dao of Immortal Lord Aurora was being fused into it. That was the cause of all the strange phenomena.

During those seventeen days, all divination methods became less effective, and all forms of cognition grew weak. Omniscience did not function properly. That was why this time in history was so full of secrets. There was simply no way for people outside of that time period to truly know what went on then.

At the moment, everyone was looking up into the sky. That included Hordeslayer and Rampart in the sword furnace, Sir Star Ring as Fourth True Monarch in True Monarch Hall, Sir Vilespirit as Gongsun Qingmu in Scourgebolt Palace, Li Mengtu as Zhong Chi, and others whose true identities were not known, such as Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix in the south guest hall and Li the Chosen, who was still in seclusion.

There were also other people who were in hiding and had not yet been revealed as being outsiders. All of them could sense that the workings of heaven were degenerating. The great and unstoppable wheel of history was grinding onward.

Sir Star Ring laughed softly. This was the day he had been waiting for. The power of order would rise to the occasion.

In Young Aurora Hall, Xu Qing stood looking at the mixed darkness and light in the sky.

As the workings of heaven were thrown into chaos, and as the inevitability of history continued, he could sense that the 'lake waters' of this portion of space-time were deeper and weightier than ever. If he wanted to make waves, he couldn't just rely on rocks. He needed a gale-force wind. And that was because there was more working against the waves than outside forces. The water of the lake itself was also resisting.

After coming here and doing so much work and study into time itself, I now have a much better understanding of how space-time works. Some parts of history aren't that difficult to change. They can simply be rewritten.... But other things cannot be altered. If you even touch them, you'll suffer a major backlash! And the most important thing right now... is going to happen on the day of the wedding!

Xu Qing looked down from the sky to the collection of sand in his hand. He was just about to turn around and call for the fox maiden to be brought for an audience when he heard a stern voice speaking in his mind.

"Come to Aurora Palace to see me!"

Xu Qing stopped in place and bowed his head respectfully. "Yes, sir."

The voice belonged to Immortal Lord Aurora!

Aurora Palace was in the direct center of the immortal palace, underneath the Aurora Grand Hall. It was the location of Immortal Lord Aurora's sleeping quarters as well as his secluded meditation facilities. Normally speaking, no one was allowed to even set foot there. The Immortal Lord's four apprentices were no exception. Not even his son was allowed to go inside.

Therefore, when Xu Qing heard the Immortal Lord summoning him to Aurora Palace, he couldn't help but take it seriously. He also knew that he couldn't afford any delays, so he quickly left Young Aurora Hall and headed directly toward Aurora Grand Hall.

Before long, a complex of buildings appeared ahead. There was an enormous public square, paved with perfectly uniform limestone tiles that made the place glisten like a mirror. Magnificent jade towers lined the square on either side, making it look like a scene from a painting.

Going down the middle of the huge square were numerous imposing buildings. And in the very center of all of them was the biggest building of all. It had a very unique architectural style. It was towering and beautiful, with red walls and golden roof tiles that glittering resplendently. That building was none other than Aurora Grand hall.

Terrifying auras pulsed out of that building, causing Xu Qing to inhale sharply as he flew closer. The auras scanned him, then retracted, offering no obstacle to him. However, he could imagine what would have happened if it had been someone other than himself approaching.

Eventually, Xu Qing stepped in through the main door of Aurora Grand Hall. He immediately bowed at the waist.

Then a mysterious and majestic force descended. His vision blurred briefly, and when he could see again, he was no longer in the hall. He was in a long corridor.

Silent, flickering candles lined the corridor on either side. Thanks to their dim light, he could see greenish-black stairs in front of him, leading down into the darkness. The sound of metal clanking against stone reached his ears.

This was Aurora Palace. Based on his host's memories, Xu Qing was actually familiar with this place. He remembered coming here when he was young. After growing up, though, he had rarely visited. Taking a deep breath, he started walking down the stairs.

The clanking sounds grew clearer and louder as he descended. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, they were thunderous. What was more, waves of heat battered at him without cease. Eventually, he reached the end of the stairs.

There was a chamber there.

In the middle of it, a constant stream of earthflame shot up from the ground. Immortal Lord Aurora stood at the flame, using a shining silver hammer to pound a sheet of iron. Every blow he struck caused a deafening boom, and sent waves of heat out in all directions.

Immortal Lord Aurora wasn't using his cultivation base. Instead, he relied solely on fleshly body power. His expression was one of pure concentration.

Xu Qing took the scene in, then approached quietly and watched the Immortal Lord work. He had no idea why he had been summoned, nor did he have any idea what the Immortal Lord was doing. As far as he could tell, the piece of iron didn't seem unusual in any way. At most, it was... very hard.

As the forging process went on, the iron began to flicker with golden light. Time passed. The iron shone more and more brightly. Eventually, it was a pure golden color, and instead of being a random lump, it had a definite shape.

To Xu Qing, it looked like a golden plaque.

Immortal Lord Aurora stopped working. Picking up the golden-colored plaque, he studied it closely, and gradually, a look of satisfaction appeared on his face. Using his finger, he started writing.

Two families are now united in marriage by this covenant that never ends. From the moment this agreement is reached, the couple face a happy future of affinity. They are predestined to grow old together, and will be by each other's side until the sea does wither up and stone rots. You will put your union above all else, and will have many prosperous and famous descendants

Let this marriage agreement be for all eternity; it is beautiful like rosy leaves, forever inscribed here as the happy couple always abides by its romantic tidings.

And thus, the agreement is confirmed.[1]

Immortal Lord Aurora's style of calligraphy was as flamboyant as dancing dragons and swirling phoenixes. Every character seemed like a living thing crying out with joy and happiness.[2]

What was more, they had been peeled away from the mortal word, forming text that was backed with law and canon. They were words that could only apply to a son and daughter-in-law! It was a marriage contract!

Xu Qing felt enlightened just reading the words.

Only at this point did Immortal Lord Aurora turn to look at Xu Qing. "A name needs to go on here. Your name. Are you going to write it, or shall I?"

Xu Qing felt as if the question had struck him senseless. And that was because something completely and utterly outrageous had just occurred to him! He did not know, nor could he remember, the actual name of Young Lord Aurora! It didn't exist in his memories! Xu Qing was shaken to the core. Up to this point, he hadn't even thought about this. No one had ever spoken his name. Xu Qing said nothing.

Immortal Lord Aurora looked deeply at Xu Qing for a long moment, then coolly said, "I'll handle it for you, okay?"

His hand moved as he inscribed the name onto the golden plaque.

Mi Ming.[3]

The moment Xu Qing looked at the name, his mind started spinning. A very strange feeling welled up within him as he realized that, at that very moment, a name now existed in his memories. For some reason, the name seemed very weighty. In fact, it was so weighty that the ground beneath his feet cracked and crumbled. He was shaking physically.

It was such a profound moment that Xu Qing couldn't help but say, "Father, this—"

"It's nothing abnormal. After all, a marriage contract binds you for life." Immortal Lord Aurora took out a jade box and put the marriage contract inside, then suspended it above the earthflame. He seemed about to say something further, but before he could, the firelight suddenly dimmed.

Immortal Lord Aurora frowned and waved his hand. "You can leave now. I called you here because I heard about what happened with the Hundred Flowers Palace and wanted you to witness the oath on the marriage contract. The contract will remain suspended here, untouchable by anyone save the two of us. Ten days from now, on your wedding day, I'll come get it."

Xu Qing's vision blurred again, and when the sensation passed, he was outside of the chamber.

At the exact same moment that Xu Qing left, the firelight in the chamber grew even dimmer. Pulses of living black pulsed out of Immortal Lord Aurora.

More and more of it appeared until it created a shadowy figure. If Xu Qing had been there, he would have recognized it instantly. That shadowy figure was the exact same thing he had seen reflected beneath Immortal Lord Aurora that day at the lake!

The dark figure looked at the spot where Xu Qing had just stood and then spoke in a raspy voice. “In the time of the succession, when the workings of heaven in the Fifth Star Ring are the most chaotic, you took away the name of the sun and moon. You made sure that the people of the world forgot the name of the sun and moon without even realizing it. That includes the Immortal Lords and the Immortal Paragon. Your skill, combined with the chaos in the heavenly workings, ensures that, temporarily at least, the matter will not be noticed.

“Most ingenious is that you used the name of the sun and moon to replace your son’s name. This is really going to be a lovely surprise to your father, the Immortal Paragon.”[4]

Aurora looked expressionlessly at the dark figure. “You used the wrong form of address. You’re me. And I’m you. That’s *our* father.”

1. The text is full of idioms and metaphors that are understandable to Chinese readers based on context and culture, but which have little meaning to average English readers when translated directly. For instance, it uses “mandarin ducks” a few times. I’m sure many of you readers would understand that mandarin ducks are a reference to a married couple, but I’m also sure there are readers who would have no idea what that meant. And this entire passage is full of such flowery and poetic stuff. I wanted the meaning to be clear without use of footnotes, so my translated version is a bit more direct. Yes, it takes away some of the poetic flair, but in this context I feel it’s important. Beyond that (minor spoilers here), there is later wordplay I had to take into account, in which the meaning is very important, so, on multiple levels, this more direct version is necessary....

2. The idiom *dancing dragons and swirling phoenixes* is used to describe Chinese calligraphy that has a certain dramatic look and feel. There are different styles of calligraphy, but I did a quick Baidu search for calligraphy described in this way. Here are [a few images](#) to give you an idea of what the calligraphy might look like.

3. Mi Ming: Mi is not a common surname. It’s a rather literary word that means “to seek, look for.” Ming means many things, but primarily “bright, brightness.”

4. I’m sure some of you might be wondering if the name Mi Ming has anything to do with the names of the sun and moon that were previously mentioned in [chapter 1155](#) and [1153](#). Since I translated those names instead of transliterated, it’s not obvious. But the answer is no. None of the names share the same characters. In fact, the characters aren’t even similar, nor do they have similar pronunciations. THAT SAID, the character Ming, brightness, is literally made up of the two characters for sun and moon. Sun is 日 and moon 月 while ming/brightness is 明. So take that for what you will....

Chapter 1165: Push a Little Here and There

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Time passed. Six days. There were only four more days until the wedding!

The workings of heaven grew increasingly unstable. As the day of succession neared, the cycles of the sun and moon became more chaotic. In even just one day, it would go back and forth between darkness and light dozens of times. The entire world was affected. Sometimes, it was impossible to see the moon during the night and the sun during the day. Occasionally, everything would get mixed up, and a bright moon would be visible during the day, while a black sun came out at night!

It was pure confusion. Just like Zhou Zhengli's thoughts at the moment. He stood in the highest tower in True Monarch Hall, his head bowed as he spoke to Sir Star Ring, who stood in front of him with his hands clasped behind his back.

"Back in the eastern planetary region," Zhou Zhengli said, "you occupied such a high position that you could remain separated from the affairs of the world, thinking about the dao. At that time, Sir Vilespirit was like a bug to you. As a result, you were not really aware of his despicable and wicked deeds. But I was out there clashing with him constantly. So I understand him a bit more.

"Since you've inquired about him, exalted one, I'll explain a bit of what I know. He has not gained enlightenment of any canon. His canon comes from the evil broken sword inside of him. That sword has a name: Betrayal!

"And that's why everything he does revolves around the concept of betrayal. He's betrayed sects. He's betrayed his own beliefs. He's betrayed everything..." Zhou Zhengli seemed to be saying some things by not saying them. Looking at Sir Star Ring, he decided to stop for a moment to let him think.

Sir Star Ring turned and looked down at the bowing Zhou Zhengli. "In other words, he'll even betray an ally! His dao is that of betrayal, and therefore, to him, it doesn't matter who he betrays as long as he betrays someone!"

Zhou Zhengli sighed with regret. "You fully deserve to be called the number one Shining Star, exalted one. All it took was a brief explanation from me, and you understand the complete picture. In contrast, it took me years of fighting and a lot of contemplation to wrap my mind around it."

Sir Star Ring glanced at Zhou Zhengli. Zhou Zhengli had a very respectful look on his face and didn't dare to make eye contact. He just kept bowing. The tower was silent for a time.

Then Sir Star Ring said, "I know you're talented, Zhou Zhengli. And I know you're a schemer as well. You fought with Sir Vilespirit for years, to the point where he views you as his archenemy. How could you possibly be deemed mediocre?"

Sir Star Ring looked off at the horizon and calmly said, "Maybe feigning weakness is your dao. Or maybe you just work hard at it. But... if you keep it up, then I'll just peel your consciousness out of that body. It makes little difference to me if you're at my side. Therefore, what you've said so far about Sir Vilespirit isn't enough. I need you to give me a good reason to get rid of him right now."

Sometimes, *overwhelming power can defeat someone even ten times as skilled*. This was just such a case. It didn't matter how Zhou Zhengli planned or schemed. If he didn't provide a good reason

right then and there, Sir Star Ring would do just as he had said. He was perfectly willing to send Zhou Zhengli away. That was the simplest way to do away with his scheming.

Zhou Zhengli smiled wryly and then sighed. “Exalted one, you misunderstand me. Truth be told, sir, it’s not that I didn’t try hard. It’s just that your brilliance is so dazzling I fear I might burn myself.... Since you brought it up, I can briefly outline the problem here. If you notice any faulty logic, sir, please point it out.

“Originally, we had the initiative in this little conflict. But we lost the initiative to them. From what I can tell, the main problem is that we’re looking at things from too high of a vantage point.

“When you occupy such a high position, the plots and schemes of nobodies are hard to notice. You need to get on the same level as them. Only then will you realize how wily and ruthless they are. Only then can you guard against their machinations. After all, we’re in the right here. They’re the evil ones. This reality is something that I only recently started to realize, and it all became clear thanks to this conversation today.

“It might seem like there aren’t many people on our side, but I think... that we actually have the *most* people on our side. With the exception of certain outsiders, everyone in the immortal palace... is on the side of order, right?

“They’re all historical figures who have no idea what fate has in store for them. They’ll automatically follow the proper course in space-time.... And that’s order, correct? Exalted one, if I can understand such things, then obviously you do too. You wanted me to say it out loud so that... I would be bound by karma, and wouldn’t consider abandoning your service.

“But, sir, you really misunderstand me. Following you has long been a dream of mine. The reality is that I’m not very smart, and I’m worried about making bad decisions. That’s why I’ll always follow your lead, exalted one.”

With that all said, Zhou Zhengli kept his head bowed and said nothing further.

Sir Star Ring closed his eyes for a while. When he opened them, they shone brightly. He looked at Zhou Zhengli.

“After all of this is over and we’re back in the eastern planetary region, come find me at the Star Ring Pagoda.” Having said that, he turned and walked off.

“Many thanks, Milord!” Zhou Zhengli bowed deeply. Eyes narrowed, he watched as Sir Star Ring left.

Sir Star Ring’s advantage is that he’s strong and brave. His weakness is that he’s obstinate and self-opinionated. All I had to do was push a little here and there, and he’s raring to fight. Let’s just hope it turns out to be a good show.

Thunder rumbled above. A moment ago, the skies were clear and blue. But now the rain was pouring down.

However, that rainfall didn't produce so much as a ripple on the lake of space-time in the immortal palace. As the workings of heaven became more chaotic, and as the day of succession drew near, space-time grew more solid than ever.

Xu Qing was able to sense that thanks to his space-time canon. He knew that it was getting more and more difficult to create any waves. It wasn't some sudden development. It was just how things worked historically speaking.

I'm afraid this is the opportunity Fourth True Monarch has been waiting for.

He stood in Young Aurora Hall, looking up as the sky suddenly switched from darkness to light. At the same time, the pouring rain transformed into hail. The pitter-patter turned into a thunderous crashing sound. A frigid aura spread, weighing down heavily on everything, eventually becoming a powerful wind that stirred Xu Qing's hair. As the wind blew, he could sense the unstoppable flow of history approaching.

The current arrived. And along with it came a minor incident that shook the immortal palace! It could be called minor because it was something that was subject to change at any moment, and was insignificant enough that it was easy to overlook or misunderstand. But that supposedly minor incident still affected the whole immortal palace.

It was an order issued by Fourth True Monarch. He personally called on the immortal palace's Law Enforcement Bureau to launch an investigation into Gongsun Qingmu, Li the Chosen, the fox maiden, and Zhong Chi.

According to him, Gongsun Qingmu, an honor guard from the Scourgebolt Palace, was conspiring to betray the immortal palace. The evidence was the jade slip from Gongsun Qingmu's apprentice, as well as information about his background and other details. All of it implicated his Master. That was why Fourth True Monarch suspected that Gongsun Qingmu's apprentice had been planning to betray the palace on orders from his Master!

As for the fox maiden, Fourth True Monarch revealed the details of her life before coming to the immortal palace. That, coupled with the fact that Gongsun Qingmu had taken her in as an apprentice, cast her in suspicion. And though there was no clear indication of her motive, Fourth True Monarch claimed that he knew the truth. She was after Young Lord Aurora! She had intentionally gotten close to the young master to earn status and avoid being expelled. Given how things turned out, it was obvious that she knew Gongsun Qingmu, otherwise he would never have taken her as an apprentice without having any previous contact. All of it proved that she was conspiring against Young Lord Aurora!

As for Li the Chosen, he had intentionally tried to get Young Lord Aurora to take in the fox maiden. He had offered her as the stakes of a bet knowing full well that he would lose. It was all to get her close to the young lord. It was the act of an accomplice!

Meanwhile, Zhong Chi had been a companion of Young Lord Aurora for years. He had seemed very loyal, but for unknown reasons had a change of heart. The proof was the poison inside of him, which he himself had ingested! No one would intentionally poison themselves, and thus, Fourth

True Monarch believed that the poison was part of a secret magic being used to poison and kill Young Lord Aurora.

Fourth True Monarch's accusations shook the whole immortal palace. In the blink of an eye, countless people were paying attention to the situation. None of these accusations were made behind closed doors. By peeling back the lid on the entire thing, and letting everyone in the immortal palace see what was going on, order could be preserved.

With everyone as witnesses, the entire affair was out in the open for all to see. That way, if Fourth True Monarch was telling the truth, the matter could be handled swiftly. Everything could conform to order.

And if Fourth True Monarch was wrong, all he had to do was apologize and say it was all a misunderstanding. In that case, if there were any waves in history, they would be very weak. After all, the matter wouldn't affect the larger course of history.

To Sir Vilespirit and the others involved, it was a ruthless blow that they had no way to avoid or block.

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix paid close attention to the matter from the beginning. In order to make sure no suspicion was cast on her, she stayed in Young Aurora Hall constantly.

What was more, the situation with driving the fox maiden out of Young Aurora Hall left Li Mengtu no choice but to leave the service of the young lord. Before departing, he had come to visit Xu Qing one last time. Thinking back to everything they had done together left Li Mengtu feeling quite moved. Looking at the young lord, he suddenly felt reluctant to leave. It was an experience he would never forget. After bowing one last time, he made a sudden decision.

"Young Lord, your humble servant had a strange dream last night.... I dreamed of your wedding, only a few days from now. There was a lot of noise and excitement, and the atmosphere in the immortal palace was jubilant. Unfortunately... in the moment when you and your wife bow to heaven and earth, a great catastrophe struck. You never finished bowing.... The world became drenched in blood."

With that, he bowed one last time and walked out.

Xu Qing watched him leave, his eyes glittering. This counterattack from Fourth True Monarch came as no surprise. There was a conflict between people who wanted to maintain order and those who wanted to change history. Everyone had their own dao. And Xu Qing knew that the only reason he had come out on top in the past was that he was so well hidden. When fighting from the shadows, it was easy to come out on top against people in the light.

Because of that circumstance, the opponent was focused on Sir Vilespirit and the fox maiden. Unfortunately, the victories he had won from the shadows were minor, and didn't affect the big picture. History was going to unfold as normal without much changes. All he had changed were minor details. The other side had always had the advantage. It was just that they had forgotten about that thanks to his string of small successes. But they would remember eventually.

I'm just waiting for the moment that you do remember and then take the initiative.

He had just put a very important game piece onto the board. It was a piece that would cause a great tempest to rise up. Unfortunately, he wasn't strong enough to play this game alone. He didn't have enough allies, and what was more, the other side of the conflict needed to participate. That was how to make a big stir!

After all, when the side of order took the initiative to act, it would result in waves. They would be small, but... it was still something!

It's getting windy.

Rumbling filled the outside world as the wind erupted into a tempest, sending debris flying through the air.

Xu Qing's eyes turned cold.

It was time to use the wind to climb to the heights of heaven!

Chapter 1166: One Piece Revitalizes the Board

Chapter 1166: One Piece Revitalizes the Board

On that night, the heavenly workings were causing dramatic transformations. The wind kept picking up, thunder boomed, and lightning illuminated the darkness. Rumbling shook the immortal palace, reaching the ears of everyone, including Sir Vilespirit, who was playing the role of Gongsun Qingmu in the Scourgebolt Palace.

Lightning illuminated the hall in which he stood as Sir Star Ring stepped out thin air in the guise of Fourth True Monarch. Instantly, killing intent surged within him, all as a frigid coldness swept out, enveloping the hall in winter. Snowflakes drifted everywhere, and ice crystals began to build up inside Sir Vilespirit, filling his body and threatening to wipe out his consciousness.

"Stay? Or go?" Sir Star Ring said calmly. "Do you really want to be my enemy? Or will you join me? You already accomplished your goal, haven't you? So what is your decision?"

His clearly enunciated words turned into swords of ice, filled with the might of order. And all were pointed at Sir Vilespirit. Ice chains clinked into being, sweeping through the hall to become a mysterious spell formation, pulsing with brilliant mightiness.

Sir Vilespirit slowly looked up at the figure standing in front of him. He smiled a very wicked smile.

"What exactly did my old nemesis Zhou Zhengli say to you, oh exalted one? He understands me better than anyone. In truth, ever since leaving Young Aurora Hall, I've just been waiting for you to come. As for my decision...."

He lifted his hand, within which appeared a jade medallion. It was the fox maiden's identity medallion! Sir Vilespirit's eyes glittered mysteriously as he forcefully crushed it. A cracking sound rang out as the jade medallion crumbled into pieces.

"Upon investigation, I came to realize that Qiu Lingshan harbored evil intentions. She infiltrated the immortal palace in order to commit criminal acts. I'm willing to punish myself for failing to realize it sooner. I immediately stripped her of her status. As for whether she deserves the death penalty, I'll let you decide, True Monarch." [1]

Qiu Lingshan was the true name of the fox maiden in this space-time. With that jade medallion crushed, her status as an apprentice and member of the Scourgebolt Palace was revoked.

This was Sir Vilespirit's dao. Betrayal. That included betrayal of organizations and betrayals of allies. As far as he was concerned, it didn't matter who he betrayed, as long as he betrayed someone. That was how things were in this space-time. Everyone was plotting against each other. The fox maiden was plotting against him, and he was plotting against her.

The moment he had an identity and some allies, he had the foundation for betrayal. And just as he had said, he really had been waiting for Sir Star Ring to show up. The frigid coldness, ice swords, and chains faded away.

Sir Star Ring turned to leave. He had accomplished what he wanted to accomplish.

However, just before he stepped out, Sir Vilespirit spoke from behind him. "Exalted one, I've been fighting Zhou Zhengli for years now, and though he understands me, I also understand him. So I'll give you a little advice. That guy... believes great good to be evil, and believes great evil to be good. He's more complicated than you think!"

Sir Star Ring stood in the doorway, his expression unchanging. "Everybody says that if you take the Shining Stars and put them out in the world, they'll become ambitious and ruthless. That's why I care about what people do, not what their ideals are. As long as I'm the strongest, then I don't care what someone's ideals are. If they obey me, so be it. If they disobey, I kill them."

With that, he strode out and became an electric bolt of light that disappeared an instant later.

Sir Vilespirit chuckled. *This whole fourth world thing has been very interesting. Sir Star Ring from the east rarely goes out into the world, so he's only now finding out how difficult it is to deal with the other Shining Stars. That's why the arrogant fellow just can't stop from calling himself the strongest. Interesting. Very interesting.*

Sir Vilespirit smiled, and this time it was both wicked and deranged. Strangely, though, the laughter that accompanied it didn't come out of his mouth. It came from the broken sword inside of him.

Sir Star Ring was now outside of the Scourgebolt Palace in front of a courtyard. It was a courtyard that had been set up for subordinates of the palace. After the incident with Spirit Phoenix at Young Aurora Hall, the fox maiden had taken up residence here.

Those two psychos think they've figured me out and know how to manipulate me. Little do they know that there's a reason they're both Shining Stars in the eastern planetary system. They're both dao fruits that I'll use to nourish my canon of order in the future!

The moment Sir Star Ring appeared, the doors of the courtyard opened. The fox maiden leaned up against the door frame and looked at him languidly.

“That lousy Master of mine really isn’t reliable at all, is he? He crushed my identity medallion. He sold me out, through and through. And now you’ve come here to kill me, is that right?” She laughed softly. “You’re very clever, True Monarch. Now that I have no status in the immortal palace, I’m superfluous, and can be killed freely. It won’t cause any waves at all. After all... historically speaking, I shouldn’t even be in the immortal palace anymore. Well, aren’t you going to do it? I already did what I wanted to do here. I’m ready to leave at any time.”

smiled broadly, as if this visit from the true monarch wasn’t a surprise to at all.

But Sir Star Ring didn’t attack. Instead, he calmly took a step forward. “You’re right. But if you did what you wanted to do, why haven’t you left yet? No, I’d say you probably have another plan you’re working on.” He took another step forward. “Is it that you’ve come to realize you *can’t* just leave?”

He continued walking the whole time, so that by the time he was finished, he was inside the courtyard, only a few meters away from where he stopped walking.

Starfire was smiling, but inside, guard was up, and sensed great danger. It was exactly as he had just said. When Sir Star Ring had blown everyone’s cover, tried to separate consciousness from the fox maiden’s body, but had come to find that couldn’t. In the past, he had been able to, but now there was some intangible force preventing him from doing it. That said, he was an adept schemer, and thus, didn’t let that show on his face.

Before he could respond, Sir Star Ring continued speaking. “Am I right, unknown god?”

His last words struck like a lightning bolt. Starfire was stunned to the core. In his previous clash with him, he had worked hard to conceal the truth, and he had believed he had done a good job. After all, he was half a step away from being an Altar God, and he had plenty of secret magics at his disposal.

And everything that happened after that had seemed to indicate that Sir Star Ring had not detected anything unusual during their interactions. But now....

“If it was anyone else,” he continued, “they wouldn’t have been able to tell. But I’m from the Star Ring Pagoda in the eastern planetary region. Do you know why it’s named after the star ring...? Did you really think that you could fight with someone like me and that I wouldn’t notice you were working so hard to conceal your godly aura? The reason I didn’t say anything before is that... I wanted to see who else was working with you!”

He waved his hand, and a silver medallion appeared.

Astonishingly, the name Qiu Lingshan was visible on the medallion.

“This is a god-branding medallion. They’ve been used since ancient times in the Fifth Star Ring to subdue gods. As you would expect, you can get them here in the immortal palace. With this medallion sealing you, your consciousness can’t escape this place unless I permit it!”

He casually pushed his finger down onto the medallion. A sealing force specifically designed to target gods suddenly shot out, causing Starfire to shiver and gasp.

“I think it’s best if you stay right here for now. Tonight we’re going to see whether or not you have someone backing you. Will they come to your rescue? If they don’t show up by daybreak... you’ll find out what happens when I use this god-branding medallion on your true form. And therefore, I suggest you send a message asking for help.”

Sir Star Ring sat down with a smile on his face to wait for dawn.

Meanwhile, Starfire was trembling, eyes bloodshot already thanks to the power of the god-branding medallion.

The wind blew stronger and stronger. It swept through the immortal palace all the way to Young Aurora Hall.

Xu Qing’s hair stirred. He was walking through the wind.

Many things had taken place. First was Fourth True Monarch blowing the cover of so many people. Then Starfire explained that consciousness couldn’t leave the fourth world after was expelled from Young Aurora Hall. Next came Li Mengtu’s apology. Finally, Spirit Phoenix moved into Young Aurora Hall.

If this was a game of Go, then his opponent’s pieces would have him surrounded, left with no option other than to be devoured.

But all of it... has just helped me to see things clearly!

He looked off in the direction of the sword furnace, and then at Starfire’s residence.

As for the game situation.... Playing one piece the right way can revitalize the board completely.

He took another step and disappeared. When he reappeared... he had not left Young Aurora Hall, but instead, was in one of the side halls. This was where Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix had taken up residence! The moment he appeared, the black-armored guards surged with energy.

“Back down!” Xu Qing said quietly.

The might and power of Young Lord Aurora weighed down, and the streams of energy backed away. The guards had no choice but to allow Xu Qing to walk into the hall, bringing the wind and rain with him. There inside was Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix, seated cross-legged and looking straight at him.

The moment their eyes met, Spirit Phoenix's heart thumped in her chest. However, she didn't reveal that on her face. Instead, she took control of the conversation by saying, "What is it? Here to interrogate me because I kicked out the fox maiden?"

Xu Qing ignored her outburst, walked over the window, and looked out at the sky. "Zhong Chi just left. Before he did, he said he had a dream. He dreamed that before we could complete the kneeling ritual in our wedding, catastrophe arrived and everything ended up soaked in blood."

Spirit Phoenix snorted coldly. "Vicious lies! He should die for that!"

Without even turning to look at her, he said, "Vicious lies? You mean like the recent rumors? Supposedly some outsiders showed up recently. So... are you one of them?"[2]

"You're not acting like yourself today," Spirit Phoenix said, her heart racing, but a frown on her face.

Xu Qing smiled. He didn't turn around. But what he said next struck Spirit Phoenix like a bolt of lightning. "I don't care if you're Yuanshan Su or somebody else. Either way, your goal is simply to be connected by karma to my host. And you want to use that to become half-owner of the immortal palace. So the question is, do you want the marriage to succeed? Or do you want it to fail?"

As he finished speaking, he slowly turned around and looked her straight in the eyes, his gaze bright and aggressive.

His words were like 10,000,000 bolts of heavenly lightning striking her down to the core of her being. Shaking, she shot to her feet and took a few steps back. Her mind was being battered with waves of shock so intense she was struck as senseless as a wooden chicken. All she could do was stare at Xu Qing as if he was a ghost.

"Wh-who... who are you?" she stammered in astonishment. Never in her wildest imagination would she have even considered guessing that Young Lord Aurora would actually say her name.

It was enough to make everything clear. He was an outsider! Young Lord Aurora was actually an outsider. She was in daze, and even wondered if what was happening was real. It overturned everything she thought was true. It subverted all her expectations. In fact, it surpassed the level of 'astounding.' Yet, there was no denying what was right in front of her.

"You...." Yuanshan Su's face was ashen, and her thoughts were in complete chaos. She couldn't even speak, as she didn't know what to say.

Xu Qing remained as calm as ever as he looked at her. "My guess is that you want the marriage to succeed. That will make it more possible for you to reach your goal. Therefore, I suggest we work together to make sure the marriage happens. But if you refuse to work with me, then on the wedding day, I'll reject you in front of everyone. That will change history in a dramatic way, and cause some big waves! You need to give me your answer before I walk out of here."

He turned and walked toward the door. Step by step, he got closer.

Yuanshan Su couldn't breathe steadily. She couldn't calm down. All she could do was watch him walking away from her, her heart pounding. Just when he was about to walk out, she took a deep breath, a complicated expression on her face.

"I'll work with you!" There was no way she could refuse. In the final analysis, her entire plan revolved around the young lord. He was key to it all. That was why, from the very beginning, she had never considered Fourth True Monarch to be an actual ally. All it took were those handful of words spoken by the young lord for her to defer to him!

Xu Qing was at the door. He was not surprised at all at her response. He had known from the beginning that once he revealed that he was an outsider, she would have no other option than to join him. That was a foregone conclusion, given her goal.

Voice cool, he said, "Good. Go keep the fox maiden safe tonight, no matter how you do it."

With that, he stepped outside into the wind. Looking in the direction of the fox maiden's residence, he sighed inwardly.

You want to fight, Elder Brother Fourth? Well, tonight we're going to fight!

The wind screamed faster and faster, rapidly turning into a tempest!

1. You might remember that Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's real name is Zhou Linshan. This name here, Qiu Lingshan, is a different name. I just wanted to clarify this, because even when I was reading it, I was temporarily confused about whose name it was. The third character is shared with Qiu Lingshan, but the second character is not. The names are not connected. ❸

2. There is some word play that doesn't translate. The specific characters for what I'm rendering "vicious lies" have the exact same pronunciation as the word for "rumors." So what he actually says is something like "you saying the word 'vicious lies' makes me think of the recent 'rumors,'" which makes perfect sense in Chinese, but doesn't have the same ring in English. In reality, this play on words wouldn't work in spoken Chinese, because you have to be able to see the characters to differentiate between them. It would be like wordplay involving the letter Y and the word why? If you said something like, "Do you mean why? Or do you mean Y?" it obviously wouldn't make any sense without further context or being able to see the word. ❹

Chapter 1167: No Bluffing. Cards on the Table!

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The wind roared through the immortal palace. As lightning flashed and thunder boomed, Xu Qing advanced through the wind. The workings of heaven were in chaos, but his heart was utterly calm. Wild colors flashed in the dome of heaven, but no expression flashed across his face.

As of tonight, it was obvious what he had to do. The game piece he had played in the form of Yuanshan Su was the clarion call marking his comeback. And to go along with that call, he needed a spear.

And thus, he appeared in the complex of buildings outside of Aurora Grand Hall in the very middle of the immortal palace. There, terrifying divine will kept watch, yet he didn't slow down at all. He shot right through the public square to appear.... right in front of Aurora Grand Hall.

The storm grew stronger. Curtains of rain fell, and the wind scraped through the air and across the green limestone. Water splashed everywhere.

Amidst all that, Xu Qing ducked his head, clasped hands, and bowed.

"Father!" he said loudly. "There are a few things I need to do tonight. And I need to use the marriage contract!"

Thunder crashed, but it wasn't capable of drowning out Xu Qing's voice. After all of his observations and calculations, he was confident that his request would be granted. And that was because the marriage contract fundamentally belonged to the young lord.

Originally, he had been hesitant. But after everything that happened... he was convinced that there was no way the Immortal Lord didn't know about everything going on in the palace, including the situation with the outsiders! This section of history was a mere space-time reflection, but... the entities inside this space-time had extremely high personhood. Xu Qing refused to believe that the old-timers in the palace hadn't noticed the signs of what was going on!

And yet, for this entire time, they had remained silent. They had not interfered! They were not providing either assistance or obstruction to the side of order or the side of change. And that lack of interference amounted to a tacit approval! They approved of everything that was happening!

Thus, having combined the implications of all his observations and analyses, Xu Qing had come here tonight!

His voice entered the hall and reached a figure seated cross-legged there. The figure opened his eyes and looked outside. His left eye was black, while his right eye glittered like a jewel.

A moment later, the storm went still. The thunder and lightning ceased. And a golden beam of light glided out of Aurora Grand Hall toward Xu Qing.

It was a golden plaque, upon which was inscribed the marriage agreement. It was none other than the marriage contract for Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. As the contract floated over, the voice of Immortal Lord Aurora emerged from the hall.

"Due to various reasons, I cannot help you with the matter you seek to handle. You'll have to do it yourself. When it's done, make sure to get some rest as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir," Xu Qing said, keeping his head bowed.

After taking the marriage contract, he turned and left. Rain poured down behind him. The storm raged in front of him.

As Xu Qing left, the storm grew more intense. By the time lightning had struck three more times, Xu Qing had appeared outside the immortal palace's university.

Thanks to the memories of his host, Xu Qing was familiar with the place. It was composed mostly of small buildings constructed from immortal timber. The roofs were made of black tiles, and the grounds were filled with immortal trees. It was a beautiful and secluded place, complete with bridges spanning flowing streams. This place was truly suited to learning.[1]

Unfortunately, it was night, and it was raining hard, so the scenery was a bit different. The trees swayed back and forth wildly, and the streams weren't even visible. The bridges were obscured by the sheets of falling water, and the windows of the buildings glowed with soft light that seemed to separate the interior from the outside world.

Xu Qing walked right into the university. He entered the haze and the soft light without obstruction, as if the warding spells protecting this place didn't even exist to him. He was the young lord, and thus, though a few places in the immortal palace were restricted to him, the university wasn't one of them.

He quickly arrived at a multi-storied building with the address #317. This building served as the university's secluded meditation facilities, as well as a place to serve sentences after being punished. Thus, it was backed by the might of the palace, and was not a place that could be easily broken into or out of.

There was currently someone seated cross-legged inside #317. He noticed Xu Qing's arrival, and opened his eyes. When he turned and looked outside, he looked surprised.

"You—"

At that exact moment, lightning fell, casting bright light everywhere and illuminating both people. On the outside was Xu Qing. On the inside was Li the Chosen.

"Young Lord!" said Li the Chosen. He blinked a few times, looking chagrined. He had been extremely nervous in recent days, but had been too scared of Fourth True Monarch to do anything.

Thanks to how Fourth True Monarch had interfered, Li the Chosen had failed to get close to the young lord. His original plan had been to watch the young lord closely to see how history would play out. That would conform to his canon, which was that of mist and obfuscation. It was no ordinary mist, though. It came from history. The mist of history was the substructure of his canon. The more clearly he saw history, the more he could dispel the mist of history. And that dispelled mist would be absorbed by his own canon, strengthening it.

Sadly, he had been foiled before he could even take the first step down the path of his plan. All he could do was wait here, sealed, until everything ended. He could have simply left the fourth world early, but he wasn't willing to do that.

Upon seeing the young lord, he bitterly said, "Young Lord, it's not that I didn't want to go to your beast ranch. Someone plotted against me and got me sentenced to this place.... I—"

"Li the Chosen," Xu Qing interrupted coolly. He had no time for chit-chat. "You were willing to cause space-time waves to get close to me, all in the hopes of slightly altering the trajectory of

established history. That was the first step of your plan, right? Well, I don't care who you really are or what your goal is. I merely want to know: do you want to succeed? Do you want to get out of there?"

Xu Qing's calm voice hit Li the Chosen's ears harder than heavenly lightning, shaking him to the depths of his soul. His pupils constricted, and his wry expression disappeared completely, replaced by a look of pure incredulity.

"Who are you?" Li the Chosen said, struggling to keep his cool as he looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing didn't answer the question. He turned and started walking away. At the same time, he waved his hand, and the door that had been sealing Li the Chosen this whole time quietly swung open.

The wind blew inside, along with Xu Qing's voice.

"I don't care what your goal is here in the fourth world. I can help you succeed. Or I can make sure you fail. Right now, I need you to do something for me. Assassinate Fourth True Monarch. And make sure he cuts off one of your arms in the process."

Xu Qing left.

Li the Chosen sat silently inside #317. A moment later, he looked up, his heart racing. The fact that the young lord was actually an outsider was so astonishing that he wasn't sure how to react.

The young lord's words had contained a threat. If anyone else had spoken those words, they would have been nothing but that: a threat. The question would have been whether there would be follow-through. But considering the threat came from Young Lord Aurora....

I have no choice but to believe he'll do it....

Li the Chosen took a deep breath. Eyes flashing with cold light, he walked out of the open door!

A big wave had kicked up in space-time!

A person who was supposed to be locked in seclusion when catastrophe hit was now freed. He was now a trusted aide to the young lord. No longer locked up in seclusion, he was now plotting how to assassinate Fourth True Monarch, and have his arm cut off in the process. A wave like this was going to totally alter the course of history.

That's just the first wave tonight. Next is Li Mengtu.

Xu Qing left the university that stormy night. Next he appeared... outside Zhong Chi's residence.

Outside the Scourgebolt Palace, in the fox maiden's residence, Starfire was trembling and eyes were bloodshot. The god-branding medallion had completely suppressed, and could sense how terrifying its power was. Given that this type of medallion was the Fifth Star Ring's primary way of keeping gods under control, it was no wonder its power was beyond comparison.

Even who was almost an Altar God, could do nothing but tremble in the face of a god-branding medallion. In fact, even got the sense that the god-branding power could be applied to true form.

Sir Star Ring was currently seated in front of her cross-legged, looking very calm. Looking coldly at the fox maiden, he said, "We're halfway through the night. I'm very curious to see if I've correctly guessed who your backer is. And... hmm?"

He suddenly looked in the direction of the university. A chaotic wave in that direction had attracted his attention. And then, almost at the exact same time that he noticed it, he looked... at the entrance of the courtyard.

Thunderous rumbling sounds echoed out as Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's imperial carriage raced through the storm. As soon as it arrived, Yuanshan Su stepped out in the guise of Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. She looked very angry. Before Sir Star Ring could say a thing, she gained the upper hand.

"True Monarch, what exactly do you think you're doing to my Elder Sister??" As the words left her mouth, a host of black-armored guards fanned out into the courtyard.

Sir Star Ring's eyes flickered with uncharacteristic surprise. "I wasn't expecting *you* to show up."

Eyes radiating fury, Yuanshan Su spoke with decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron. "The fox maiden is the apprentice of my Master. Therefore, she's my Elder Sister. It's no surprise at all that I would show up when she's in trouble!"

"When did she get that status?" Sir Star Ring asked. He had taken advantage of Sir Vilespirit's betrayal to strip the fox maiden of her status. But now it seemed that Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix had given her a new status.

"A long time ago," Yuanshan Su said. "If you don't believe me, go talk to my father. But what's more important is that I said so."

She stepped forward to the fox maiden and waved her hand, using the power of her host's body to negate the god-branding medallion.

Starfire breathed a sigh of relief and then laughed softly. "Milady, your humble slave girl was almost convinced you wouldn't come to help."

Yuanshan Su ignored

Sir Star Ring watched all of this happening and laughed softly. Then he slowly rose to his feet, looking a bit absent-minded. Voice hoarse, he said, "I really could never have guessed that you would show up to save That said, your arrival has really cleared up the mystery."

“You might be the mastermind I’ve been waiting for. But if you’re not, then I think I have a good idea of who the real mastermind is. This is definitely unexpected. Very unexpected. Somebody got the identity that no one is supposed to be able to get....”

1. The black roof tiles mentioned here are a traditional type of Chinese roof. Nowadays they can be made from more modern materials like plastic or whatever. Incidentally, remember a while ago how I mentioned that the character Qing from Xu Qing’s name can mean blue, green, cyan or even black? Well, this is one case in which the character means black when used as part of this specific combination of characters. As you can see from [these pictures](#), the tiles are indeed black, or perhaps a charcoal color. 🏠

Chapter 1168: The Majesty of the Young Lord

Chapter 1168: The Majesty of the Young Lord

Sir Star Ring got an answer to his question, but it only scratched the surface of the mystery. The arrival of Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix cleared away enough fog for him to see things clearly. Unfortunately, not all the fog was gone, so no matter how he studied the situation, things weren’t completely and utterly clear. It was like *looking at flowers in the fog*.

That said, given what he could see thanks to his canon, he felt strongly that he was correct. After all, it was human nature to believe what you wanted to believe. And Sir Star Ring was human. That was the reason he looked absent-minded and spoke in a hoarse voice.

What was more, he knew that if it was as he suspected, then... there was no chance he could win this war in the end. And given the events that had played out, his opponent had only just begun to fight!

Maybe I can’t win. But there’s a possibility... I might not lose!

Sir Star Ring’s eyes glittered as killing intent rose within him. Ignoring Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix and the fox maiden, he turned to leave. The two of them weren’t important to him now.

At the moment, the most crucial element to him was time. And therefore, he wasn’t going to waste any time on these people.

Starfire looked at him and was inclined to block his path. Unfortunately, the pressure from the god-branding medallion made it so that all could do was look at Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. “He seems to be in a hurry, Junior Sister. What do you say we slow him down?”

Yuanshan Su’s eyes glittered, but in the end... she chose not to block his path. *All he told me to do was protect the fox maiden.*

Eyes narrowing, she watched Fourth True Monarch walk out of the courtyard and disappear into the wind and rain.

Thunder rumbled.

RUUUUUUUMMMMBLE!

As Xu Qing appeared outside of Zhong Chi's residence, he heard the crash of thunder. He walked inside. Everything blurred. There were spell formations and warding spells designed to keep people out, but they didn't do a thing to Xu Qing.

In the blink of an eye, he was standing right over Li Mengtu, who sat there cross-legged and meditating in the guise of Zhong Chi. A flash of lightning lit up heaven and earth outside, and the light reached inside. Li Mengtu opened his eyes and looked confused.

"Young Lord?" He had not been expecting Young Lord Aurora to show up. He quickly got to his feet and prepared to bow, but before he could, a gentle force emanated from Xu Qing that prevented him from bowing.

Xu Qing walked to the window and looked out at the storm. The wind blew and the thunder boomed.

"Li Mengtu!" he said calmly.

As he spoke the words, thunder crashed outside, and the sound of it slammed into Li Mengtu's heart. Mind spinning, his face fell. He couldn't have been more astonished, and though he opened his mouth to speak, it was Xu Qing whose words rang out in the room.

"I know what you're trying to do. You're using your canon to slowly infect the body you've possessed. You're trying to poison it to death!

"However, the presence of your own consciousness combined with the extraordinary nature of the body is making it difficult for you to meet the requirements to poison it to death. Therefore, you're hoping to take advantage of a key moment in history, and the mighty waves it will generate, to make your canon of poison more effective.

"Your host is supposed to die in the coming catastrophe, but you're hoping to kill him with poison. If you do that, then your poison will have the weight of history behind it. And technically speaking, it will have appeared in history before your own Master.

"As a result, it won't matter that this is only a reflection of history. It will still be an effective weapon for your inevitable fight with your Master in the future. If this history becomes real, then your canon of poison will have a foundation in reality. If this history remains a mere reflection, then you'll be able to have a foundation of an illusion.

"Either way, it will benefit your future cultivation. An ingenious plan!" Xu Qing turned to look at Li Mengtu.

The words caused Li Mengtu's heart to pound so loudly it was almost deafening. He was breathing heavily, and the look of respect in his eyes had changed into something fierce and aggressive. Yet within that aggression there was a profound and obvious incredulity.

He was thinking the very same thing that went through the minds of Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix, Li the Chosen, and Fourth True Monarch earlier. A person who was supposedly impossible to possess had indeed been possessed.... The result was confusion and astonishment.

In the blink of an eye, his canon poison surged within him. Staring at Xu Qing, he suppressed his astonishment and quickly regained his cool.

A thousand thoughts running through his head, he said, “Who are you?”

“You likely guessed who I am the moment I said your name,” Xu Qing said calmly.

Li Mengtu said nothing. He was indeed able to make an educated guess, considering that he had told Patriarch Diling about his identity, and instructed him to pass the information to Xu Qing. But then he thought back to all of his interactions with Young Lord Aurora, and he wasn’t totally sure. That was especially true considering that it wouldn’t be too difficult to figure out who he was. After all, poison... was his defining attribute in real life. He was about to explain all of this when thunder crashed outside.

Xu Qing noticed it and looked outside. He had a lot to do tonight, and it was going to take time to explain everything to Li Mengtu.

“I have a better way to accomplish your goal!” Xu Qing took out a special jade slip and was about to imprint it with information. Before he did, he stopped and looked at Li Mengtu. “Pick a fundamentally defining name for your poison canon!”

Li Mengtu’s eyes flashed. Given that Zhong Chi was the study partner of the young lord, he recognized what kind of jade slip that was. It was a jade slip of decree. His heart was already racing as he realized what the young lord was about to do. It was something he had dreamed of accomplishing, but had been unable to do.

Though he was still unsure of who exactly he was dealing with, he didn’t hesitate to say, “Poison of Mengtu!”[1]

Xu Qing nodded, then pinched the jade slip as he imprinted it with divine will.

“Zhong Chi, disciple of the immortal palace, will use the canon Poison of Mengtu to protect and safeguard the young lord! Therefore, Zhong Chi is hereby authorized to create the Department of Poison in Young Aurora Hall, to further the study of his poison and permanently enshrine it as an aspect of the immortal palace. Let his proclamation be heard worldwide!”

Li Mengtu’s mind was spinning more dramatically than it ever had in his life. He knew full well... that this was a righteous bestowal![2]

His identity was receiving a righteous bestowal, as was the foundation of his poison canon. This was clearly a far more direct way to reach his goal than poisoning himself, and it was also far more impressive! In fact, the two different methods couldn’t even be compared with each other.

As the decree was being imprinted, space-time waves rolled out dramatically, vying with the thunder outside in terms of intensity.

Upon sensing the space-time waves, Xu Qing flicked the jade slip into the air and sent it flying to Li Mengtu. “Wait until tomorrow morning. Then come to Young Aurora Hall to officially set up the Department of Poison.”

Li Mengtu caught the jade slip. He wanted to say something, but at the moment was at a complete loss for words.

“Finally,” Xu Qing said, “take some of your poison and give it to me.... It needs to be strong, otherwise how could you use it to protect me?”

He looked calmly at Li Mengtu.

Li Mengtu didn’t hesitate for a moment. Reaching up, he viciously sliced open his chest, causing blood to spray out. It was pure black. Next, he sent some of his will into the blood to catalyze the poison canon to the proper level. He put it in a bottle, and then he gave it to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing took it and examined it. “It seems to me that your understanding and mastery of plants and vegetation is imperfect. From the time I gave the poison canon back to you until now... you haven’t improved it much.”

Shaking his head, he walked out and disappeared into the wind and rain.

Inside, Li Mengtu exhaled slowly. As the words the young lord had just spoken seemed to echo in his ears, he smiled wryly.

You hid yourself very well, Xu Qing....

The storm got more intense in the immortal palace. Rain poured down, and the chaos in the workings of heaven grew more obvious. Half of the sky was suddenly red like evening. The other half was still pitch black!

In the pitch-black part, Sir Star Ring was flying at top speed toward Zhong Chi’s residence. The waves coming from there were like flames in the night. But even as he shot forward, a fog suddenly appeared out of nowhere in the darkness, blocking his path! Sir Star Ring stopped in place.

Li the Chosen slowly walked out of the fog, his eyes gleaming with the desire to do battle. “You seem like you’re in a hurry, Sir Star Ring. Where are you going?”

Intense fighting was playing out in the darkness.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was moving through the red of evening. He could sense that his actions were causing waves to fill the immortal palace’s space-time. At first, when he changed the direction of Li the Chosen, the waves were minor. But they picked up when events played out at the fox maiden’s residence.

Then he went to Li Mengtu and issued a decree, and the waves grew more forceful.

Next comes Li the Chosen's severed arm. That needs to become a reality. After that, the decree's contents will become effective, and the space-time waves will really kick up. Unfortunately... all of that won't be enough.

Xu Qing sent his divine will to the poisoned blood in his hand. Other than Li Mengtu's Master, there was only one person who could possibly understand his poison canon. And that person was Xu Qing. At the moment, he was focusing his powers of understanding on the poisoned blood, hoping to use the body of his host to augment it and... make it stronger.

Before long, he arrived at Scourgebolt Palace, and Gongsun Qingmu's residence.

Inside was Sir Vilespirit in the form of Gongsun Qingmu. Opening his eyes, he looked in surprise at the entrance. He could sense who was there. He had been ready for someone to come looking for him, and was very confident in being able to deal with whoever it was. But how could he have ever guessed that the person to come... would be Young Lord Aurora?? Just like everyone else, he was shaken to the core.

The storm raged, and as red light shone everywhere, thunder boomed.

Xu Qing did not show any trace of politeness as he stepped forward. The door exploded, and as the wind and rain entered, so did he.

Looking down, he said, "Your dao is that of betrayal. But that's not going to work on me."

1. Just a quick reminder that the Mengtu from Li Mengtu's name contains the characters for "dream" and "earth/soil." So if you translated the name of the poison, it would be Poison of Dreaming of Earth/Soil. In all likelihood, someone who didn't know the background of the name of the poison would think of it in that way. But all of the 'outsiders,' who of course are familiar with Li Mengtu, would instantly associate it with his name. And I think the meaning, in this case, is related to him as a person, rather than the implication of his name. So in this case, I'm choosing to render the poison name with his name instead of the translation of the meaning. ❹

2. The term here is a fairly unique term. The characters are the same as the ability used by Meng Hao in ISSTH, but it's not intended to relate to that character or novel. The term does not exist in dictionaries, and interestingly, when you search for it on the Chinese internet, the top results are all explanations of how it works in cultivation novels. Essentially, it's a magical way of authenticating something as being official. ❹

Chapter 1169: Gongsun Dies, Sword Furnace Shocked

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The sound of the storm, including the rainwater crashing down off the eaves of the buildings, filled the hall. As a result, Xu Qing's voice sounded even more majestic. Lightning crashed, sending a

flash of light inside, and framing Xu Qing as he stood there. His shadow... stretched out to completely cover Sir Vilespirit! It became a mighty pressure!

Sir Vilespirit had no choice but to take the fluctuations very seriously. He looked up at the young lord. He had not predicted this outcome. There were many people he assumed might come to him this night, but he hadn't even considered the possibility that it would be Young Lord Aurora, who, up to this point, had not acted strangely in any way. What was more, the young lord's words struck him to the core like a sharp blade.

As countless thoughts spun in his head, he spoke in a hoarse voice. "I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you mean, Young Lord."

His eyes shone threateningly as he looked at the person standing in front of him.

"You don't understand?" he said coolly. Xu Qing didn't seem to care about the threatening look in Sir Vilespirit's eyes. "Gongsun Qingmu, thanks to the secret orders I delivered as young lord of the immortal palace, everything you have done was justified.

"Your acts of betrayal were all carried out to accomplish the mission I gave you. You leaked confidential information about the immortal palace, but that was because I asked you to do so for the goal of rooting out traitors. You stole treasures from the immortal palace, but that was on my orders as I attempted to test the palace's defenses. You also killed people in the immortal palace, but it was all justified by me.

"Now, do you really want to test me?"

Sir Vilespirit shook from head to toe, and his expression was very unsightly. This was really a mortal blow against him. It took all of his betrayals and made them baseless. After all... in many instances, the words spoken by Young Lord Aurora were more than enough to prove anything. And because of that, nothing Sir Vilespirit had done could really be called a betrayal!

Simultaneously, the seeming fact that Young Lord Aurora was an outsider was causing a tempest of astonishment to rage inside Sir Vilespirit.

But Xu Qing wasn't done adding on pressure. Dropping down into a squat, he stared Sir Vilespirit in the eyes.

"To me, your betrayals were deeds of service. And because they were deeds of service, they weren't betrayals at all! If you had ten thousand years to work with, maybe you could afford to waste time. But here in the fourth world, time is very limited. There are only a few days left. Given that time frame... don't you think I can make sure that all of your betrayals fail, whether they be in the past, present, or future?"

As Xu Qing's words hammered into Sir Vilespirit, the dangerous look in his eyes grew stronger. Eventually, the air behind him started to ripple and blur as a terrifying iron sword took shape. At the same time, an explosive sword will surged.

Xu Qing's expression remained completely calm. He hardly seemed to notice Sir Vilespirit's aura change as he seemed to prepare to take action. However, he did look over at the broken sword.

“You think assassinating me will constitute a betrayal? Well, unless you think you’re so fast you can kill me before I react, then... the next best thing would be to put on a good show of it. Remember, I could issue orders to have you locked up all the way until the wedding and the catastrophe. To put it bluntly, the only way your betrayal will work is if I permit it to.”

Sir Vilespirit sat there scowling and not saying a word. The pressure on him just continued to build, until finally he spoke. “Young Lord, surely you didn’t come here just to say all that.”

As thunder rumbled, Xu Qing reached out toward the broken sword behind Sir Vilespirit.

Sir Vilespirit hesitated briefly about what to do, but in the end, chose not to stop him.

Xu Qing made a grasping motion, and the sword flew over to him. He gripped the blade with his thumb and forefinger. After examining it, he spoke through the sound of the thunder from outside.

“What if your sword was stained with my blood, and I said you had tried to assassinate me...? Could there be any more ultimate betrayal here other than killing the Immortal Lord himself? The betrayal of assassinating the young lord would definitely be very beneficial to you.”

Xu Qing ran his finger along the edge of the blade, causing a drop of blood to fall onto the sword. The sword vibrated excitedly. The space-time waves in the area immediately grew more intense.

Of course, there was no true success yet. However, Sir Vilespirit’s heart was already racing. He could sense that if a betrayal of this level succeeded, it would be immensely helpful to him. Struggling to control his breathing, he looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked back at him coldly. “That was how I had planned to help you succeed at your betrayal, and survive the process. But sadly for you, you made a mistake.”

Sir Vilespirit didn’t respond. He knew exactly what mistake he had made. He had mistakenly revoked the fox maiden’s status as an apprentice. Unfortunately, he knew there was nothing he could do now. How could he ever have guessed that someone would take an identity that should have been impossible to take?

As of now, he knew that regardless of who this outsider was, Sir Star Ring... had almost no chance of coming out on top. Without any hesitation, he rose to his feet and bowed deeply to Xu Qing.

“How can I make up for this, Young Lord?”

Xu Qing tossed him the bottle with Li Mengtu’s poisoned blood in it. Then he took out a jade slip of decree and imprinted it with divine will.

“Gongsun Qingmu of the Scourgebolt Palace conspired with outside enemies to betray the immortal palace and assassinate me, the young lord. Thanks to the safeguard of the poison created personally by Zhong Chi, Gongsun Qingmu’s assassination attempt failed, and he was poisoned to death!

“Given how many years Gongsun Qingmu prepared, it’s no surprise he has a clone outside of the immortal palace. Therefore, notices will be put up throughout the Fifth Star Ring naming Gongsun Qingmu... wanted dead or alive!”

After that, he sent the blood-stained sword back, then left without casting another glance at Sir Vilespirit. As for Sir Vilespirit... he had no choice about what to do next. He sighed, and with a bitter expression, opened the bottle and drank the poison.

He had no other options. If he didn't cooperate, there were simply too many ways for the young lord to force him to fail. It didn't matter if Fourth True Monarch had declared his apprentice's actions to be a betrayal. If the young lord wanted to... he could overturn the entire game board.

Sir Vilespirit was not really in a position to fight back. And that meant he had only one path going forward. As the poison spread through him, Sir Vilespirit trembled, and his skin gradually turned black. That poison was Li Mengtu's canon, and had been augmented by Xu Qing, making it astounding. Sir Vilespirit could do nothing to save himself from it.

As Xu Qing disappeared into the storm, lightning flashed, illuminating the hall and revealing that Sir Vilespirit was seated cross-legged, with his head drooping down onto his chest. He was dead! His dao was gone, and his mind perished. Sir Vilespirit's consciousness had been driven out of the fourth world!

As Xu Qing had said, he could stay behind if he wanted, but had picked the wrong path. Thus, his only true choice had been to ingest the poison. The moment he died... two huge space-time waves surged through the immortal palace!

The first came because Gongsun Qingmu's assassination betrayal had a foundation and was settled conclusively. That situation caused a huge wave. The other came from Zhong Chi. As of that moment, the decree Xu Qing had given to Zhong Chi became a closed loop! He had successfully safeguarded the young lord! The space-time tempest became like a vortex, or a blooming flower within the wind and rain.

As it spun, Xu Qing continued on his way. His next destination was... the sword furnace where Hordeslayer and Rampart were! That was his last place to visit that night.

As he neared, the space-time waves coming from everyone else grew stronger. Eventually, those coming from Li the Chosen grew incredibly dramatic!

Xu Qing turned and looked in that direction. *Li the Chosen's arm was just severed.*

Large amounts of space-time sand began to form around Xu Qing, shining with dazzling light that almost made him seem illusory. Looking away from it, he continued on his way.

Step by step, he got closer to the sword furnace. Soon, he caught sight of it.

The sword furnace, located in the middle of a spell formation, was pitch black and emanated unspeakable might. There was more thunder here than anywhere else, as lightning bolts similar to heavenly tribulation fell constantly and hit the sword furnace. Every bolt of lightning sent sparks exploding out and showering down. Even from a distance, it was a majestic and mysterious sight.

The constantly showering sparks were sucked in by the spell formation and turned into a sea of electricity. Aggressive sword energy was building up in the sword furnace, and it seemed just on the verge of erupting out!

“You two have a much simpler hiding spot than everyone else,” Xu Qing said coolly. “You possessed sword embryos. If it weren’t for the increase in waves recently, I wouldn’t have been able to find you very easily. Most interesting of all is that the two of you are taking advantage of your situation to emerge early.”

When Hordeslayer and Rampart heard his words, they trembled in shock. But then Xu Qing spoke again.

“Well, that’s fine. It will just make it easier to realize who’s in charge!” The moment the words ‘who’s in charge’ were spoken, lightning crashed off in the distance.

Amidst the silver lightning bolts was Sir Star Ring, who shot toward the sword furnace in a beam of prismatic light as Fourth True Monarch, his expression grim and his killing intent raging.

Chapter 1170: The Square and the Compass

Chapter 1170: The Square and the Compass

Lightning and thunder went wild as Sir Star Ring shot through the air in the form of Fourth True Monarch. He pierced through heaven and earth like a spear, moving with mountain-toppling, sea-draining momentum....

Nothing could block his path! Amidst intense rumbling sounds, he smashed through the outer wall of the building that contained the sword furnace. As the rubble rained down and rain fell... he landed right next to the furnace! He was standing right in front of Xu Qing! His incredible momentum caused a virtual tempest to whip up around him.

Xu Qing’s garments flapped, and his hair whipped about. But he stood as firm as a mountain, not taking even a single step backward.

His expression remained the same as ever as he looked coolly at Sir Star Ring. “You seem to be in a good mood tonight, Elder Brother Fourth.”

“As I expected, it’s you!” replied Sir Star Ring, a complicated look in his eyes.

Endless bolts of lightning flowed across his entire body, eventually streaming down his legs to spread out into the surroundings. As for his eyes... when they locked onto Xu Qing, all traces of doubt within him were wiped out. As his thoughts went wild, his expression became incomparably grim, and massive killing intent built up within him.

“It’s truly a surprise you hid yourself so well...” he said, taking a step toward Xu Qing. “You were the one who spread those rumors! I set up the situation with Sir Vilespirit to try to draw you out, but you sent the fox maiden in your stead.”

He took another step forward. “I arranged for Yuanshan Su to interfere, but thanks to your alliance with Sir Vilespirit, you got her a new status, and my efforts to drive her away failed. After I blew everyone’s cover, you made sure Sir Vilespirit’s betrayal worked. Then... you cowed Yuanshan Su,

helped Li Mengtu succeed, got Sir Vilespirit to kill himself, and sent Li the Chosen to block my path.

“I have to admit that you’re very, very clever! You have an identity that makes you impervious to everyone. And that indicates that I have no way of winning this war. After all, if I make a move here... it will cause waves! I suppose that was a factor in your plans.”

Sir Star Ring took a third step forward. He was fully aware that because of the identities held by himself and his opponent, there was no historical basis for them to fight. If he started a fight, it would cause the very waves he was trying to prevent. And protracted fighting would lead to injuries that would make the waves even bigger.

“But... I still have an option other than losing!” When he took his fourth step, his energy surged. Thunderous rumblings surrounded him as a terrifying aura erupted from him. Eyes burning with killing intent, he shot toward Xu Qing!

His way of not losing was to drive Xu Qing’s consciousness out! If he did that, then even though he would fail to maintain order, at least he could get rid of his opponent, and thus, not lose to him. Afterward, there was always the possibility he could smooth everything out! After all, the wedding day was the most important event of this fourth world space-time!

As his voice rang out and his energy surged, he shot forward, all while tens of thousands of chains made of canon swept out around him. They filled heaven and earth with dazzling light, causing the dark sky over the sword furnace to turn as bright as day. It even outshone the lightning, causing everything to dim in relation to the pure order.

And yet, there was more. A host of spell formations rumbled into being behind Sir Star Ring. There were nine layers, each layer complex and majestic, and all of them shining with a different color of light.

There were a total of seven colors, plus black and white. Nine colors. Nine formations. As they spun, they emanated a terrifying pressure that could shake heaven and earth. That force, along with the tens of thousands of chains, and Fourth True Monarch’s strength, was all closing in directly on Xu Qing. When Sir Star Ring attacked... he didn’t hold anything back!

Inside the sword furnace, Hordeslayer and Rampart, who were still reeling from Xu Qing’s words, could sense the dramatic events outside.

“It doesn’t matter if Young Lord Aurora is an outsider like us....”

“Right now, this is the best opportunity we could have!”

“We should take advantage of their fighting to try to form the immortal swords!”

“Whatever happens here beyond that has nothing to do with us. Even if they destroy space-time and throw everything into chaos, it won’t have any karmic connection to us!”

“We’re going to get our fourth world good fortune without any hitch at all!”

Hordeslayer and Rampart took advantage of the moment, holding back none of their strength as they tried to catalyze the immortal swords into being as quickly as possible. In the blink of an eye, sword energy raged within the furnace. The immortal swords were about to come into the world!

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he saw what was happening to the sword furnace. He knew instantly that they were taking advantage of his fight with Sir Star Ring to form the swords early and avoid karma.

He also knew that if this was happening in the real world, there was no way he could fight Sir Star Ring. Sir Star Ring was number one among the Shining Stars, and had gained enlightenment of his own mighty and mysterious canon. What was more, he was at the absolute peak of Imperial Sovereign, and was half a step into the Grand Emperor level. He had even defeated an actual Grand Emperor in combat....

But this was the fourth world. The body of Xu Qing's host could make up for the weakness of his actual cultivation base. And even if Sir Star Ring took advantage of Fourth True Monarch's body to unleash power superior to his own, the reality was that the space-time waves in the fourth world were a weapon for Xu Qing. The fourth world was really the best battlefield for him at the moment. What was more... his host's status could also be used as a weapon.

Therefore, Xu Qing waved his hand, and an invisible space-time tempest immediately rumbled out explosively.

As a result, the incoming chains started to blur.

Then Xu Qing waved his hand again, and space-time sand floated out, surrounding him and causing him to fuse into space-time. He immediately became blurry.

"You set things up ingeniously. But you're still lacking because... you're too weak!" Sir Star Ring kept his eyes on Xu Qing as he pointed a finger up into the sky.

Instantly, the nine-layered spell formation began to spin rapidly, becoming a vortex out of which spewed an ancient aura. Next, a green stone stele began to emerge from the vortex, and the sensation of ancient time grew vastly more intense.

Unreadable text and magical symbols flowed across the surface of the stone stele, making it look infinitely mysterious. The chains of orders began to vibrate, all while explosively unleashing the power of order. Apparently, this stone stele was one of the origins of order!

Sir Star Ring had summoned it to be the heart of the spell formation. Then he pushed his hand in Xu Qing's direction.

"Be expelled by order!"

Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. Winds screamed. The green stone stele rumbled loudly. And as the vortex of the formation spun, the mightiness of the aura raged out, along with an expelling will that crushed down on Xu Qing. It looked like the space-time waves were about to disperse.

Not even Xu Qing, fused as he was with space-time, could hide himself from them. He was on the verge of being totally crushed. Then Xu Qing looked up.

“Elder Brother Fourth, just you coming here was too much.... You’ve already entered into my chaotic sea of space-time.”

As the words left his mouth, he gently waved his hand. The sand of time in the area was swept about, causing the sand to disperse through heaven and earth. The friction of the sand rubbing against itself and floating about caused one timeline after another to appear. They were timelines of chaos.

It wasn’t just about time flowing faster, being reversed, or stopping. There was something more profound going on. It was like a formless river that was everywhere at the same time. And yet it wasn’t set rigidly in one place. The power of the outside world, or alterations, could bring about different transformations.

A good example was the Desert of Time, which was the manifestation of the life essence treasure of Immortal Lord Aurora’s wife. What it revealed was subsidiary branches of time.

“Any who enters my chaotic sea will sustain the effects of time,” Xu Qing said, his eyes turning cold. “Your every movement will create chaotic timelines. You will be hit by countless timelines, causing you to either die or go insane! Enter the sea and find bitterness. Experience tribulation. Time comes to cease. It is... Infinite Timelessness!”[1]

As his voice echoed out, all of the chains present, all of the symbols in the spell formation, the green stone stele, and Fourth True Monarch’s body... were hit by the spreading space-time sand, whereupon countless timelines appeared. All were wrapped up. And then, the chains, the spell formation, the stone stele, and Fourth True Monarch began to ripple, distort, and blur.

The chaotic sea of space-time erupted. Chaos was being used to counter order!

Sir Star Ring looked at the countless timelines covering him within the sea of chaos, and his eyes sharpened.

“So this is how you’re breaking order.... If this was happening in real life, it would cause me some trouble. But do you know why I chose to possess Fourth True Monarch?”

Sir Star Ring lifted his foot, and when he stepped forward, ripples flowed across the sea of space-time chaos. But when ripples appeared on a sea of chaos, those ripples represented order!

“It’s because Fourth True Monarch was the original founder of the Star Ring Pagoda! Though he perished in the catastrophe that befell the immortal place, the Order Pagoda was built outside of the palace. It continued on after that, until it was eventually renamed the Star Ring Pagoda!

“I inherited the name Star Ring, and I gained enlightenment of order. Therefore... I am completely in unison with Fourth True Monarch here, and I can unleash Fourth True Monarch’s essence of order!”

Sir Star Ring's eyes suddenly shone as if with starlight. Astonishingly, his eyes seemed to contain twin seas of stars! Each sea of stars contained millions upon millions of heavenly bodies, and all of them were shining brightly and arranged in a specific sequence....

Then a majestic voice echoed in heaven and earth.

“Order is another word for rules. Without rules, nothing can be accomplished. But the word ‘rules’ is made from two characters. The first is the character for the compass. The second is the character for the carpenter’s square.

“As they say, you can lay the square down to measure a piece of rope, or stand it upright to measure height. Invert the square and you can measure depths, or place it vertically to measure distance. Bend it to measure something circular, flatten it to measure something flat.”[2]

As the words were spoken, they formed a dao resonance. At the same time, the sea of stars in Sir Star Ring’s left eye rearranged themselves into the shape of a carpenter’s square! Within his right eye, the stars took the shape of a measuring compass!

This was... using the square to set life and death, while using the compass to depict reincarnation!

1. This dialogue is almost exactly the same as what was said in [chapter 1117](#). ㊦

2. The saying “without rules, nothing can be accomplished” is from the *Mencius*. Because it’s a famous saying from real life, I want to keep the common translation. But there is some significant wordplay to address. Much of it I conveyed by spelling things out more overtly than in Chinese. But some elements require additional explanation. The second part of the saying from the Mencius, which is generally rendered as “nothing can be accomplished,” is more literally “cannot form the fangyuan.” Fangyuan is made from two characters. One character means, among other things, “flat/square” while the other means “circular.” This combination of characters can mean different things, among them: circumference, neighborhood, surrounding area, radius, general area, etc. Add to that the fact that the square and circle have implications in Chinese mythology (specifically, I’m talking about the square from fangyuan, not the square from “carpenter’s square,” which is a different character altogether). This was something that caused a lot of trouble for me when I first started translating xianxia. Long story short, the square represents earth and the circle represents heaven. Given that, it kind of makes sense to think of the square and circle as representing “everything/anything,” as the combination essentially represents heaven and earth, in other words, everything. Readers of *ISSTH* might remember a scene very early in the novel when there was a section about the square and circle motif being inverted, which was said to be an inversion of the natural order of things. So this entire passage, and by extension the ability, has multiple levels of wordplay and meaning. I wouldn’t be surprised if there are some elements that didn’t occur to me about the symbology and whatnot. But at least now you get a general feeling for it. In the next chapter, the square and circle aspect will become important. ㊦

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Chapter 1171: Two Excited Swords

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As of this moment, Sir Star Ring was revealing the true nature of Fourth True Monarch's power. Similar to the situation with the thirteen coffins, he couldn't manipulate them perfectly. But on a fundamental level, and in terms of personhood, they were a dramatically awesome force.

A sound rang out that surpassed any sounds of nature. It was greater than any dao resonance, as if it represented the order of the universe and the rules of the starry sky. The moment it happened, the carpenter's square made of millions upon millions of stars in his left eye became manifest externally, revealing the power of order!

It was laid down to form the boundary of the world. It stood upright to outline the upper limit. It was inverted to determine the depth of the world. It was placed vertically to establish distance! Gradually, all of that converged into a square around Xu Qing. It became... a square world around Xu Qing.[1]

Within that independent world, chains began to flow, almost as if it were a prison isolated from the outside world. Xu Qing was being cut off from the local space-time! And that would leave him without a foundation! This was the way to vanquish his sea of chaos!

A very serious expression appeared in Xu Qing's eyes as he realized that he couldn't block this manifestation of order. Within this world, his consciousness was like a mortal being suffocated. It felt very uncomfortable.

That was because as he was separated from the space-time of the fourth world, he lost the augmentation of space-time, and he was losing the foundation he needed to keep his consciousness inside of Young Lord Aurora. All of a sudden, images appeared around him. They were blurry versions of himself, and they represented his consciousness, which had come and fused into Young Lord Aurora. But now... he was being separated, and so was his consciousness.

And yet, things weren't over yet. Next, the circular compass in Sir Star Ring's right eye manifested outside, and began to draw a circle around Xu Qing!

When the circle appeared, rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth, and great daos trembled. Within that circle was an infinitude of circles, layer upon layer all with a beginning but no end, creating life and death. This was reincarnation!

All of the circles were spinning at different rates, creating a terrifying gravitational force! It weighed down on Xu Qing, and combined with the previous force of expulsion to make it even stronger. It was going to fully drive Xu Qing's consciousness out of the body of Young Lord Aurora, and expel it from this space-time.

Inside, Xu Qing sighed regretfully. In this version of history, Fourth True Monarch was truly a formidable person with great potential. He knew that he was no match for this. Yet he wasn't flustered; from the moment he had decided to fight Sir Star Ring, he had begun preparing thoroughly.

As the images around him began to disperse, he reached up and rubbed his lips. That caused thunder to rumble. Countless lightning bolts converged, and cracking sounds rang out as they turned into the hand of an old man. When that hand appeared, everything in existence went still.

Next, the fingers of the hand formed an incantation sign. The sign created a resonance with heaven and earth. Everything trembled as the natural and magical laws of the world were affected, including all order and rules.

This was Young Lord Aurora's canon... Three-Karmas Ten-Evils Seal! Black karma fire erupted all over Xu Qing, then spread out in all directions. The fire was so intense it could burn anything it touched, and in the blink of an eye, the world that was separating him from everything else turned into a sea of flames. Then it swept back inside of Xu Qing, filling him and turning into a sealing mark!

When the mouth could not speak, when the karma of the mouth was pure, when the body was at peace, when one was fully without concern, ten thousand thoughts could flourish! Sealing one's own mouth would seal one away from death! This was sealing the karma of the mouth![2]

This sealing was resisting the force of expulsion! The world trembled as black karma fire covered Xu Qing. Then he looked up at Sir Star Ring, his eyes glittering. The hand of lightning went into a different incantation sign. Thunder rumbled.

As was said, the body could not tread a vile path, could not harm life, could not kill, steal, or be obscene. The karma of the body was absolutely pure. When the body was pure, nothing in existence could defile it. No wickedness could stain it. This was the second of the three karmas. The karma of body sealing!

When the body does not move, and was not within karma, it could not be expelled. It was as if it didn't exist, and thus there was nothing to expel. This karma supported reincarnation!

Xu Qing stood there like a reef amidst crashing waves. No matter how the wind and rain raged, he stood tall. How could his reincarnation be expelled?

The square world trembled. The circle of reincarnation shook. The sound of it spread in all directions.

Seeing this, Sir Star Ring's heart filled with determination. He knew that this fight was going to be his last chance. Eyes glittering, he extended the index and middle fingers of his right hand and pushed them against his eyes, one on each eye! The eyes turned crimson, as if the seas of stars within them had become soaked in blood. Within the blood-red seas of stars, the power of order emanated a blood-red glow that turned into punishment that rumbled toward Xu Qing.

"Punishment!"

The square world and circle of reincarnation were bolstered by the power. Blood-red light raged, causing the force of expulsion to start working even more dramatically.

Xu Qing shivered from head to toe, and felt more clearly than ever that he was being expelled. In fact, he felt like he was almost completely separated from Young Lord Aurora's fleshly body. Above that body appeared... a projection of his true image.

"As I expected, it's you!" When Sir Star Ring saw the true manifestation of Xu Qing's consciousness, his killing intent raged. Holding nothing back, he went all out to expel him from the world.

But then, the projection of Xu Qing, as well as Young Lord Aurora's fleshy body, raised their hands. And up above, the hand of lightning went into another sign.

It was the third of the three karmas from Three-Karmas Ten-Evils Seal. It was... sealing the karma of will!

Thoughts and actions could be both righteous or evil. The good would be kept, and the evil would be expelled! Good karma could include refraining from greed, anger, or unorthodox opinions. It could bless the body, become boundless benevolence, and illuminate anything and everything with great auspiciousness. Bad karma could include embracing greed, anger, or unorthodox opinions. It could lead one to worship false deities, make one as dark as a wretched devil, take away light, and bring misfortune.

This seal did not lock down the body or bind the mouth. It put fetters on canon! You could say that the first two karmas affected oneself, while the third karma would be directed at the enemy!

As it appeared, it bound order and restricted rules. What was more, it completely enveloped Sir Star Ring.

Afterimages sprang up around him as the projected image of his consciousness was locked onto by evil karma. Clearly... the sealing of the karma of will was driving his consciousness out of his body! Both of them were trying to expel each other!

The projected consciousnesses of Sir Star Ring and Xu Qing were visible above the heads of Fourth True Monarch and Young Lord Aurora. Xu Qing faced the pressure of reincarnation and the square world. Sir Star Ring was being burned by karma fire, and his evil karma could not be tolerated by heaven and earth, and thus, he was being expelled. They were both fighting back viciously against the other!

This was a clash of canon. It was a clash between Fourth True Monarch and Young Lord Aurora. It was a clash of order versus eternity. And most of all, it was a fight between Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring!

As the clash went on, the expelling force from the square world began to weaken. The driving away caused by the circle of reincarnation slowed down. But they did not disappear. They could be slowed, but similar to how a torrential downpour could be blocked temporarily, they could not be reversed.

As Sir Star Ring saw that, and as the karma fire burned around him, he fought back against the force of expulsion to raise his hand. At the same time, his eyes shone with determination. He would pay whatever price he had to in order to drive the consciousness of his enemy away.

Xu Qing's eyes shone brightly as he prepared to take out the marriage contract.... That was his ultimate trump card in this fight; if utilized at the right time, it could completely reverse the situation.

But just as Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring were both about to go all out to defeat each other... the sword furnace down below began to rumble loudly!

An aggressive will, like none other in the world, erupted from inside the sword furnace! It was a sign the immortal swords were about to come out into the world.

Hordeslayer and Rampart had fused their consciousnesses with the sword embryos, and had previously intended to let the process go along naturally and come out into the world on the wedding day. But given how things were progressing, they suddenly felt a lot of pressure. That was especially true considering that Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring were fighting right in front of them. That... got them very nervous.

Therefore, they had done everything in their power, even if it meant changing history and causing waves, to come out into the world that very night. It meant coming out early, and that could result in complexities with the others. But they didn't care.

It didn't matter to them if Sir Star Ring won or lost. And they couldn't care less if Xu Qing lived or died. Even if the two of them bashed each other's brains out at the same time, or if space-time got turned completely upside-down. It would have nothing to do with Hordeslayer and Rampart. All they cared about were their own goals!

As of this moment, the space-time waves got even more intense. For the immortal swords to come out into the world now... was a significant change to history!

Sir Star Ring's expression flickered. *He chose this location with the express purpose of forcing them to do this!*

Unfortunately, he was locked in such close combat with Xu Qing that he couldn't interfere.

The sky dimmed as countless lightning bolts shot toward the sword furnace. One after another, they slammed down onto the furnace. All of a sudden, sword light erupted from inside, creating a multicolored beam that shot high into the sky.

Within that beam of light... emerged two immortal swords that were both black and white in color! The immortal swords had come out into the world! The lightning then turned black and white as it encircled the two swords. A thrumming sound echoed out, reaching deafening proportions, and a sword might weighed down, so immense it seemed it could shatter heaven and earth.

From within all that came the excited laughter of Hordeslayer and Rampart.

"Sir Star Ring, and you, the unknown, detestable cultivator, we brothers must thank you. If it weren't for your little game and the stimulus it provided, we wouldn't have been as confident in gaining enlightenment."

"In fact, our enlightenment might have failed. But thanks to the help from you two, we not only came into the world early, but also, we gained deeper enlightenment!"

"And now, our canon has become even more impressive!"

Laughter rang out from the two immortal swords. Hordeslayer and Rampart were clearly very excited, and they were about to send their consciousnesses back to the outside world. But before they left, they had more to say.

“Have fun playing around, kids. Grandpa isn’t gonna stick around! If the two of you have the chance, come to the north and see how outstanding we are in real life. After all, you performed a real service to us here!”

“That’s especially true of you, you unknown, detestable, shameless, unreasonable idiot who possessed the young lord. I can’t believe you dared try to tell us what to do! Keep on dreaming, why don’t you?”

Xu Qing looked at the two immortal swords, and he heard the words being directed at him. His eyes narrowed.

The next instant... a pure white jade slip flew out from his host! It was the very same betrothal gift that Immortal Lord Aurora had given to Immortal Lord Nineshores. It was blank, but could be imprinted with divine will to allow any item from the immortal palace to transfer ownership to the bearer!

1. If you skipped the big footnote in the last chapter, I suggest you go back and read it to make sure you understand this part fully. In a word, when Sir Star Ring mentioned “nothing can be accomplished” he references a term that contains the characters for square and circle. ㊦
2. Much of the wording comes from different parts of [chapters 1150](#) and [1151](#). ㊦

Chapter 1172: Sixteen Words from the Marriage Contract!

Chapter 1172: Sixteen Words from the Marriage Contract!

On that occasion days earlier, Nineshores had accepted the other betrothal gifts, but had not taken the jade slip that allowed the user to take any treasure from the immortal palace. He had given that to Xu Qing. All in all, he was giving away his daughter’s hand in marriage, and given his personality, was not the type of person to covet the belongings of a family friend.[1]

That jade slip was now a trump card for Xu Qing to play in a key moment. Originally... Xu Qing had been ambivalent about the use of the jade slip.

And when he picked the sword furnace as the location to fight Sir Star Ring, he didn’t do it with the intention of forcing the two swords to be bonded to him. His original goal had been to ensure that the clash between order and chaos would put pressure on to the two swords in the furnace, and thus give Hordeslayer and Rampart no choice about what to do. They would be forced to take advantage of the moment to complete the swords ahead of schedule. They would be in a very passive position.

If Sir Star Ring won, then their future success would all be contingent on his approval. After all, suppression itself was an act of maintaining order. If the young lord won... then all he would have to do was order them to be bonded to him. That also gave Hordeslayer and Rampart a spectacular motivating force.

In the end, they really had no choice but to speed up. Only by putting everything on the line could they catalyze their sword bodies and come out into the world early. That was the only way to come out on top. It was their only chance at success. And that was what Xu Qing wanted. It was an overt plot.

According to his plan, as long as the two swords came out into the world early, it would result in space-time waves that would help him going forward. But... the words spoken by the two swords before their departure were overly excited.

Therefore, Xu Qing decided that forcing a bond would be a significant departure from history. And that would be great for him. Even as the excited words echoed out, and the consciousnesses within them stirred in preparation to leave the fourth world....

Xu Qing took out the blank jade slip and threw it up into the air. It rose above him. Dazzling, endless light shone out.

Xu Qing sent out his divine will at the exact moment that the consciousnesses of Hordeslayer and Rampart were about to leave... and he branded them into the jade slip.

“A pair of immortal swords have come into the world today. I hereby assign them names. One is Hordeslayer. The other is Rampart... and they will be my personal swords!”

As his divine will spread out, rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth. It was like the resonance of a great dao as magical law stirred, and a binding order formed.

It could be called a fatal blow. Not only did it determine who the swords belonged to, but it also gave them names.... Those names, Hordeslayer and Rampart, instantly created an extremely strong bond of karma! Because of that karma, the pair of black-and-white immortal swords vibrated as countless immortal symbols appeared on their surface.

They had been created in the immortal palace, and had been born out of the immortal palace’s sword furnace. In every respect imaginable, the pair of swords were utterly and thoroughly objects of the immortal palace.

Then, the immortal symbols from the jade slip responded to Xu Qing and formed an extremely tight bond. It could not be resisted, could not be blocked, and could not be rejected! Inside of them, Hordeslayer and Rampart, who were just like spirit automatons now, had no time to react. They had been overwhelmed with excitement, and hadn’t even considered that Xu Qing would do something like he did.

The moment Xu Qing branded the swords with the immortal symbols, the two swords shivered, and Hordeslayer and Rampart were struck numb with shock. An instant later, an incredibly majestic force surged out of the immortal palace, pouring into the immortal swords and into their consciousnesses....

Massive waves rose up within their divine will. They were undergoing a righteous bestowal that was turning them into spirit automatons and bonding them to an owner.

As of this moment... they were truly spirit automatons. The sealing marks which would force spirit automatons to acknowledge their master... had appeared on them.

And because Xu Qing had given them names... the karma in the sealing marks wouldn't just affect this specific instance of space-time. It was highly likely... that they would apply in the outside world as well!

The astonishment within Hordeslayer and Rampart surpassed all imagination. They felt like their minds were being ravaged by countless bolts of heavenly lightning. It was just like the saying *great joy begets sorrow*.

"Th-this... this...."

"But this... I..."

Their effort to leave the fourth world had been interrupted. Karma bound them. They had to acknowledge they were owned by someone else. And they had been officially named.... It became a binding force that they couldn't fight against. Their consciousness absolutely could not leave now!

As they reeled to the core, Xu Qing lifted his left hand. He beckoned at them.

"Come here."

The two black-and-white immortal swords vibrated and issued a thrumming call.... And then, as Hordeslayer and Rampart felt madness overwhelming them, the swords they had possessed, turned around and soared gracefully toward Xu Qing!

They had no choice but to obey. Their consciousnesses wished to weep and rave. But they couldn't. Deep inside, they realized that, as the swords' excitement built, so did their own. It was beyond their control.

Meanwhile, because the immortal swords came into the world early, and because Xu Qing had bound them and forced them to acknowledge him, the space-time waves grew even more intense!

Combined with everything that happened up to this point, the waves surged like heaven-shaking, earth-shattering tsunamis! In fact, it was totally correct to say that the space-time waves had reached tsunami level!

Waves came because of Li the Chosen, Gongsun Qingmu, the fox maiden, Zhong Chi, and then the two swords.... A raging tsunami hit the viscous surface of the space-time lake, causing the water to spin and seethe.

Xu Qing's consciousness was already back inside his host's body, and he was standing atop the tsunami! He could clearly sense that order had been crushed!

He waved his hand, and the two swords shot toward him and then started orbiting around him. It didn't matter how Hordeslayer and Rampart struggled. Their madness did nothing to change the situation. They had to respond to Xu Qing's divine will, unleashing the power of the swords to form a fierce and consummate sword energy that slashed at the reincarnation and the world square!

Rumbling echoed out in shocking fashion. The world square crumbled. The circle of reincarnation fell to pieces! Order shattered loudly.

Sir Star Ring shivered from head to toe, and two streams of blood seeped out of his eyes. The seas of millions upon millions of stars in his eyes collapsed. The compass and the carpenter's square became nothing but dust. Most important of all was that his canon was shaken violently.

The two swords' intense momentum continued. After destroying the world square and circle of reincarnation, they shot into the sky, becoming an intersection of black and white as they headed directly toward Sir Star Ring.

Killing intent raged.

Inside the swords, Hordeslayer and Rampart could do nothing but ignore their bitterness and madness, and throw caution to the wind as they pushed the swords to the limit of their strength. After all, they were also furious with Sir Star Ring.

Sir Star Ring's face fell, and he fell back at top speed. Thousands and thousands of thoughts ran through his mind, and all of them were full of rage toward Xu Qing. As those thoughts combined, Sir Star Ring took a deep breath and suddenly lifted his right hand. Extending his index finger, he pushed down on his forehead.

When he pulled his finger away, a dazzling chain of gold emerged from his forehead. He swept it out in front of him. The chain wasn't very long, as it was only made from 99 links. It was one short of 100. Every single link in the chain was covered with densely packed magical symbols, each of which represented order.

The moment it appeared, the power of order became incredibly clear, and it formed a strong resonance with Sir Star Ring's consciousness. That was because the golden chain was not something that belonged to Fourth True Monarch. It... was the foundation of Sir Star Ring's canon!

Once the chain acquired its 100th ring, he would break out of the Imperial Sovereign level and become a Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor. That was why he was intent on maintaining order in the fourth world.

As of this moment, he was throwing caution to the wind. As he took out his own canon, thirteen coffins manifested around him. The coffins were different sizes and made of different materials, but all of them emanated a strong aura of order. The moment they appeared, brightly colored light flashed in heaven and earth. The coffins contained corpses of canon, which were all that remained of the rivals Fourth True Monarch had killed.

Originally, Sir Star Ring had only been strong enough to use three of the coffins. But he knew that three coffins wouldn't be enough to do anything to the immortal swords, much less Xu Qing on his tsunami of space-time. Therefore, he catalyzed his canon, forcing it to a higher level in the hopes of turning everything around at this key moment! He quickly performed an incantation gesture, his face distorting as the golden chain glittered, wrapped around the thirteen coffins, and sent golden light flooding into them.

Instantly, the thirteen coffins started shaking. Their lids did not open, but thunderous banging sounds started echoing out from inside of them. Sounds of thumping and pounding filled the air. At the same time, thirteen voices echoed out, grimly crying out in voices that surpassed sounds of nature or dao reverberations!

“Order and judgment; bones of sycophants; dig down to the Yellow Springs; be executed immediately!”

It was a total of fifteen words, and they became a judgment of order, transforming into an ancient stone stele that rumbled toward Xu Qing atop the tsunami of space-time.

Xu Qing looked up, his expression calm, but his eyes gleaming with unprecedented ferocity.

“The space-time waves have become a tsunami,” he said calmly. “That should be enough to cover some of the words. And that... means this fight is about to end.”

All of a sudden, a golden plaque flew out from Xu Qing’s robe and hovered in front of him.

As soon as it appeared, heaven and earth went still. Space-time became calm. The waves stopped. Everything became peaceful. Auspicious signs and propitious blessings emerged from within.

The plaque was, of course, the marriage contract. Immortal Lord Aurora had personally created it, imbued it with his will, his consciousness, and his blessing. And it contained all of the well wishes he could give to his son. The words on the plaque had been penned directly by him. They represented his will!

Two families are now united in marriage by this covenant that never ends. From the moment this agreement is reached, the couple face a happy future of affinity. They are predestined to grow old together, and will be by each other’s side until the sea does wither up and stone rots. You will put your union above all else, and will have many prosperous and famous descendants.

Let this marriage agreement be for all eternity; it is beautiful like rosy leaves, forever inscribed here as the happy couple always abides by its romantic tidings.

And thus, the agreement is confirmed.

Xu Qing extended his hand, and the space-time power from the tsunami covered most of the words, causing them to blur away so that only sixteen words were left visible. Those sixteen words linked together to form a sentence.

This covenant ends, this predestined affinity. You wither up, like rotting leaves. Thus, it is confirmed.[2]

Xu Qing pointed at Sir Star Ring in the form of Fourth True Monarch! The sixteen words from the marriage contract shone with majestic light as the space-time tsunami surged. In the blink of an eye, the predestined affinity between Sir Star Ring and Fourth True Monarch was ended!

His consciousness suddenly withered up. It was like a rotting leaf!

Sir Star Ring’s face fell dramatically.

1. Nineshores gave the jade slip to Xu Qing in [chapter 1154](#). ^㉔

2. In case you missed the previous footnote explaining the marriage contract, the wording was chock full of all sorts of wordplay and figurative speech. The “sixteen words” here tap into that wordplay to create even more wordplay. In order to properly convey both the original message and the shortened version, I really had to bend over backward and twist myself around a few times. In the end, I did manage to extract sixteen words (most of them congruent with the original versions), and make them conform to the proper meaning (in general). UPDATE: Literally as this chapter went live, I was looking at this and realized that there is a tense change (in English), that I somehow missed. In the sixteen words “rotting” is used, while in the original it’s “rots.” I can fix this fairly easily, but don’t have the time now. I’ll get to it later. 🙏

Chapter 1173: Begone, Sir Star Ring!

Chapter 1173: Begone, Sir Star Ring!

Sir Star Ring’s heart swelled with astonishment. He felt like an infinitude of lightning bolts were smashing into him, causing him to struggle to breathe.... He could clearly sense an unstoppable force slowly peeling his consciousness away from his host’s body. It was completely irreversible!

The so-called predestined affinity was the main reason why he had chosen Fourth True Monarch as his host. Right now, that foundation was collapsing! The unstoppable force was causing his consciousness to desiccate and rot. It even affected the surrounding world, like rotting leaves rapidly withering away.

At the same time, orders and natural laws alike fell into nothing. That included the golden chain that was the manifestation of Sir Star Ring’s canon. As Sir Star Ring’s consciousness withered, the chain... broke! Rings cracked apart, causing indescribable pain to Sir Star Ring’s consciousness. For the first time in his entire life, he felt terrified. As for the judgment he had called forth.... The moment the marriage contract appeared, the judgment could not be enforced!

The thirteen coffins trembled, and the voices inside of them slowly went silent.... In fact, it was as if everything was being reversed. The words that had been spoken formed canon and materialized, but now they were sent spinning away until they didn’t exist. The might of an Immortal Lord surpassed all else in existence.

It wasn’t just Sir Star Ring who was flabbergasted. So were the two immortal swords. Hordeslayer and Rampart hovered in midair, trembling. The scene playing out in front of them surpassed anything they could have imagined possible. In fact, event after event on this day had surpassed anything they could conceive. Some mysterious person had acquired an identity that should have been impossible to acquire. In an inconceivable twist, they had been forced to be bonded to him.

And now... that marriage contract appeared! Contrary to expectation, the words written on the contract had been put to use.

As a result, Hordeslayer and Rampart were deeply, deeply shaken.

In this space-time, the marriage contract was above everything else in terms of position and significance. It was paramount! Contained within it were blessings from Immortal Lord Aurora to his son. Those blessings contained a will. The will permeated each word in the contract, making

each word canon in this space-time. They were law! When canon flowed, order had to bow its head, and rules had to conform. Acting in contradiction would amount to acting in contradiction to the will of Immortal Lord Aurora.

In all of the immortal palace, there were only two people who could use such an item, and they were Aurora and his son. Therefore, the moment the marriage contract appeared, the conclusion of this event was set in stone and could not be changed.

The reason Xu Qing could cover some of the words on the contract in order to make it conform to his needs of the moment... was that written up on it was the name of the young lord who he had possessed! It went without saying that he qualified!

There was just one element he needed, and that element... was space-time waves. And the space-time waves needed to reach a certain level before they would be effective.

That was why Xu Qing had forced everyone to change history in order to reach their goals. All of that led to the dramatic changes to space-time that he needed. He needed the space-time waves to reach the level of a tsunami! By doing so, he would have the strength he needed to cover over some of the words on the marriage contract.

It might seem like a simple thing, but the reality was that, to make it happen required a host of complicated steps that all had to be accomplished properly. The level of difficulty was astonishing.

Thunder boomed in the sky. Sky-obfuscating, land-enshrouding mightiness weighed down on the location of the sword furnace. Looking up, it was possible to see a net of electric sparks connecting to the tsunami of space-time. A figure stood on the tsunami, hair flowing, energy surging, and a fierce gleam in his eyes, as if his gaze could pierce the depths of the world.

He was looking at Sir Star Ring in the form of Fourth True Monarch. The sixteen words on the marriage contract shone with dazzling, endless light.

The glow of it illuminated the twisted, distorted face of Fourth True Monarch. His entire body was emanating black smoke. The smoke swirled together into the form of Sir Star Ring, which immediately began to dissipate.

All defiance within him was meaningless. None of his struggling did a single thing.

The sixteen words on the marriage contract were unstoppable. Maybe he was the number one Shining Star on the outside, but that didn't mean he could stop what was happening. All he could do... was wait to be expelled!

His predestined affinity with Fourth True Monarch had been severed. He had been filled with a power of withering that was immensely harmful. Previously, he had expelled other people. But now, he was being expelled.

The foundation of his canon had been broken. Not only had he failed to benefit from coming to the fourth world, but also, he had been seriously hurt.

As he was disappearing, he glared at Xu Qing with killing intent in his gaze.

“I admit that you beat me this time. But... our fight isn’t over. I’m going on to the fifth world, a place you can never go to, and there, I’ll become a Quasi-Immortal! And to repay you for blocking me from completing my canon... I’ll just wait until the immortal palace event is over. Then, when you don’t have the identity from this space-time, and are back outside, I’ll kill you in an instant!”

Then Sir Star Ring’s consciousness crumbled into ashes. He had been expelled from this space-time. In the game between order and chaos, order had been thoroughly defeated. There was no possibility for order to make a comeback.

Sir Star Ring’s final words had been full of deadly threats. But the stage had already been set, so Xu Qing wasn’t going to let deadly threats affect him.

By the time the immortal place event is over, I won’t have the same cultivation base I do now!

Xu Qing looked over at Fourth True Monarch’s body. Without Sir Star Ring’s consciousness in it, Fourth True Monarch was like a bubble that just popped and disappeared. A thoughtful expression appeared on Xu Qing’s face.

Now that order had been defeated, space-time was thrumming. It was like a wild horse that had been freed of any reins, or raging waters free of a dam. In an instant, the space-time waves surpassed anything from before. Massive amounts of space-time sand appeared out of nowhere, flying from all the living beings in the immortal palace and congregating around Xu Qing like rain.

This was a hundred times more than anything he had seen before! The scintillating grains of sand fell constantly, forming together until they made the shape of an hourglass! And it came to float right in front of Xu Qing![1]

The moment the hourglass formed, heaven and earth shook. The immortal palace trembled. The world rippled. Dazzling light shone out that could suppress all things. This was a precious treasure of space-time!

Xu Qing’s heart raced. By means of his own canon, he could sense that this hourglass would only work for fifteen minutes.[2]

Put precisely, it could transcend this space-time for fifteen minutes! He could use the hourglass whenever he wanted. It could be used in the past, or in any time. And whatever happened then would be permanent. Whatever happened... existed outside of time and beyond the timescape![3]

At the same time, the moment Xu Qing gained enlightenment of the hourglass, his personal canon advanced. Innumerable bits of enlightenment regarding time filled his consciousness, bolstered his canon, and nourished his laws. As a result, in a very short time, his canon advanced in a way that would normally take countless years. He instantly reached the peak of the eighth extreme!

As his canon advanced, Xu Qing’s aura, battle prowess, and cultivation base all rose dramatically. He was now on the very cusp of being a nine-world Smoldering God!

My reserve powers are more than sufficient. When I make that final advancement and reach the nine-world level, I will become an Imperial Sovereign! Not only will I be stronger than ordinary Imperial Sovereigns, but thanks to all of my accumulated knowledge and advanced preparation, the Imperial

Sovereign level... will be nothing but a stepping stone! I'm just around the corner from being a Quasi-Immortal!

Xu Qing took a deep breath and looked off at the horizon. Because the workings of heaven were in chaos, the horizon was blurry. Yet it was just barely possible to see... the rising sun. It was daytime. Sunlight pierced the clouds, landing on the sword furnace as well as Xu Qing. He looked away from the horizon and at the sword furnace.

"Come out," he said coolly.

Distortions appeared as a figure took shape. It was a young man clad in white. He didn't seem very special, but his face was kindly, and he smiled in a very unthreatening manner as he bowed to Xu Qing.

"Well met, Young Lord. It is I, Zhou Zhengli. Whether in terms of strategy or actions, Young Lord, you were spectacular in this fight. It was like immortal might shocking the world. You are truly a *dragon amongst men*, sir!"

This young man was of course, Zhou Zhengli, who had been working with Sir Star Ring this entire time! His expression was calm and sincere, his smile rueful but admiring.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered coldly.

The moment Sir Star Ring's consciousness had been expelled, Zhou Zhengli had arrived. Though he had remained hidden, his aura made it obvious that he was waiting for someone to notice him. Each and every one of the Shining Stars was an extraordinary individual. But during the entire fight between Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring, he had remained completely out of sight.

It would be easy to discount someone like that. Yet despite the fact that Sir Star Ring was gone... he was still here. That was suspicious.

Furthermore, as Xu Qing had dealt with Sir Vilespirit, and came to know how conniving he was, he had come to some conclusions about the person Sir Vilespirit considered his nemesis, Zhou Zhengli. Zhou Zhengli was a sneaky person, who liked to hide his true strength, his true thoughts, and of course... his true goals!

"You aren't actually trying to maintain order, are you?" Xu Qing said. "I suppose I owe you some thanks for how things ended with Sir Star Ring."

If Sir Star Ring had been around to hear such words, he would have been shaken to the core.

Xu Qing sounded very certain of his conclusion. If Zhou Zhengli had also been devoted to order, then Sir Star Ring's departure wouldn't have resulted in such monumental space-time waves. But Sir Star Ring's departure had felt like a complete and utter defeat. There was only one explanation.

"Brilliant, Young Lord," Zhou Zhengli said in a soft, obsequious voice. "I have no intention of being an enemy of you, sir, neither here nor in the outside world. The fact you acquired a seemingly impossible identity indicates that you... are no ordinary individual. You're obviously someone I want to get along with, sir."

“Sir Star Ring is obstinate and self-opinionated. To be honest, I couldn’t do much other than nudge him a bit in one direction or another. That was my goal. The moment I realized that Young Lord Aurora was not who he should be, my goal... was to make friends with you.

“The truth is that it doesn’t matter to me which side I’m on in the fourth world. I could try to maintain order, I could stay neutral, or I could try to make waves. That is my canon. My dao.” With that, Zhou Zhengli bowed his head in a very obsequious way.

Eyes glittering, Xu Qing said, “You certainly went into a lot of detail just now.”

Zhou Zhengli didn’t seem ruffled. Maintaining his bow, he said, “I want to make friends with you, and I want to stay in the fourth world. If you don’t understand me thoroughly, then I doubt you’d agree to be friends, and you certainly wouldn’t let me stick around.”

1. For the sand to make an hourglass shape makes more sense in Chinese, as the word for hourglass in Chinese is literally “sand filter.” 沙漏

2. In reality, the hourglass will work for ‘the time it takes an incense stick to burn.’ For a number of reasons, I’m going to render it as, simply, fifteen minutes. One reason is that the word ‘time’ is important, and the characters for “incense stick of time” do not actually contain the character for time. I generally render it as ‘time it takes an incense stick to burn’ for clarity’s sake. But I want to avoid unnecessary wordplay elements in this part of the story. Generally speaking, Er Gen uses ‘incense stick of time’ to mean something roughly between fifteen to thirty minutes (I asked him about this in person once). I’m going to go with fifteen minutes for ease of reading. What’s important here is not the specific number of minutes involved. It could be 15, 20, or 30. All would work. The important thing is that it’s a relatively short time. 时间

3. This is yet another instance in which “time” and “timescape” are clearly different terms that are either synonymous or near-synonymous. And yes, this is a title drop as the author uses the exact characters from the title of the series. 时间

Chapter 1174: An Ancient Wedding Garment

Chapter 1174: An Ancient Wedding Garment

“That’s not good enough,” Xu Qing said as he hovered in midair, looking down at Zhou Zhengli, who was still maintaining a humble bow.

Zhou Zhengli seemed harmless. But the reality was that harmlessness was a mere veneer. On the inside he was like a deadly viper. He had manipulated Sir Star Ring, and had certainly played a role in his ultimate downfall.[1]

Xu Qing didn’t want to fall into the same trap. Of course, his cautious nature would dictate his choices. Therefore, it didn’t matter that Zhou Zhengli claimed he wanted to be friends. Unless he provided an excellent reason, Xu Qing was not inclined to keep him around. And given how powerful Xu Qing was right now, if he didn’t want to keep him around, Zhou Zhengli would not stick around.

The wind was cold, so cold that not even the sunlight provided any warmth. As it blew, Zhou Zhengli looked up at Xu Qing.

“Exalted one, there are only four days left until the wedding. Someone needs to keep an eye on Zhong Chi’s poison, otherwise it could cause trouble in the four remaining days. Someone should also keep tabs on Li the Chosen to ensure he doesn’t get any ideas. Sir, you have a lot to keep track of. Well, I’m very familiar with Jiang Fan, so I can handle that.[2]

“Someone should also take time to record the details of the fox maiden identity to pass on to later generations. And, of course, the same goes for my identity. I’m the palace’s official historian. What’s more, sir, as the young lord, you need another study partner.

“All of those things can cause waves. There are many things I could help you with over the next four days, Young Lord. I can help you, not just to keep things going as they are, but to make even more waves. In addition, there are three people still in hiding. I’ve been keeping a close eye on everything, and I already uncovered their identities. You don’t need to waste your time on them, Young Lord. I can take care of one per day for you.

“That way, by the time we get to the wedding day, there won’t be any unknown factors to deal with. In the end, Young Lord, if you think the space-time waves aren’t sufficient, then just give the order, and I’ll die publicly to change history. Of course, every additional day that I live will benefit me.

“Sir, those are the reasons you should let me stay.” Zhou Zhengli once again bowed and waited for Xu Qing to make a decision.

Xu Qing looked coldly at Zhou Zhengli for a long moment. Then he waved his hand, and the shining marriage contract flew back into the fold of his robe. Then, another wave of his hand caused the immortal swords with Hordeslayer and Rampart in them to leap over to him and hover on either side, shining with immortal light and emitting immortal fluctuations.

Then Xu Qing ignored Zhou Zhengli as he walked over to the door leading away from the sword furnace. Just before leaving, he spoke over his shoulder to Zhou Zhengli.

“Have you ever eaten snake meat before? The more venomous the snake, the more tender the meat.” Xu Qing left.

Zhou Zhengli remained stock-still for a long moment. After everything was quiet for a time, he slowly straightened up and looked at the spot where Xu Qing had just departed. His expression became very serious.

He and Sir Star Ring have similarities and differences. He’s more cautious and more ruthless. He thinks of me as a venomous snake. But... to me, and probably to Sir Star Ring as well, isn’t he also a venomous snake...?

He sighed deeply. More than ever, he wanted to avoid making an enemy out of this person.

As the wedding day approached, and as the Aurora Epoch neared, the chaos in the workings of heaven grew more intense. The transitions between day and night grew more frequent, and there were constant changes in weather. And yet... nobody seemed to have been paying attention to the events of the previous night. It was as if the wind had blown everything away.

Fourth True Monarch appeared again, and this time, he got along perfectly with Xu Qing. Their initial meeting was one of chatting and laughter, and the familiar mannerisms and tone of voice resonated perfectly with the Fourth True Monarch from the memories of Xu Qing's host. Apparently, his Elder Brother Fourth had no memories about what had played out the night before. And he also had no idea that he had been possessed by another consciousness.

That got Xu Qing thinking. After all, he had personally witnessed Fourth True Monarch disappear after the fight by the sword furnace.

Does it mean...?

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he looked up at the sky. Then he bade farewell to Fourth True Monarch and headed back to Young Aurora Hall. He did not come out again.

The four days went by quickly.

Zhou Zhengli did exactly as he said he would, and worked very hard during the four days. He recorded all of the information about the fox maiden identity, not just her status as a disciple of Nineshores, but everything else as well. As a result, she became an established figure in history.

He monitored Li the Chosen as well. As a result, Li the Chosen felt hemmed in, and had no chances to cause trouble. Zhou Zhengli even urged him to just accept how things were. He helped Zhong Chi with his poison work, working hard to ensure that the Poison Department was fully established, and that the Poison of Mengtu became common in the immortal palace.

He even tapped into the power of the immortal palace to cause three successive waves in space-time, all of which were the result of him expelling other outsiders who had remained hidden the entire time. He accomplished that by means of beheadings. The result was that Xu Qing got even more space-time sand.

Zhou Zhengli did only those things and nothing else. After all, he didn't want to do anything to cause a misunderstanding with Xu Qing. He was extremely respectful.

And thus, time passed during the final four days before the wedding. There were no setbacks. And at long last, the day came for Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix and Young Lord Aurora to be married.

When the day began, the heavenly daos were no longer in motion. The heavenly workings went still. Both sun and moon were visible in the dome of heaven, shining radiantly. When you looked up into the sky, everything seemed bright and auspicious.

Just as before, the immortal palace was full of bright lanterns and colorful decorations. Everyone was smiling, and the atmosphere was lively. There was a bustle of noise and excitement. Lively chatting and expressions of praise could be heard everywhere.

Xu Qing was flanked by a host of ceremonial officials as he walked out of Young Aurora Hall. Cheers filled the air.

Xu Qing was not wearing the same clothes he usually wore. He had a brightly-colored robe embroidered with nine golden dragons, all of which were so lifelike they seemed like they might fly up into the air at any moment. The collar and cuffs of the robe were decorated with exquisite immortal jade and spirit shells, all of which were befitting the son of an Immortal Lord. He wore a spirit crown inset with immortal jade that glittered in the light that shone down from the sky above.

Wherever he went, people offered cries of joy, approval, and blessing.

“Congratulations, Young Lord!”

“Hahaha! It’s the young lord’s wedding day! The young lord and young lady are really a match made in heaven!”

“Young Lord, after the wedding, you can’t go back to your old ways. I’ve watched you grow up, and now that you’re getting married, I can only hope to see the day you take up the position of Immortal Lord.”

“Good luck, Young Lord! I hope your journey of life is full of love and happiness. You’ll definitely grow old with the young lady, and be united for all eternity!”

Xu Qing heard wonderful words of blessing and anticipation coming from all sides. Although he had been expecting this to happen, he was a bit taken aback by it all.

Eventually, the sound of bells could be heard through the clamoring crowd. That was when he arrived at Aurora Grand Hall. A huge banquet had been laid out, though there were no guests from outside, only cultivators from the immortal palace. It was a bustling, luxurious event.

Xu Qing looked around and spotted Zhong Chi smiling, one-armed Li the Chosen sitting there with a wooden expression, and Zhou Zhengli looking modest and humble. He even spotted the fox maiden, who looked somewhat irritated.

At the highest spot in the banquet stood Immortal Lord Aurora. He normally had a grave expression on his face, but right now, he was smiling. That said, he was meticulously dressed in the most orthodox manner, and was obviously taking this day very seriously. When he caught sight of Xu Qing, he waved him to approach.

Xu Qing took a deep breath, settled his thoughts, and hurried over.

As soon as he reached the Immortal Lord, Aurora smiled kindly and helped Xu Qing to straighten his red wedding gown.

Immortal Lord Aurora sighed. “If your mother could see you right now, she would be so happy.”

Xu Qing looked like he was about to say something, but Immortal Lord Aurora tousled his hair and smiled kindly. “No need to go into all that. Look, your wife’s here.”

Off in the distance, red light shone boundlessly as Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix appeared, clad in her wedding gown, flanked by her handmaidens.

The wedding gown was exquisite. It was made of dark red silk, and was embroidered with golden phoenixes and clouds. It looked like the sunrise itself, and was a perfect indication that she would become the official wife of the young lord. Her hair was coiled into a bun, which surrounded her phoenix crown and then tumbled down her back filled with glistening spirit pearls. As she walked, her dress swayed back and forth, making her look like a blooming peony as she approached Xu Qing.

Xu Qing hesitated. The Immortal Lord then pushed him from behind, and he took a step forward.

Every step he took was accompanied by loud cheering. Every step he took brought auspicious signs.

Countless gazes were fixed on the two of them as they neared each other.

Outside of the space-time of the immortal palace, in the real world, not very far away from the Fallen Immortal Moors, was the God Blood River. The river water churned as a black boat glided across its surface.

No one knew exactly how many ferry boats operated on the God Blood River. But one thing was for sure. Those few people who ever took a ferry twice in their life would rarely see the same ferry pilot.

There was no passenger aboard the ferry boat. There was only the ferry pilot, clad in a woven rush raincoat, whose ancient and wrinkled hand guided the oar and kept the boat on a forward course. The pilot seemed used to time passing by, year after year, seemingly with no beginning or no end.

But today was different. As the wind blew across the river, the ripples it created seemed to tug desolately on the ferry pilot's heartstrings....

The pilot slowly looked up. The aurora above rippled, shining down onto the boat. The face beneath the wide bamboo hat... was the wrinkled face of a very old woman. This ferry pilot was actually a woman! She was looking off in the direction of the Fallen Immortal Moors, and she seemed to be lost in memories. In the end, she sighed.

“You came back....”

The wind blew, stirring the woven rush raincoat. And beneath it, it was just possible to see... a very ancient red wedding dress.

1. The contrast between “harmless” and “viper” is better in Chinese, because harmless literally means “without poison/venom.” Meanwhile, the term I’m rendering as deadly viper literally is “hyper-venomous snake.” 毒蛇

2. Jiang Fan was introduced in [chapter 1136](#). Based on clues in [chapters 1152](#) and [1167](#), we readers could have deduced that Jiang Fan was Li the Chosen. But there was never any ‘onscreen’ evidence of other characters figuring out who he was. In fact, in [chapter 1149](#), Zhou Zhengli specifically said

that he *didn't* know who Jiang Fan was. I guess if he was playing Sir Star Ring the entire time, it would make sense that he withheld the information, or perhaps he found out later. ❹

Chapter 1175: A Wedding Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1175: A Wedding Beyond the Timescape

The sun and moon were in the sky simultaneously, reflecting each other's brilliance, and creating a unified glow of dazzling light. It shone down on the lands of this space-time, almost like wedding garments gifted by heaven itself.

As countless cultivators looked on... two people approached each other step by step. A man and woman, each clad in wedding garments, got closer and closer to each other, one coming from the east, the other from the west.

The woman wore a dazzling wedding dress that looked like living flame. Her smile was a touch bashful, but her eyes contained a longing for the future. As she advanced, her beautiful face seemed to fill with a rosy glow, whether because of the rising sun or her own emotions, it was hard to say.

And yet... close observers would be able to tell that her expression was forced, and her smile was empty. In fact, her eyes seemed as cold as ice. Yet she seemed to be in full anticipation of the wedding. There was no conflict between the iciness and the anticipation. After all, she was not really Spirit Phoenix. The emotions she felt toward Young Lord Aurora were not natural. The anticipation came because, even though history said that the wedding ceremony would never be completed, it would still create karmic connections! [1]

In other words, the fact that she had reached this point meant that she had already largely accomplished her goal. All she had to do was continue onward, and it wouldn't really matter what happened historically speaking. She sped up a bit as she walked.

Meanwhile, the man wore a swirling gown with nine dragons on it. The golden crown on his head reflected the light of the sun, and its jewels glittered. And yet, as he approached his dazzling wife, his heart pounded. The reason was because of his understanding of what happened at this linchpin in history.

Yuanshan Su is playing the part of Spirit Phoenix. I'm acting as Mi Ming. Historically speaking, this is their wedding. And historically speaking, the wedding actually didn't work out... They never finished the ceremony of kowtowing. Her name... was never added to the marriage contract.

Li Mengtu had explained to Xu Qing what happened in real history, and Zhou Zhengwei had confirmed it so that Xu Qing didn't misunderstand what was to play out.

The linchpin was the first kowtow! When they kowtowed to heaven and earth, there was a violent reaction. The Immortal Lord rebelled, the Immortal Paragon stepped in, and everyone in the immortal palace... crumbled into ashes, dead.

It's going to happen after enough time passes for an incense stick to burn.

Xu Qing's heart pounded harder and harder. It wouldn't be long before the biggest tempest of all would strike this historical space-time.

At the same time, he was ready to make his final salvo. He was on the side that was fighting to change history. He needed that to grow his space-time canon. He had not stopped working toward the effort just because he drove out Sir Star Ring's consciousness.

After all, expelling Sir Star Ring eliminated all factors of uncertainty for the outsiders. Everything... came down to this very day!

Xu Qing was not pleased with an hourglass that could exist beyond the timescape for only fifteen minutes! He wanted more than that. He wanted to take his space-time canon to the limit that was possible in the fourth world. He wanted his timescape hourglass to last for much longer.

And there were two historical events that, if he could change even just one of them, would fit the bill. Unfortunately, changing either of those things would be so difficult they might as well be impossible.

The first was to save Aurora and everyone else from the fate of death. The second was to change this wedding ceremony into a success.

A failed wedding was second only to death in the regret it would cause.

Xu Qing knew that the first thing was something he had no way to affect or change. But... the second, because of his identity, wasn't impossible to change. In fact, Xu Qing felt certain... that the imp who had given him those birthdate characters was none other than the discarnate soul of Immortal Lord Aurora. And it seemed very likely that his goal was to make up for past regrets.[2]

Of course, that was mere speculation on Xu Qing's part, and he had no hard evidence to confirm it. Either way, it didn't conflict with his own goal here.

And his timescape hourglass was going to be his biggest asset right now! He could use it to buy fifteen minutes for Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix, to ensure that, in this reflection of history, their wedding ceremony was not interrupted. This time, they would succeed at completing the ceremony! The resulting space-time waves in this version of history would become a true space-time tempest! That was Xu Qing's plan.

As things developed, he became more and more certain of what he had to do. He stepped forward without hesitation, until... the two people clad in wedding garments, surrounded by cheering... rose up into the air together. Dazzling, auspicious light shone from heaven, surrounding the bride and groom with a beautiful glow.

Everyone looked on intently. In the crowd, Zhong Chi sighed, the fox maiden snorted coldly, Li the Chosen looked on with cold eyes, and Zhou Zhengli's eyes shone. Fourth True Monarch was there as well, standing next to Immortal Lord Aurora, looking on with a proud smile.

"Little Junior Brother really has grown up." Fourth True Monarch turned to look at Immortal Lord Aurora.

Aurora didn't seem to have heard him. He seemed relieved, and yet, as he looked at the auspicious couple, he seemed to be exuding a black smoke that no one could see.

The master of ceremonies, who was a grand elder in the immortal palace, then spoke in a loud voice.

"The beautiful, auspicious day has arrived. Let the ceremonial performers do their duty. Let the honor guard display the wedding paraphernalia. Let the spectators revel. Drums, flutes, and all manner of musical instruments will bring propitious sounds to our ears."

Cheering and music filled the air. It couldn't have been a more optimistic atmosphere. An immortal phoenix flew about, accompanied by a heavenly dragon, carrying a red silk banner in their mouths that supported an embroidered silk ball. As they swirled around Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix, the two of them were bound by the silk, with the silk ball between them.

Laughing heartily, the master of ceremonies said, "To respect the ancient etiquette, the couple will first kowtow to heaven and earth! Let the couple begin by prostrating to heaven."

As his voice echoed out, Xu Qing took a deep breath. Then he and Yuanshan Su both looked up into the sky.

The dome of heaven was filled with dazzling rosy light. The sun and moon were hidden, and the heavenly workings seethed. Time was still slipping away as a new epoch approached. The rosy light and the auspicious glow were symbols....

The master of ceremony's voice again rang out. "Pay respect to the great heaven. The happy couple are the product of heaven."

Xu Qing lowered his head and together with Yuanshan Su, prostrated to heaven. The dome of heaven rumbled.

"Pay respect to the wondrous earth. Tie the knot and make the marriage official."

The two of them prostrated again! The sky trembled, and the glow grew more intense.

"Pay respect to heaven and earth. Endure as long as the earth lasts and heaven exists."

Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. Winds kicked up. The sun and moon were completely covered up. It was as if an enormous hand... had plucked them out of the sky! The Aurora Epoch was truly on the way!

Yuanshan Su took a deep breath. She knew that a dramatic event was just about to unfold. The black smoke coming out of Immortal Lord Aurora was about as thick as it could be. The astounding historical event was about to happen!

But then, all of a sudden, an hourglass flew out from Xu Qing.

The moment the hourglass appeared, it shone with stupendous light, like a torch on a dark night, illuminating everything! The sand began to fall, whereupon a majestic and stupefying power spread out within this space-time. It was a flood that could not be stopped.

It was time beyond the timescape. It transcended this space-time. It was fifteen minutes that could not be changed. As it fell, it forced this linchpin of time to continue!

And thus, the light in the sky went still. The quaking lands came under control. Everyone stopped moving. The wind, the spirit energy, the heavenly workings... all froze.

But within the light cast by the sand, Xu Qing and Yuanshan Su were not affected. Yuanshan Su was stunned. Her eyes were wide with incredulity as she turned to Xu Qing and opened her mouth to say something.

But he simply took a breath and growled, "Don't waste your breath. Continue the ceremony!"

She shivered and slowly closed her eyes. Eyelashes quivering, she quietly said, "According to etiquette, the bride and groom will kowtow a second time, this time to the sun and moon. Pay respect to their brightness, which brings about the good fortune of both yin and yang."

Xu Qing bowed his head, and together with her, kowtowed!

Voice trembling, she continued, "Pay respect to the red thread of matchmaking, to create a union perfect in heaven."

As the two of them continued with the ceremony, things were happening in the outside world. Space-time waves were building into a crescendo.

"Now the third kowtow, to the parents." Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's voice trembled with complex emotions, including reminiscence, but also... boundless anticipation. Her voice came as a surprise to Xu Qing, and he suddenly looked up. What he saw caused his heart to skip a beat.

There was something unusual going on with her. She looked very different compared to before. Her eyes were not cold, and she was clearly not acting. She seemed full of ancient reminiscence, complex emotions... and tenderness. It was as if she had been waiting for thousands and thousands of years, all for this very day and moment. Yuanshan Su's consciousness had, at some point, simply vanished.

Xu Qing's pupils constricted. And then he heard a very familiar voice sighing into his mind. It was... the imp! The sigh became a wave that swept through him, taking control of his body away from his consciousness.

Xu Qing's mind reeled as all of the puzzle pieces clicked together. *He's not the discarnate soul of Immortal Lord Aurora. He's... actually Young Lord Aurora!!*

Young Lord Aurora looked at Spirit Phoenix tenderly. Reaching out, he took her hand and gently said, "Pay respect to the kindness our parents showed in raising us. This emotion is like the East Sea. Pay respect to the kindness our parents showed in educating us. This grace is weightier than a mountain. May our parents experience love and joy, and live lives long and peaceful."

Tears seeped out of the corners of Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix's eyes as she clasped Young Lord Aurora's hand tightly. Then she looked into the eyes of the person whose life she valued more than all others, and opened her mouth to utter the last part of the ceremonial oath.

“The fourth kowtow is between husband and wife.... One heart. One will. We will grow old together on the same pillow and under the same blanket. We are both willing to experience the love of husband and wife, a happy couple in perfect harmony. The blessing of three lifetimes, cooperating for eternity, always together... in life and in death. We are... husband and wife....” Tears streamed down Spirit Phoenix’s face and fell to the ground below.

“We are... husband and wife!” Young Lord Aurora said, reaching out and wiping her tears away. And then he took out the marriage contract... and wrote Spirit Phoenix’s true name onto it.

Unheard-of space-time waves rolled out. Heaven and earth trembled. A screaming wind created a huge vortex that covered the entire immortal palace. Intense rumbling rocked everything.

1. As is made clear throughout the rest of this chapter, this wedding ceremony is not like a Western wedding ceremony. It’s the traditional Chinese type that involves a series of bows/kowtows. ❹

2. The birthdate characters were first mentioned and explained in [chapter 1146](#) and [1147](#), and were again mentioned in [chapter 1154](#). Previously, we weren’t 100% sure that the birthdate characters mentioned in 1154 were those provided in 1146 and 1147, but now we do have confirmation. ❹

Chapter 1176: The Person I Miss

Chapter 1176: The Person I Miss

Love can be both moving and confusing. Countless men and women dream of finding that one special person that will stay by their side through every phase of their life. It is just like the ancient wedding vow: *the lovebirds sing in harmony, they stay together forever, they grow old together, and they share life and death.*[1]

But sometimes karma plays out in a different way, and despite a sacred promise being made, love letters become very hard to send.[2]

There are always going to be people who live lives full of lamentation and regret. And thus, there came to be a woman who spent millions upon millions of years traversing the God Blood River as a ferry pilot, but clad in a red wedding dress. And thus, there came to be an imp who devolved into desolate madness, who hid his bitterness beneath laughter and cursing.

There are few happy couples amongst immortals. In the vast majority of cases, their love becomes a whirlpool of bitterness and struggle. The regrets that come with unrequited love become like stars in the sky that can be seen but not touched, beautiful but sad.

I can only stand in the immortal palace in the timescape, and look at the same old embroidered curtains, musing that there is a person missing. I think back to that day years ago, and how her face was flush in the reflection of the peach blossoms.... And I sigh, thinking about the person I miss, who is oh so far away.

There is bitterness entrenched deeply within me. It goes without saying who that person is, and how things turned out.

A bitter east wind blows, and our happiness is cut short. My mind is steeped in sorrow and gloom.

This is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Peach blossoms fall, and lie idle on the pond and pavilion. We still have our sacred promise, but even a love letter is hard to send.

We have nothing, nothing, nothing.[3]

But... the two ends of the timescape river connect to each other. The road of reincarnation creates an endless loop. If you refuse to forget someone, they'll eventually speak to you once more. And thus, those words caused waves to flow across the surface of the river of blood.

"You came back...."

She had gone, leaving behind only the peach blossoms laughing in the spring breeze. The scenery stayed the same, but it was empty and meaningless.

Then the spring breeze picked up, and a person stepped out of those memories.

They had waited millions upon millions of years, and were now being reunited beyond the timescape.

On the edge of one small section of time, on this day, Xu Qing was able to tread the timescape and help them continue what had been interrupted.

Looking at the young lord, Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix softly said, "Over the years, I constantly wondered... if it was fate that I had met someone who touched my heart. Was it a blessing?"

The wind of time was a tempest on the outside. A vortex. But inside... it gently stirred Spirit Phoenix's hair as she gave voice to her longing. Glittering space-time sand dropped down, surrounding Young Lord Aurora and Spirit Phoenix. From a distance, it was possible to see waves surging around them, almost like a dream.

"The last time this happened," Spirit Phoenix said, "we didn't complete the wedding ceremony.... Catastrophe struck, and my father came to take both of us away.

"Because we had not truly become husband and wife, and my name was not written on the marriage contract, you refused to leave with my father. I know why. You didn't want to drag me into what was happening. Instead, you chose... to stay here and help your father settle his debt. And I chose... to be punished on the river of blood, to help you atone for your crimes.

“So does today count as us completing the ceremony and putting my name on the marriage contract? Does it count as making everything official?” Spirit Phoenix sighed. “The debt has been settled. The crimes have been atoned for... Can we go home now?”

Young Lord Aurora said nothing.

The space-time waves were stronger than ever. They were whipping into a vortex, filling the immortal palace with deafening rumbling sounds. And they were bringing more and more space-time sand.

It surrounded the two of them, gradually accumulating to again form an hourglass that existed beyond the timescape. The limit was not fifteen minutes. There was enough sand to last... for two hours. That was the limit in this reflection of space-time.

Young Lord Aurora didn't answer Spirit Phoenix's question. He looked up... in the direction of his father, Immortal Lord Aurora. When he did that, the fifteen minutes that Xu Qing had bought for him... ended.

Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth. All of the living beings who had frozen in place earlier... went back to normal. The cheering and laughter resumed. It was as if no one had noticed that some extra time had been bought.

The sky was still distorted. The sun and moon were dark. The workings of heaven were at a peak level of chaos. Everything was about to change dramatically!

And then a white light spread out that illuminated the entirety of the Fifth Star Ring. It was like the spreading of an entire sea! The Aurora Epoch arrived, late by fifteen minutes.

A boundlessly mighty force converged, pouring into Immortal Lord Aurora's life force, and transforming into an imperial robe that draped about him.

Countless people looked on as Aurora put on an imperial crown. Immortal Lord Aurora was ascending the throne! In this next epoch, he was taking over as the ruler of the Fifth Star Ring! The sun and moon, which had reached the epitome of darkness, now blazed with light. Their dazzling brightness shone infinitely.

Then Immortal Lord Aurora's gaze swept through the world before coming to rest on his son. His eyes were full of warmth, blessing, and... departure. He lifted his foot and stepped... up into the sky.

He strode through the dome of heaven to the sun and moon. The moment he took over as the lord of the star ring, a boundlessly mighty force converged on him, and his hand became infinitely large. It covered the sky, piercing through the highest heavens to reach the sun and moon. The hand pierced through something like a bubble before grabbing the sun and moon!!

Heaven and earth became pitch black. Sunlight and moonlight disappeared, and Aurora's own light became gloom.

The entire Fifth Star Ring was now without any light! And then Immortal Lord Aurora squeezed down on the sun and moon in his hand, and they were pulled inside of him. It happened very smoothly. The sun and moon merged into him as smoothly as water flowing down a pipe!

And that was because, back when the workings of heaven went into chaos, he had taken away the name of the sun and moon. No one even realized that they had forgotten those names. He had taken the names of the sun and moon and hidden them within the name of his son.

Mi Ming. Seek Brightness.

Seek for what is not seen. The sun and moon are the brightness. That was the meaning of Mi Ming! [4]

“Going forward,” Aurora said softly, “you will be the sun and moon of the Fifth Star Ring. You will have boundless light that can never be defiled. The will of the gods is laid bare, and you can be forever free from the godbane! Ming’er, this... is my wedding gift to you. Go now... and live the life you want to live.”

As he looked out at the pitch-black heaven and earth, black smoke exploded from within him and spread out everywhere. At the same time, his voice echoed out into the Fifth Star Ring.

“Of the seven colors in the world, I chose the red! It will become part of my aurora, turning it crimson! Henceforth... I convert to the dao of gods! I hereby change my canon into godhood!” [5]

His voice echoed in the ears of all living beings. It exploded into countless hearts and minds. And then... he extracted the infinite red color and fused it with his light.

It became... a crimson red aurora! It was a mountain-toppling, sea-draining aurora that could crush anything in its path. As it spread out through the canopy of heaven, covering all beings.... It replaced the sky! Going into the future, that crimson aurora would be the only source of light in the sky for the people of the Fifth Star Ring!

However, there was something strange and gruish. A change this drastic had never occurred in the Fifth Star Ring, this land of cultivators. After all, it was something that would affect all living beings. And yet everyone in the immortal palace, even Fourth True Monarch, was smiling.

The dancing continued. The celebration went on. The laughter and chatting did not cease. Apparently, none of them realized what was happening in the outside world. That scene, coupled with the dramatic change in the dome of heaven, was extremely jarring.

When Xu Qing realized what was happening, he looked up at the familiar red aurora, and his mind felt like it was spinning.

Is this what really happened? But why did the Immortal Lord do this? And why... is everyone here acting like this? Also... what is Young Lord Aurora trying to accomplish...?

Gradually, his racing thoughts began to form an answer. Even as it occurred to him, Immortal Lord Aurora spoke again, his voice ringing through the sky. This time, he sounded even more aggressive than before!

“Did you hear that, Immortal Paragon?”

As his voice boomed like thunder through the red sky, the response came in the form of an ancient sigh. It came from the dome of heaven, from the land, from the air, from the inanimate objects, from the living things. It came from every corner of the Fifth Star Ring.... It turned into a most ancient voice, resonating everywhere, causing the sky to distort, driving away the aurora, and revealing a glittering starry sky.

The starry sky was also distorted. Countless heavenly bodies rippled, as if they were a host of bubbles, all of them different sizes.

All were different colors, but there were none that were red. There were infinite bubbles, and yet all of them contained various scenes. If you put all the scenes together like a puzzle, they would form... the entirety of the Fifth Star Ring!

An ancient hand appeared along with the sigh. Extending two fingers, the hand reached through the starry sky and touched one of the bubbles.

The bubble popped. It was destroyed. In an instant, the immortal palace was wiped out of existence just like that bubble. All things and all beings were reduced to ashes. It didn't matter the level of their cultivation base. None could fight back or resist. They dissipated.

Fourth True Monarch. The grand elder. Everyone, even the cultivators who served as hosts to the outsiders. Only Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix remained amidst the crumbling ruins. They were real, living beings!

Up above, Immortal Lord Aurora disappeared. However, his boundless red light converged on him and then shot up into the canopy of heaven. It appeared in the starry sky amidst the countless bubbles, where... it began to fight the ancient hand. Down below in the destruction and ruins, the young lord maintained silence.

He looked at the figure in the starry sky, and then he prepared to take a step forward. He had assumed all along he could do this. After all, he had planned for this moment for millions upon millions of years. The moment he had longed for that entire time was now upon him. He had assumed that he would be able to make the choice.

Except... he couldn't help but look at Spirit Phoenix, whose hand he held, and who was holding his hand tightly. He knew that she was still waiting for an answer.

She had been waiting for that answer for millions upon millions of years. He could envision her on the God Blood River, piloting a little boat, clad in a woven rush raincoat. And beneath that raincoat was a wedding dress. Wind blew and rain fell. Time passed. Year after year....

Compared to that, all of his talking points seemed meaningless. He couldn't bring himself to say them. He didn't have the strength to step forward. He knew that he owed her far, far too much....

After a long moment of silence, he took a deep breath and suppressed the obsession that had driven him for millions upon millions of years. Reaching out, he tucked a stray hair behind Spirit Phoenix's ear.

“Let’s go home...” he said softly.

Spirit Phoenix had been waiting for him to say that for too many years to count. It had finally happened. She was almost in a daze as she looked at that familiar face from her memories, that person who she could never possibly forget. Tears flowed down her face. She squeezed down tighter on his hand.

And finally, she said, “I know that you can never understand or forgive the Immortal Paragon.... I understand that you want to uncover all the secrets, and find out why this happened. And I know more than anything that you did all of this... to save your father.

“You didn’t set this up for me.... That hourglass creates two hours that exist beyond the timescape. You want to use it to go back to real history, not just a reflection. You want to go back and try to change what happened! But you’re willing to give that up for me. In that case....”

Spirit Phoenix looked at the man she loved, and then she reached toward the hourglass floating off to the side. She grasped it between her fingers, and a popping sound rang out as the hourglass broke open. Countless grains of space-time sand spilled out, forming... a space-time door that led back to real history!

Young Lord Aurora was shaken to the core.

Standing in front of the door, Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix said, “I’ll go with you. Let’s... either live or die together.”

1. As far as I can tell, this wedding vow is made up by the author, although it contains some idioms and terms that are common in traditional Chinese wedding vows. I could be wrong. I tend to check these things to see if the poetic sayings are from real-life poems, songs, etc. In this case, nothing popped up right away, so if it is a real-life ancient wedding vow, I think it’s relatively obscure. ❷

2. In this line, the author alludes to a poem by Southern Song Dynasty poet Lu You. Like I’ve said before, I prefer to use existing translations of poetry if they exist and are good quality, and in this case, I found a great translation of the poem by Jean Yuan. The original line in the translation is: “We still have our sacred promise, but even a love letter is hard to send.” The poem is called Phoenix Hairpin. In this case, the translator has a literal translation, a more poetic translation, as well as background information on the poem. If you’re interested, I suggest going to the translator’s website to [check out the poem](#) (it’s at the bottom of the page). ❷

3. This is a much longer excerpt from the same poem referenced above. ❷

4. Just a reminder that the character Ming/brightness is made up of the two characters for sun and moon.... ❷

5. The last thing he says is somewhat vague in Chinese, and does not actually say godhood. It uses one of the characters from the terms I’ve been translating as personhood and godhood, and based on the context here and later, it seems clear that the implication is that it’s related to gods and godhood. ❷

Chapter 1177: Real History

Chapter 1177: Real History

In the dome of heaven, in the reflected version of history, the starry sky rippled and distorted. Heavenly bodies blurred. Countless bubbles lacked the color red.

But red was in the aurora. The crimson aurora flowed as if to do battle with all the other colors! Within light and shadow, Immortal Lord Aurora and the ancient hand got closer and closer.

As Xu Qing looked on, he was reminded of that monster back in the second world.... Everything that was happening in the sky here was very similar to what happened in the second world.[1]

Meanwhile, the doorway of time stood amidst the ruins, glittering. However, the glow was not colorful. Rather, it was black and white. That doorway of time looked like a door, but it also looked like a mirror. Just like the mirror from the first world.

A ripple of understanding flowed through Xu Qing's consciousness. At the same time, he realized that the black-and-white glow coming from the doorway of time did not consist of rays of light. Rather, it was light like powder, drifting about. It surrounded Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix, and was also pouring into Young Lord Aurora. It was... forming a resonance with his consciousness.

Xu Qing was not surprised at all. He had formed the space-time sand, and he had caused the space-time waves. It made sense that the doorway of time would be connected to him because of his space-time canon. Young Lord Aurora and Spirit Phoenix were borrowing that, and using their memories as a link between the past and the present. As a result, Xu Qing would need to witness their journey back into real history.

"Is that okay, young friend?" Young Lord Aurora said softly, his voice reaching both Spirit Phoenix and Xu Qing's consciousness. "Will you come with the two of us on a quick trip back?"

Spirit Phoenix's gaze was kind as she said, "Young friend, you are our benefactor. Regardless of whether we live or die on this trip, we'll make sure that you get back safely!"

Xu Qing thought about it. He considered what he knew about the young lord and Spirit Phoenix. And then....

"Okay!" he said.

"Thank you..." said Young Lord Aurora. Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix said the same thing. And then the married couple held hands as they walked into the doorway of time.

It was almost like going into the first world. They were going... back into real history!

History took place within time. It was ancient time. And it was the sand and silt at the bottom of the river of the timescape. Even more than that, it was a record and a reflection of time.

Fundamentally speaking, time was the backdrop and the framework for the development of history. By means of time, people could organize and interpret past events. But simultaneously, by means of historical developments, time could reveal its flow and its transformations! For most people, that was nothing more than an abstract concept. But to cultivators who could command space-time canon, it could fill in gaps in their understanding, and lead to... astounding destined opportunities!

Imagine taking a mirror and placing it above a river. Obviously, the image formed by the mirror would only reflect one part of the river. That image corresponded to reflected history.

Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix stepped out of the mirror and onto the River of Time.

There, the young lord spoke to Xu Qing. "It's formed from my canon of the past."

His words verified Xu Qing's supposition. And it significantly bolstered the understanding provided by his canon of time. "Everything here is formed subjectively. People believe that time flows like a river, and so it does."

Young Lord Aurora laughed softly. "That's what my father said once."

Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix held hands as they stepped into the river and sank down to the sand and silt. From that point, they began to walk against the flow. With every step they took, the sand and the silt stirred around their feet. It looked at first like they were making changes. But as they passed, nothing behind them was different.

Xu Qing noticed that.

This time, the one to provide an explanation wasn't Young Lord Aurora. It was Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix.

"My father once explained all of this to me," she said softly. "Think of the past like pages in a book. Once you turn the page, the past is gone. It doesn't exist. But it does leave behind evidence of its passage. That evidence becomes hidden secrets, and the hidden secrets naturally form order."

Xu Qing tried to digest what she was saying.

Immortal Lord Nineshores' canon was that of secrets. Clearly, that was related to the history he could see. By viewing history and time from different angles, they could be seen more completely.

Walking through the River of Time, and treading on the sand of history, was an astounding destined opportunity. Xu Qing was gaining immense enlightenment, and it was allowing him to extend his space-time canon far out into the River of Time.

Gradually, his space-time canon began to fill with waves. As the waves grew bigger, they made a vortex that absorbed his understanding of space-time. Ultimately, they became a powerful flow

that spread out and seemingly stirred the sand. Every single grain of that glittering sand contained images of space-time. All of that shone into his heart.

To Xu Qing, who cultivated the canon of space-time, there could be no good fortune that surpassed the experience of transcending beyond time itself like he was now.

Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix could sense what was happening. They exchanged a glance, and then... they slowed their pace significantly.

They were dead set on reaching their goal, and they wanted it to happen quickly. But... this was an unprecedented destined opportunity and good fortune for Xu Qing, and they wanted him to succeed, just as he had done everything possible to help them succeed.

Xu Qing was experiencing a journey that involved going back into a reflection of the past, and then stepping from that reflection into real history. It went without saying that there couldn't possibly be a better way to bolster his understanding of space-time.

When he reached his limit, an indescribable cracking sound echoed in his consciousness. It was the sound of a lock on his space-time canon being broken open. The instant it happened, massive amounts of space-time sand began to pour into his consciousness. And it far surpassed the amount that had made the previous hourglass!

Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix were approaching their destination. When they finally stepped onto the origin of their memories... a sigh echoed through time. It kicked up sand and sent waves across the river water. And with the help of Xu Qing's space-time canon, it formed numerous pages of history for Young Lord Aurora, which spread out in front of them. Soon, it replaced everything they could see.

The River of Time dissipated, and the immortal palace of old appeared in front of them. However, it was as if there was a curtain separating them, making it impossible to see things perfectly clearly....

Within the blur, Xu Qing spotted a person.

It was Immortal Lord Aurora. He wore white clothes and had white hair, and he was standing in front of a mountain of ice. His expression was one of pain, bitterness, and sorrow. Ultimately, all of those emotions blended together to form loneliness.

"From now on, it's just going to be you and me, son.... I'll be with you as you grow up."

There was an infant sealed in the ice mountain. It went without saying who that infant was.

The image blurred, as though the pages of time were being flipped. Immortal Lord Aurora was by the infant's side as he slowly grew. The infant babbled happily as he learned to talk.

His father hugged him and laughed. His father held his hand as they climbed a mountain together. He was eventually a boy, perched on his father's shoulders as they watched the sun rise.

“Daddy, I want the sun and the moon to be around forever. I love them!”

Immortal Lord Aurora smiled. It seemed that his time spent with his son was healing him. The immortal palace had been empty, but now there were people there. There were attendants, followers, apprentices, and more.

Xu Qing eventually spotted Fourth True Monarch. All of them were smiling. They respected the Immortal Lord, and they loved the young lord. All of them accompanied the young Lord as he grew up.

The immortal palace overflowed with life.

Sadly, those beautiful times were only temporary. As the pages of history turned, and as time flowed, the light in the immortal palace dimmed. And then, without warning... it went out.

Darkness spread everywhere, reaching every corner. The Immortal Lord walked through that darkness and gloom, and he no longer wore a white robe. His clothing was black. And his hair was black. His eyes were cold and they seemed full of slaughter.

He personally... killed all of his followers, wiped out all of his attendants, and brutally slaughtered his apprentices. His four apprentices all died miserably. The immortal palace reeked of gore. Blood flowed on the ground. Shredded flesh stuck to all the buildings.

When the immortal palace was quiet, a young man was stranded in the sea of blood, shivering in terror and despair. In front of him, the darkness converged into the form of his father. His father slowly reached out his hand.

The hand was trembling and black. The darkness was rippling, struggling as if it was being restrained, until eventually... he reached down and tousled the young man's hair.

The light of dawn accompanied the tears that fell onto the young man's face.

The Immortal Lord's robe became white. His black hair turned white. Wrapping the young man in his arms, he bitterly murmured, “I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry....”

Then he erased the young man's memories and erased the blood in the immortal palace.

When the young man woke up, the sun shone brightly. Everyone was there in the immortal palace, their smiles unchanging. They were not acting strangely at all. Just as they had in life, they happily accompanied the young man.

And yet, it was starting on that day that Immortal Lord Aurora told the young man to never come visit him at night. Beneath the Immortal Lord's grand hall, a cave came to exist. And in that cave were chains. Every night, that cave was filled with bitter howls that no one could hear.

In that manner, one day turned into another. Years passed....

The young man grew up and gained enlightenment of his canon. It was a special canon. It was that of the mirror.

But then one day his canon... was secretly transformed.

The night Immortal Lord Aurora sensed that his son's canon had changed, his pain in that cave surpassed anything from before. Until... darkness once again infected the entire immortal palace.

By the time dawn came, everything was back to normal. Normally speaking, time would have passed like that, an illusion that contained only a father and a son.

But one day a very determined woman arrived. And then there were three living people.

And then the wedding day came.

1. It is so weird because, as I was reading the first paragraphs of this chapter originally, I was thinking of the monster in the second world, and then got to this paragraph and found Xu Qing thinking the same thing. That scene started in [chapter 1141](#) but primarily took place in [chapter 1142](#). 

Chapter 1178: Henceforth, I Will Not Exist in Reincarnation!

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The red curtain of history had been opened wide. Young Lord Aurora's heart was pounding thanks to the memories that had been hidden away within him.

At the very least, memories that had been waiting countless years to be released were now free. Young Lord Aurora, who had been slowly driven mad as he waited quietly in the immortal palace, finally had an explanation. And yet... personally seeing what had actually happened didn't enable him to calm down.

Spirit Phoenix gripped his hand even tighter.

Xu Qing and Young Lord Aurora were in a fused state right now, so Xu Qing could clearly sense his agitation. And he understood it. But there was nothing he could say.

A real life, and a fake one. Despair and hope. Weeping and laughter. All of them mixed together until... they revealed a father's love. Unfortunately, that father eventually disappeared into time, like sand that slipped through the fingers when dredged up from the bottom of a river.

It was only possible to go through time without a fear of death, like a dreaming soul, full of helplessness and sorrow, full of longing. Surpass life and death. Walk through time. To find an opportunity to ask: why?

Xu Qing sighed. He thought back to Peerless City, and the blur of memories, and the image of his parents that could never fade away. He thought back to Seven Blood Eyes, to his Master, to Sergeant Thunder, and to Grandmaster Bai. And then those figures combined into an ancient voice that echoed in his consciousness.

“Don’t stop now! Don’t give up!!”

The historical images continued to flow through time. The red curtain had parted, but it didn’t take away the red. The color of the wedding still blossomed within history. Like blood.

In the image, Immortal Lord Aurora laughed gratefully. Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix were kowtowing to heaven.

But then...real history played out, and it was not what had happened in that fifteen minutes beyond the timescape. Heaven and earth transformed. The sea of light rippled, and even as their first kowtow concluded... rumbling descended from above.

The sun and moon were plucked away. Immortal Lord Aurora became red, and the sky... no longer had a sun and moon, but instead a crimson aurora. That was the only source of light. Within that light, countless bubbles appeared.

Along with them came an ancient hand. The bubble popped, and a ripping sound echoed out as he took away all the glory of the immortal palace.... At the same time, the bride and groom stood amidst the ruins, stunned looks on their faces. At least, until their minds blurred.

Neither the Immortal Lord nor the Immortal Paragon wished for the bride and groom to know what had truly happened. They were cut away from it all and rendered unconscious.

Just before passing out, the Young Lord Aurora of the past looked at his father, and watched him rebel. He watched him change his canon into godhood, and shoot out into the starry sky. Even if he lost, he was going to fight the Immortal Paragon! That was the last thing Young Lord Aurora saw before losing consciousness.

But the images of history continued to play out. The Young Lord Aurora and Spirit Phoenix who had stepped out of the mirror and into the past, were watching intently. They wanted to see... what really happened.

And they did.

After Immortal Lord Aurora shot out into the starry sky, he blazed with radiant, crimson light. And yet... he did not have any desire to do battle!

Smiling, and yet with tears flowing down his face, he looked at the ancient hand and shouted, “Kill me, father!”

Those words slammed into the mind of Young Lord Aurora like millions upon millions of lightning bolts. This was not a fight to quell a rebellion. It was....

“Father... asked to die...?” murmured Young Lord Aurora bitterly.

An ancient sigh echoed through history. The bubbles glittered, and light swirled into the shape of a majestic figure. The figure hovered in the starry sky in front of Immortal Lord Aurora, so majestic he became everything. It was as if he was the starry sky. Mixed emotions filled his eyes. Shame. Helplessness. Sorrow.

“Do you blame me?” he asked hoarsely. “For sealing the godbane inside of you...?”

Immortal Lord Aurora looked up at the familiar figure in front of him. It was his father, the most paramount entity in all of the Fifth Star Ring. The Immortal Paragon!

He was the one who had led the cultivators of all the minor worlds in a grand counterattack against the gods! He was the one who had overthrown the dynasty of the gods, and ended the suffering of all living beings. He was the one who had compacted the Fifth Star Ring down and turned it into a land of cultivators. No one had accomplished more in the Fifth Star Ring than him. There were countless people who grew up venerating him as a hero of the ages.

“I don’t blame you,” Immortal Lord Aurora said. “Back during the war with the gods, it seemed like you won. But the truth is that just before death, the God Paragon infected you with the godbane.

“The gods are a fundamental manifestation of the higher star rings. They are a *part* of the higher star rings. Therefore, a God Lord can never truly be destroyed, not for all eternity. As long as someone remembers a God Lord, then no matter how many epochs pass, that God Lord can be called back. And thus, there’s no need to even mention... a God Paragon.”

Immortal Lord Aurora looked at the Immortal Paragon, and he shimmered with red light as he continued, “The God Paragon used the power unleashed by the destruction of his godhood to gather his boundless godly might and turn it into the ultimate curse. Not even someone as incredibly powerful as you could completely wipe it out of existence. And the bit that remained when you tried became a sealing mark.

“That’s why you went into seclusion after the final battle. You found out that the God Paragon... wanted that curse to be inside of you... so that could be resurrected. A resurrection like that would take many, many years. But if the process couldn’t be stopped, then the resurrection was certain to take place. And the moment it occurred, this land of cultivators in the Fifth Star Ring would be reduced to ashes.

“In order to prevent that from happening, you traveled through all the higher and lower star rings, sending out countless clones in the hopes of finding a way to solve the problem. And eventually you did.”

Aurora’s voice faltered a bit, and when he started talking again, there was bitterness in the voice. “And that was to transfer the godbane away and enter a state of slumber! The transfer magic came with extremely strict conditions. You could only pass it on to an only child. Your son. Me. And I could only pass it on to an only child.

“After passing it through 4,900 generations, the curse would be fully dispelled. With each transfer, the curse would weaken until it eventually disappeared. That is why, for the sake of the Fifth Star

Ring, you chose to take the godbane and use that magic... to transfer it to me and enter a state of slumber.

“That is also the reason why there is a succession between the epochs in the Fifth Star Ring. Your true form is sleeping, and even your clone must remain in slumber most of the time. You sacrificed your bloodline for the sake of the Fifth Star Ring. Our family’s bitterness is the only way to keep the godbane sealed, and, as generations pass, eventually get rid of it.

“I understand all of that, and I wanted to go along with it.” Immortal Lord Aurora was speaking in a near murmur by now. “But... father, the godbane is why Ming’er’s mother died! She... died the first time I lost control! I am the one... who personally ripped her to shreds.... I am the one... who murdered the love of my life....

“Did you know that she didn’t even try to stop me? She wasn’t angry. The moment she died, she looked at me with love in her eyes. She paid with her life to bring me back from insanity and into control. I couldn’t face that reality. That was why I went into a state of slumber.”[1]

Immortal Lord Aurora wept as he looked at the Immortal Paragon. His face was a mask of pain. He couldn’t bear to think about what he had done. He could not accept it, and he couldn’t forgive himself. And yet, he could not ignore his own father, who had sacrificed everything for the Fifth Star Ring, even his own bloodline.

But the more he tried to wrap his mind around it, the more he blamed himself. And that guilt became a black hole that slowly consumed him. Within that never-ending pain, he had eventually chosen to seal himself. He was worried that, in his current state, he might harm more people. It was for that reason that, historically speaking, he had slumbered for so long.

“When I woke up 10,000 years later, I thought that I had everything under control. And so, I unsealed Ming’er... with the intention of accompanying him. Being with Ming’er as he grew up was a healing time for me.... But, father, how could I have ever known that I didn’t have things under control at all?? And then... I lost control again.”

Immortal Lord Aurora was shaking, and his voice was shaking as well. “When it happened, I almost... I almost ripped Ming’er to shreds. I came so, so close... After that, I chose to build that cave to seal myself in. I told Ming’er to never come see me at night. I thought... that sealing myself was the safe option.

“Until... I realized that Ming’er’s canon had changed. That was when I realized that *you* had changed his canon. It was no longer that of the mirror. Instead... it had become that which can transfer the godbane! It was that which could seal the godbane... the Three-Karmas Ten-Evils Seal!

“You wanted me to transfer the source of my unsustainable pain into Ming’er. But how could I possibly put him through what I went through? Endless suffering, day and night. The pain of having personally killed the love of your life!”

Immortal Lord Aurora started laughing madly as he pointed at the Immortal Paragon.

“Father, to the Fifth Star Ring, you are the Immortal Paragon, whose glorious achievements could never be matched! I don’t blame you for sacrificing your bloodline! But... you are also my father!

“I’m not as amazing as you! I cannot and will not take that pain and put it into my son! I also know that there is another way to deal with the godbane, a way that’s not so complicated. In reality, back when you transferred the godbane to me, you knew that you could use that other method to wipe out the godbane forever. And that was to wait until the right time, when I was old enough and then just kill me!

“Well... the godbane and I have fully fused. The time has come! I’ve rebelled. I changed my canon to godhood. The god is awakening within me. Father, you... don’t have much time left! You... have to kill me!! Shred my flesh. Pulverize my bones. Eradicate my soul. Wipe me out of existence! Ensure that I do not exist in the past, the present, or the future!

“Remove every trace of me from the memories of all living beings! Make sure I do not exist in reincarnation. It should be... as if I had never existed! It would be as if you never have had me as a son!”

Immortal Lord Aurora had finally taken a stand! The crimson aurora stained all of history.... It was the color of marriage, but also the color of blood! This was the love of a father. And then, a voice echoed within history.

“Ming’er, going forward... you will be the sun and moon of the Fifth Star Ring. You will have boundless light that can never be defiled. The will of the gods is laid bare, and you can be forever free from the godbane!”

1. In [chapter 1155](#), Aurora told some of this story and mentioned going to sleep for 10,000 years. ㊦

Chapter 1179: Lingering Incense

Chapter 1179: Lingering Incense

Images from history swirled within the blood-red color. Countless grains of sand flowed within the brightly shining currents of the River of Time.

Beyond the glow of that light, Young Lord Aurora stared blankly. He had been rendered unconscious back then, so he had never heard that conversation. But just now, he had heard the entire thing.

As it turned out, his entire childhood in the immortal palace had been fake. As it turned out, his father’s rebellion was actually a plea to be killed. As it turned out, he had pleaded for death to protect his own son.

He began to tremble visibly as he watched his father charge toward the Immortal Paragon. Tears streamed down his face. He had never understood why his father did what he did. And he had always believed that the actions of his grandfather, the Immortal Paragon... were unforgivable. Now that he knew the truth, the only thing left behind was pain.

Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix sighed, but she did not loosen her grip on his hand.

Xu Qing was a mere observer, but he was also feeling deeply shaken. Based on what really happened in history, it didn't seem like anyone was in the wrong. Was the Immortal Lord wrong... to wish to end his pain? To choose to rebel as a way to seek death? To end the godbane with himself, and ensure that his son did not experience the same pain he had? That was the manifestation of fatherly love, and there was nothing wrong about it.

Was the Immortal Paragon wrong... to sacrifice his bloodline for the sake of the Fifth Star Ring as a whole? To abandon himself for the greater good? There was nothing wrong about that either.

From these historical images, it was clear that the second method of dealing with the problem that had been mentioned by Immortal Lord Aurora... was something the Immortal Paragon had known about from the beginning. As long as the time was right, if he personally killed Immortal Lord Aurora, it would solve everything. And there would be no need to whittle down the godbane over many generations.

Given his skill and ability, it was only natural that he could have ensured that time came sooner, rather than waiting for it for such a long time.

But considering that he was almost solely responsible for the entire Fifth Star Ring, he chose to ignore that option. Traces of fatherly love were also evident in his choice. He did not want to lose his son. There had always been a simpler option, but he chose the longer and more complicated version instead. Because of going down that path, Immortal Lord Aurora stayed alive up until this point in history. f|re(e)web.n\ovel. (c)o.m

He loved his son, and couldn't bear to kill him. But his son loved his own son so much that he would rather die than see him in pain.

The historical images continued to flow.

The Immortal Paragon, as grand as the starry sky, had still not spoken a single word. He had maintained silence the entire time. Even as Immortal Lord Aurora surged with red light and closed in seeking death, he said nothing.

Light glittered and rumbling sounds echoed out as Immortal Lord Aurora's canon corroded everything. Yet the Immortal Paragon remained silent. He allowed the Immortal Lord to launch his attack.

Until Immortal Lord Aurora's white hair turned black. Until his white robes became black robes. Until the aura of a god erupted from Immortal Lord Aurora.... Cackling laughter rang out, growing louder and louder until it was a roar that shook heaven. The words "kill me" echoed again and again, causing the images of history to ripple and blur. The God Paragon was trying to return by means of Immortal Lord Aurora's body!

The Immortal Paragon closed his eyes and slowly extended his hand. He gently lowered it.

It was just like years ago in the minor world when he had tousled his son's hair, smiled, and said, *"Wait until you're all grown up. Then I'll take you outside to look at the starry sky."*

He had done that.

As his hand dropped, Immortal Lord Aurora crumbled into ashes and vanished. He turned into red motes of light that spread out to become an aurora in the sky. He was gone. His soul was destroyed. His bones were eradicated. From that moment on, he did not exist in reincarnation.

As the light shone, the Immortal Paragon closed his eyes. He did not open them again. He simply stood there looking bleak and lonely. A very long moment passed, and then he turned and left.

He had previously stood straight and tall, but as he made his way off into the distance, he became stooped and lonesome. At that moment, he was no longer the Immortal Paragon of the Fifth Star Ring. He was just a father who had lost his beloved son, and was now bitter and alone. Eventually... he once again became part of the starry sky.

And then a faint murmur echoed through that starry sky.

“It was for the sake of you, the Immortal Paragon, and all life... that Aurora gave the Immortal Paragon an iron-clad reason to kill him. That was how he freed himself.... And that was how he freed you.... It was also how he freed the Immortal Paragon.... He helped everyone.”

A host of threads floated out of the historical images, drifting amongst the sand. They were secrets of history. They eventually formed into a figure within the historical images... right in front of Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix.

He was Immortal Lord Nineshores.

Young Lord Aurora said nothing. Spirit Phoenix bowed her head.

“This bit of history...” Nineshores said softly, and then he shook his head. “This bit of history should never have been viewed by anyone beneath the level of Immortal Lord. It cannot be known. Although the godbane has been done away with, if anyone found out the truth, it would give birth to karma, and then everything could be undone.

“Immortal Lords could avoid that, but for anyone under that level, it would be too great of a risk. That is why your father and I made sure you weren’t aware of what happened. But now you’ve seen it. Now you know.... Therefore, from the perspective of the Immortal Paragon, who must consider the future of the Fifth Star Ring, erasing you from existence would be the best option.

“Except there are other things to consider. One is my daughter, who is also his granddaughter-in-law. Another is his grandson, within whom is the undying sun and moon of the Fifth Star Ring, this land of cultivators, which cannot be destroyed. And the third thing to consider is that...”

Immortal Lord Nineshores paused briefly. “I’m soft-hearted. And though the old man might be willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the Fifth Star Ring, in the end, he’s also soft-hearted. Therefore, he has chosen to bear the weight of your karma. Now, you may go.”

Nineshores gently waved his hand in front of him. The pages of history blurred. The River of Time surged with waves. An unstoppable force wrapped up Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix to send them away....

Nineshores turned back to the starry sky. Everything blurred. It would disappear in moments.

Young Lord Aurora looked up. “Perhaps the Immortal Paragon will bear the weight of my karma, and that of Spirit Phoenix. But there’s another stream of consciousness inside me, someone who showed me great kindness. He....”

“He’ll be fine,” Nineshores said coolly. “He has karma that the Immortal Paragon cannot bear. As for the godbane... it wouldn’t dare to mess with him.”

Waves surged on the River of Time, covering everything. They carried with it that sand from elsewhere, and swept it onto a mirror. The mirror disappeared.

When everything became clear again, the immortal palace was there. When they left, it was in ruins. But when they came back, the wedding was going on. However, there was no clamoring crowd.

There was only Young Lord Aurora, Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix and... another consciousness that was now a blurred figure.

It was Xu Qing. On the way back, he had separated from Young Lord Aurora’s body. Now he floated in midair, looking at the immortal palace, and looking at Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix.

Everything that had happened seemed like a dream. The things in the River of Time were even more like a dream. Now he was waking up from the dream.

Xu Qing had benefited dramatically. After all that he had experienced, his understanding of space-time was nearly complete. He could sense that he was very close to a breakthrough....

All he needed was a direction. And when it came to that direction, he just needed to make a choice. When he did, the breakthrough would occur.

Xu Qing wasn’t concerned with the truth he had learned in the dream, and all the karma related to it. Nor was he concerned about the vague things Nineshores had said about him. He had already gotten the karma of the broken face under control. If the godbane came looking and tried to use him to bring back the God Paragon, well... Xu Qing got the feeling that Eminent Desolation would not be very happy. That said, the historical truths he had learned had still affected him emotionally.

He turned to look at Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. They looked back without saying a word. A moment passed, and then Young Lord Aurora waved his hand to send some sand flying over to Xu Qing, where it took the shape of an hourglass.

Its capacity had increased. Its limit was not two hours, but rather, a day. free.web(n)ove(l)(.)c(o)m

“Young friend... thank you for accompanying us,” Young Lord Aurora said softly. “I no longer have any regrets. Going forward, I have decided to leave this place. Just as my father wanted, I will live my own life....”

With that, he looked at Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. Gazing back at him warmly, she nodded. A smile broke out on Young Lord Aurora's face, a smile that contained a bit of melancholy, but also relief. The two of them rose up into the sky and away toward the void. As they departed, the world blurred. It was as if millions upon millions of years of time were passing by and eroding everything.

Xu Qing looked up at the two figures disappearing overhead, and as he did, a voice drifted down.

"I can't help you much with your space-time canon, young friend. But I do remember my father saying that after space-time... Is parallelism!"

The moment Xu Qing heard those words, his mind filled with thunderous rumbling, and his eyes began to shine brightly. It was like his head had been anointed with the purest enlightenment. He understood!

The voice from above continued to drift down. "I'm giving the immortal palace to you. You can have everything in it. Given what you understand of space-time, you should understand what to do with it. And now... if we're connected by destiny, maybe we'll meet again."

And then Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix said, "Thank you for your help, young friend. Thank you for everything you've done for us. Later on, take a trip to the God Blood River. I'm going to leave a gift for you there...."

As they disappeared into the distance, the immortal palace eroded more and more quickly. In only a few short breaths of time in which Xu Qing gained sudden enlightenment, the palace passed through millions upon millions of years. The buildings, and the entire world, crumbled into dust. The space-time waves of the fourth world vanished.

And yet, in Xu Qing's mind, his space-time canon had changed. It had transformed from a trickling stream into a mighty river.

Chapter 1180: The Ninth Extreme!

Chapter 1180: The Ninth Extreme!

The river water churned, sending a great spray of water out in all directions.

Xu Qing sat cross-legged on the surface as the ash from the fourth world dissipated around him. It was like falling snow.

However... the world had not been destroyed, nor had it disappeared. True, the buildings of the immortal palace, and everything around it, had vanished into nothing. But the world itself still existed.

And that was because of Xu Qing's presence! As of now, Young Lord Aurora had ensured that the immortal palace belonged to him. He had the proper status to use it. He had achieved major success with his space-time, turning it into a manifestation of the River of Time, and thus maintaining the existence of the fourth world.

At the same time, Xu Qing understood that he could leave it at any time. With one thought, he could return to the third world if he wished. Whether it was the living third world, the painting that was the second world, or the single line that was the first world, he could descend to all of them easily.

That said... there were limitations in terms of going the opposite direction, in other words, up. Those limitations weren't anything to do with status or identity, but rather, the level of his canon. Anyone with canon or a canon treasure could get into the fourth world. But the requirements for the fifth world were more stringent.

The canon had to be at a very high level, with its power of law immense. In other words, it required battle prowess equivalent to a Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor. As of now, Xu Qing could sense that he was just on the cusp of being able to enter the fifth world.

I need to take my space-time to the next higher level. That will be when I can achieve a breakthrough. And that higher level will be my ninth extreme!

His eyes glittered brightly.

Xu Qing's intuition was telling him that when his ninth extreme appeared, he would become a nine-world Smoldering God. In other words, the ninth extreme would allow him to step into that fifth world, a place reserved for either Grand Emperors or people whose canon had reached a certain level. Once he was there, he would be able to enter the fifth world, whereupon he was confident that he could...

Step into Imperial Sovereign and fight a Grand Emperor! As for my ninth extreme... after space-time is... parallelism....

The words spoken by Young Lord Aurora upon his departure were deeply moving to Xu Qing, and right now, they were like thunder rumbling in his mind. The sense of enlightenment that had begun when he heard them was now growing in intensity.

As Xu Qing sat on the River of Time, he eventually looked down at the water. He was looking at his reflection. He stared at it for a long time until... he closed his eyes.

In that instant, the reflected version of him opened his eyes! The reflection sank down toward the bottom of the river, toward the sand. Eventually, he disappeared.

Atop the river, Xu Qing sat cross-legged and unmoving.

Wind blew from off in the distance, bringing an immortal mist. The wind blew past the cultivators, across the immortal foyer and onto the stone stele.[1]

The stele was black, covered with moss and lichen, and seemed to emanate an extremely ancient feeling. Barely legible on the stele was writing describing the three paths leading into the immortal palace. Astonishingly, this was the entrance of the immortal palace. When cultivators came here, they had to pick their path inside.

Li Mengtu and Patriarch Diling had just arrived, along with another individual. Upon arriving at the immortal foyer, the vast majority of cultivators picked the path on the left. That was the first path, a misty little trail that seemed to be a different dimension compared to the foyer, as it was much darker. A light rain fell there, making the trail muddy.

The second path, which lay straight ahead, was much more choked with mist, although it was possible to see a bridge there. A person was slowly disappearing as he crossed the bridge away from them.

“That’s Sir Star Ring,” Li Mengtu said. “When we arrived a moment ago, I saw him walking in that direction. Which path are you planning to select, Brother Xu? If you take the trail, we can go in together.”

Patriarch Diling looked eagerly at Xu Qing to find out his plan. The person standing next to him was none other than Xu Qing!

Shockingly, he was back at the moment when the Fallen Immortal Moors had opened up, and they had just begun their journey into the immortal palace. Whether it was Li Mengtu or Patriarch Diling, they didn’t seem to think anything unusual was going on. It was as if they had no idea that they were actually in the past.

Put precisely, they had been here in another instance of space-time. Even more strange was that Xu Qing was behaving exactly as they were, as if this really was the first time he had been here. He was currently looking at the third path.

The trail. The bridge. The river.

“I think I’ll take the bridge.”

Patriarch Diling and Li Mengtu exchanged a glance.

Li Mengtu nodded, clasped hands and bowed to Xu Qing, then went to the trail on the left. Patriarch Diling seemed to want to say something, but was hesitating to do so. Ultimately, he bowed to Xu Qing and followed Li Mengtu on the trail. The two of them were soon gone.

Xu Qing was the only person left in the immortal foyer. As he stood there, he looked to the right.

After a moment of consideration, he looked away, then stepped toward the bridge.

Time passed.

Beyond the bridge was the second world. It was like a painting. Xu Qing experienced many things there, except... that he didn’t run into any sword-wielding imp. He ended up slumbering in the monster’s bucket. Eventually, some unknown disturbance caused the monster to howl with fury and empty the contents of his bucket. Xu Qing didn’t know what the disturbance was. However, he did manage to escape by the skin of his teeth.

In the third world, he ran into Li Mengtu. By teaming up, they managed to get identities in the fourth world. They entered together.

Xu Qing was not Young Lord Aurora. Instead, he was a guard at the Records Repository. He tried to change history and make some space-time waves. He succeeded to a degree, but never managed to make any big waves, as Sir Star Ring was there maintaining order.

When the wedding day came, catastrophe befell the immortal palace, just like it had historically speaking. The bubble in the starry sky popped, and everyone in the immortal palace disappeared, including Xu Qing.

He opened his eyes. He was seated cross-legged next to a tiny river. Off in the distance, as if separated by space-time, was another version of himself. That version stood next to a mighty river.

So that's how it is....

The Xu Qing next to the stream closed his eyes.

The reflection continued to sink down. Soon... the same scene from before started to play out on the immortal foyer. Again, Xu Qing had no idea what was going on. Considering how dangerous the situation was, he decided that the safest thing would be to go with Li Mengtu and Patriarch Diling on the rainy trail.

Because of that, he didn't experience any of the things he had experienced in the first or second world. He ended up getting into a conflict with Sir Vilespirit, which led to a bit of a grudge between them. He also befriended Zhou Zhengli. The two of them, along with Li Mengtu, worked together to get identities for the fourth world. Once in the fourth world, they experienced the drama of history.

When everything was over and the fourth world disappeared, Xu Qing opened his eyes and saw... two other versions of himself. He thought for a while and was stunned at what occurred to him.

So that's how it is....

He closed his eyes next to the very, very tiny stream.

And yet, the reflection just kept going down. He encountered a series of currents and ripples. He became one Xu Qing after another, all in different space-times, but all at the entrance of the immortal palace. He made all sorts of choices. It was similar to his experience in the Desert of Time, when that primordial sand would shift in the wind and make different timelines. As a result, he experienced many things.

In fact, sometimes he even died! Those space-times became empty voids.

Some of the reflections solved problems in ways that Xu Qing normally didn't. Murder. Massacre. Robbery. There was a lot of variety.

His experiences varied because of that. In some cases, he teamed up with Sir Vilespirit. Other times he worked with Hordeslayer and Rampart. There were times when he didn't go to the fourth world at all. There were even instances in which Xu Qing became friends with Sir Star Ring, and helped him to maintain order.

After each experience ended, a new flow of water would appear outside, where Xu Qing remained seated cross-legged on the majestic river. More and more streams of water appeared around him. Some were big, some were small. Upon each one sat Xu Qing. They became a vast, densely packed host of rivers. There were countless versions of Xu Qing and countless rivers, filling the void.

Then the wind blew, and the primordial sand stirred, and the original version of Xu Qing opened his eyes.

“Unify!” he said softly.

All of the countless versions of Xu Qing opened their eyes... and looked at him! All of the gazes unified, and then... poured into him. Next, the countless rivers surged... and joined the original river!

The river water raged, and Xu Qing’s mind spun. It was as if his heart had opened up. His eyes were no longer obscured.

Countless egos became an id. Countless rivers became a great sea!

At that moment, the ninth extreme was born!

Extreme parallelism!

Everything shook dramatically as Xu Qing’s ninth world formed right in front of him. His cultivation base skyrocketed! He went from being an eight-world Smoldering God into being a nine-world Smoldering God. That was the ultimate limit for Smoldering Gods! His canon also broke through to a higher level!

As it happened, he rose to his feet atop the space-time sea. Looking off into the distance, he lifted his foot... and took a step!

His destination was a place that only people with Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor battle prowess could enter. The fifth world. And that was where he could complete his breakthrough. When his foot dropped, everything blurred and distorted. Surpassing all shackles, he passed through the wall and entered... the fifth world!

A dazzlingly beautiful sight met his eyes. He saw vortexes, some large and some small, like galaxies or gruish eyes. They went on seemingly forever.

Despite how majestic it was, Xu Qing was able to see all the vortexes and all the details. And he was also able to perceive the fact that, in some of the vortexes, people sat cross-legged.

One of them was Sir Star Ring, but there were others he was not familiar with. Based on their auras, they were Quasi-Immortals. The people all had strange and dream-like images flowing around them.

It looked like Sir Star Ring was in the middle of a breakthrough. Sir Star Ring seemed to notice Xu Qing looking at him, as he opened his eyes. The moment he saw Xu Qing, his face filled with an uncontrollable incredulity.

“What are you doing here??”

1. “Wind blew from off in the distance...” and the things that happen after that are what happened starting in [chapter 1139](#). 

Chapter 1181: Reaching Imperial Sovereign in One Step; Looking in on Revered Ancient

Chapter 1181: Reaching Imperial Sovereign in One Step; Looking in on Revered Ancient

Getting into the Fifth World was exceedingly difficult! It was a place made for Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors. As for Imperial Sovereigns... your only hope was to have canon that had been advanced to a high level.

Cultivators like that were as *rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns*. In fact, in this generation in the Fifth Star Ring... it was publicly acknowledged that only the number one Shining Star, who was of course Sir Star Ring, qualified in that regard. That was one reason why the Shining Stars had such a high opinion of Sir Star Ring. It was also why Sir Star Ring was so ambitious. His canon of order had long since reached the point where he could break through to the Quasi-Immortal level.

He had intentionally held back in order to accumulate a total of 99 chains of order. After that, he had planned to use the majestic energy of the fifth world as his foundation, and the power of the immortal palace as the driving force, all with the goal of accepting Fourth True Monarch’s canon.

By breaking through in that way, he could follow the same path as Fourth True Monarch. Had he broken through in that manner, then the instant he became a Quasi-Immortal, he would have been one of the most astonishing Quasi-Immortals to exist, even going back to ancient times.

His battle prowess would have been overwhelming. He would have been an incredibly powerful Quasi-Immortal! And that would have given him limitless future potential! By accomplishing that, becoming a Lower Immortal would have been a foregone conclusion. That was the entire reason he had come to the Fallen Immortal Moors.

Unfortunately, ideals might be nice, but they often don’t measure up to reality. He had been thwarted in the fourth world, and had failed to maintain order. As a result, he never succeeded in his plan for the 99 chains. What was worse, some of them had even been broken. It had affected him in significant ways.

But Sir Star Ring was the number one Shining Star, so he didn’t let his defeat get to him. He made some mental adjustments, entered the fifth world, and continued to pursue his path.

Now he was only moments away from success. He had completely repaired his chains of order, and was halfway through building the 99th chain. All he needed was a bit more time and he would complete it. Then he would break through from Imperial Sovereign to Quasi-Immortal.

He had experienced some twists and turns, but was still going to achieve the result he desired. Based on his understanding, there was no one else in the same generation as him who had come to

the immortal palace and could get to the fifth level. Thus, there was no one around who could stop him.

The other Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors here were not interested in fighting him as long as he didn't make a move on them. He was one of the Shining Stars, and was under the protection of special laws in the Fifth Star Ring. Anyone who broke such laws would have to pay a very high price. That was why he had been convinced there would be no hitches during his breakthrough.

But then he spotted Xu Qing... and was immediately shaken to the core. The development, after all, was profoundly significant. He could see the evidence of a breakthrough on Xu Qing. Besides, the mere fact that he had come to the fifth world indicated that he had broken through and was now on roughly the same level as himself. That realization caused his heart to start pounding.

"Your cultivation base.... You're a Smoldering God??"

He wasn't the only one to react with surprise. The other Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors working on their cultivation opened their eyes and looked at Xu Qing. Their reactions varied. But all were surprised, especially when it came to Xu Qing's cultivation base level.

"Smoldering God?"

"With canon...."

"He gained enlightenment of that canon as a Smoldering God...."

"Interesting. Looks like it might be time to rethink who deserves to be the number one Shining Star."

An intangible wind seemed to kick up in the fifth world. As that wind blew, Sir Star Ring wiped the grimace from his face and slowly got to his feet. Killing intent built explosively within him, quickly turning into a raging tempest around him.

Naturally, he realized who Xu Qing was the moment he saw him.[1]

The person in front of him was the same cultivator who had possessed Young Lord Aurora in the fourth world! The person in front of him was the same cultivator who had kicked up such endless waves, all while staying hidden in the shadows! The person in front of him was the cultivator who had used the words on the marriage contract to drive him out of the fourth world!

"So you came here... looking to break through...? I won't allow it!"

His killing intent exploded, and his cultivation base power, which was just on the verge of a breakthrough, erupted explosively. It didn't matter if Xu Qing was planning to interrupt his breakthrough. There was no way he could allow *him* to break through.

If a Smoldering God could cause him so much trouble, then if that person broke through, he would definitely cause even more trouble. Though Sir Star Ring was confident he could still come out on top in that case, this person just really irritated him. And thus, he didn't hesitate to shoot directly toward Xu Qing.

The surrounding Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors looked on with keen eyes. None of them would casually call these two members of the Junior generation. After all, the fact that they had reached this point indicated that they qualified to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Grand Emperors. It didn't matter to them who came out on top in the fight. If nothing else, being able to watch a fight like this would bring a welcome respite from their tedious cultivation.

And yet, just as Sir Star Ring's killing intent surged and he shot forth, and even as the Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors looked on, Xu Qing, who had only just arrived in the fifth world, frowned. He knew that he wasn't in the proper state to get into a fight. His parallelism canon was fluctuating, and his ninth world was still stabilizing.

Xu Qing knew that the most important thing for him right now... was to use the energy here to make that final burst into Imperial Sovereign. He was completely and utterly confident that he could succeed. But he knew that if he was fighting when it happened, or if someone interrupted the process, he would have a hard time defending himself.

He hadn't been planning to interrupt Sir Star Ring's breakthrough. He figured it would be best for both of them to break through before worrying about fighting. But apparently... Sir Star Ring wasn't going to let that happen.

"Fine then," Xu Qing growled, his eyes icy. "I won't allow *you* to break through." Lifting his right hand, he pushed it gently in the direction of Sir Star Ring. "Be expelled."

The fifth world rumbled loudly, and the wind became a tempest. As the world rumbled, the vortexes all started rotating. It was as if countless eyes had suddenly opened. A terrifying force of expulsion erupted. And it landed... right on Sir Star Ring!

Sir Star Ring was stunned, and he wanted to fight back. But the terrifying power was beyond his ability to resist. An instant later... he started blurring. And then he just vanished. He had been expelled from the fifth world. After he was gone, the force of expulsion went away and everything returned to normal.

As for the Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors, their desire to see a dramatic scene play out in front of them died. All of them suddenly felt the need to take the situation very seriously.

"He owns the place?"

"He has seniority!"

"This guy has power over the immortal palace!"

Xu Qing didn't have time to judge the reactions. Before leaving, Young Lord Aurora had given him ownership of the immortal palace. Theoretically speaking, he should be able to expel anyone he wanted once he was in a given world. After expelling Sir Star Ring, he sat down cross-legged, closed his eyes, and immersed himself in his ninth extreme.

The ninth extreme was the extreme of parallelism. It seemed to Xu Qing that this extreme was like the primordial sand he had found in the Desert of Time. Each and every movement became individual timelines and instances of space-time. Theoretically speaking, there was no limit to the versions of space-time that could be produced in that way.

They were real. But at the same time, they were unreal. At the same time, they were also doors. By means of those doors, he could connect to versions of himself from different space-times, and could share thoughts with them. Unify them, and that was the ninth extreme.[2]

You could call it the overlapping of parallel universes.

Suddenly, the fifth world rippled as Sir Star Ring appeared, forming out of the void.

“You—” he howled.

He only got out one word. Xu Qing, not bothering to even look at him, waved his hand to repeat the expelling process. Ripples flowed out, and the furious Sir Star Ring, who had just been stepping into the fifth world, was once again thrown out. He left behind only the echoing remains of the one word he had spoken.

Xu Qing closed his eyes and circulated the ninth extreme within him. He linked space-times, expanding the effect, until his ninth world bloomed like a dazzling flower.

Then he unified all the worlds! Nine worlds intersected, and Xu Qing’s cultivation base skyrocketed. His aura and energy shot upward. It caused ripples, which quickly turned into something like a vortex. As it spun and spun, Xu Qing sat cross-legged in the center of it. And his soul... manifested externally!

In the Imperial Sovereign level, one formed an immortal embryo. When it was complete, one became a Quasi-Immortal!

It was divided into three phases, which were the illusory reality, the undying, and the immortal embryo!

In the illusory reality, the soul came out of the body, covering the physical body and becoming what was called the real body. Because it was made of a soul, it was illusory. But because there was also a real body, it was called... illusory reality.

Xu Qing’s entire person radiated dazzling light. As his soul emerged, it looked almost like the statue of a buddha. He sat cross-legged, like a giant, shining with boundless light like a divine being.

Imperial Sovereigns were the cultivator system’s version of the Godfire level. Of course, Xu Qing’s version of the illusory reality was a bit different from other Imperial Sovereigns. It very quickly transformed from being blurry to clear, which was the hallmark of the great circle of illusory reality. At the same time, a majestic power that surpassed Smoldering Gods erupted within him.

He had reached Imperial Sovereign in one step!

Outside of the immortal palace, beyond the Fifth Star Ring, and separated by a boundless starry sky was... the Ninth Star Ring!

In the Revered Ancient mainland, in Sea-Sealing County, there was a phoenix palace underground, where Plumdark was in seclusion....

A figure sat cross-legged nearby, surrounded by shocking godly light. It was Xu Qing's old god clone. The moment his immortal body stepped into Imperial Sovereign, their mysterious connection caused the god clone's godly authority to glitter. There was a resonance between this god and this immortal!

Off to the side, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior looked stunned. Inside the phoenix hall, Plumdark's eyelashes quivered.

In the imperial palace of humankind, Empress Summer Departure looked in the direction of Sea-Sealing County.

Another person looked in that same direction. Beneath Revered Ancient in the ancient world where the Brilliant Heaven Godfolk were sealed, Erniu was frantically running along. His head was currently the size of a small mountain. He looked to be in very bad shape, but his eyes glittered brightly as he ran along and laughed uproariously.

I hit the jackpot. The jackpot! I could tell at a glance that this thingie is delicious. Granted, it's a bit tough. I just need to find a good spot to crack it open.

As he ran along salivating, he was about to check his surroundings to look for a good place to eat the item he had taken. That was when he sensed something strange happening. He looked up, whereupon his eyes went wide.

Holy crap! Little Ah Qing must have eaten something amazing. How could he be breaking through so soon??

1. I have selectively edited out some text here that claimed Sir Star Ring had never seen Xu Qing's true facial features in the fourth world. Except, he did, in chapter 1171. 📖

2. In English, "space-time" is an uncountable noun, similar to "traffic." You generally do not use the word "traffics" in English. That is why I have been saying things like "instance/version of space-time." However, the author uses the term as a countable noun. After a while, it gets tedious to say version/instance of space-time, so going forward, I will use it like a countable noun in many cases. 📖

Chapter 1182: The Stubborn Sir Star Ring

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The Imperial Sovereign level was all about the process of forming the immortal embryo. With an immortal embryo and a corresponding canon, one could step into the level of the Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor. After, the immortal embryo would become a mature immortal, and canon would become a tributary, and the Quasi-Immortal would become a Lower Immortal!

Countless cultivators dreamed of reaching those three levels. But it was extremely rare for people to actually succeed. Every major level was like a brutal elimination process. Each step along the way required destined opportunities and good fortune. You also need to build up impressive reserve powers.

What was more, because the Fifth Star Ring had outlawed gods, cultivators didn't really have any natural predators. That was why there were more Imperial Sovereigns than in places like Revered Ancient. But if you looked at them as a proportion of the cultivator population in general, they were still rare.

In the Revered Ancient mainland, gods still wreaked havoc. Mutagen was everywhere, and life was hard. Even when it was in its heyday, the cultivator population there didn't come close to the Fifth Star Ring. As a result, there were very few Imperial Sovereigns there.

The three phases of the level didn't just require an impressive canon. It also required significant power from the star ring itself to act as nutrients for the immortal embryo to eventually become a mature immortal.

Xu Qing had been aware of that for a while now. Now, as he was breaking through, he was fully aware of the advantages and disadvantages he had. In the Smoldering God level, his canon had been strong, but his fleshly body had been a weakness.... He was now facing a similar situation in the Imperial Sovereign level.

The reason I was able to come into the fifth world, which is normally for Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors, is my canon. The ninth extreme, that of parallel overlapping universes, is comparable to a Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor's canon in the great circle. But it's definitely not anywhere close to being a tributary.

As far as I'm concerned, when it comes to the Imperial Sovereign level, and even the Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor level, what I lack... is the immortal embryo, and its eventual mature form. What I have to do next is acquire more star ring power, which is really the origin power of a higher star ring. With that as nutrients, I should be able to rapidly mature my immortal embryo.

As for canon... I can't give up on that. If I want to become a Lower Immortal, then my canon is lacking. What I need... is the tenth extreme!

As Xu Qing sat cross-legged, he sensed his cultivation base fluctuations, and at the same time, analyzed everything that had happened so far, and used that to speculate about the future. He had no idea what the tenth extreme was going to be. He didn't even have a direction to pursue. At least he knew where his weaknesses lay.

I'm strong enough to fight a Quasi-Immortal. But because of the process of creating the immortal embryo, my fleshly body is as weak as an Imperial Sovereign. If I actually faced Quasi-Immortal power, it would be a problem.

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment.

An assassin?

Eyes gleaming, he cleared his thoughts and looked off into the void. There were ripples in the spot he was looking at. They were aggressive ripples, and they seemed to indicate that someone was trying to force their way into the fifth world.

Xu Qing knew exactly who it was. But....

He broke through on the outside?

He looked apathetically at the spot with the ripples. Gradually, a shape grew more distinct, and Sir Star Ring appeared. Instantly, the might of a Quasi-Immortal erupted around him.

“Xu Qing!!” he howled furiously. His eyes were completely bloodshot as he glared at Xu Qing. He really had achieved a breakthrough! There hadn’t been any other choice. After being expelled multiple times, he knew that he couldn’t possibly reach his goal of breaking through in the fifth world. He had no choice but to do it outside. Unfortunately, becoming a Quasi-Immortal in that manner was not ideal.

The killing intent within him grew even stronger than before. He wanted nothing more than to slaughter Xu Qing.

Upon sensing the killing intent and seeing Sir Star Ring’s bloodshot eyes, Xu Qing coolly said, “I’ve been waiting for you for a while now.”

As those words swept through the fifth world, a screaming wind kicked up, which sent out space-time fluctuations. The fluctuations reverberated in front of and behind Sir Star Ring, as well as to his left and right. They reverberated in his past, present, and future. They reverberated everywhere!

Xu Qing eyes glittered like heavenly bodies, as if the light of space-time was flowing within them.

To him, Sir Star Ring didn’t look like a single, unique entity. Xu Qing saw... countless versions of space-time, and in every one of them was Sir Star Ring, just in a different state. In some cases he was insane. In others, he laughed coldly. In yet others, he was silent, vicious, or in pain.... There were countless space-times, and countless Sir Star Rings. Xu Qing took them all in.

Of course ‘seeing’ was just the first step. The second was influencing. Xu Qing could clearly sense that he was able to influence, not just Sir Star Ring, but the space-time he was in. If his canon were at a higher level... he could truly erase him from existence. He could erase all versions of him, along with his karma, fate, and reincarnations....

That sensation made Xu Qing think back to what Yu Liuchen had told him about True Gods. The reasons True Gods always came back was because of their undying names. Even if they were killed, as long as there existed a memory of them, they could use that as a symbol to return to.[1]

Back then, Xu Qing didn’t quite understand what that meant. He just knew that True Gods were terrifying, and that there were too many unknowns regarding them. But now... he understood. When a True God came back, they were not the same as before. And that was because... what came back after their death wouldn’t be the actual god, but rather, a manifestation of that god from another space-time.

Sadly, my immortal embryo is still in the illusory reality phase, and my ninth extreme hasn't reached the limit. So at the moment, I can't influence all of the space-times.

Xu Qing lifted his right hand, pointed it toward Sir Star Ring, and opened it wide.

Sir Star Ring was currently looking directly at Xu Qing, and his heart was pounding. The look in Xu Qing's eyes caused him to shiver down to the depths of his being. He even stopped breathing, as a sensation of deadly crisis erupted within him. It felt like someone was seeing every aspect of him. They could see his karma, his fate, his reincarnations, and thus... he instinctively felt immense crisis.

All of a sudden, a host of chains appeared around Sir Star Ring, and the terrifying power of his Quasi-Immortal cultivation base erupted. He was about to launch an attack....

Xu Qing closed his hand. "Infinite Timelessness!"

As the words echoed out and his hand closed into a fist... the various space-times that had appeared around Sir Star Ring rumbled loudly and unleashed an explosion of disorder. The explosions instantly reached a peak of intensity, transforming into a space-time tempest. Xu Qing had used Infinite Timelessness before, but could only unleash disorder. But now... with command of his ninth extreme, things were different.

Next, Xu Qing opened his fist and waved his hand, and the disorderly space-time tempest swept about like an angry wave. And it engulfed... Sir Star Ring and nine of the versions of space-time around him. Nine versions of Sir Star Ring were engulfed by the tempest, causing their fleshly bodies to wither up, and eroding the chains of order around them.

All of this seemed to indicate... that all of those instances of order had become a thing of the past in the timescape. Of the nine Sir Star Rings, three screamed as their bodies collapsed into dust, leaving behind only immortal embryos. They wouldn't last for long, though, and were currently trembling violently.

The other six versions found the space-time around them crumbling. Their experience was affecting the real world, as Sir Star Ring was currently coughing up blood, and his body was withering.

This was Quasi-Immortal battle prowess! It could influence immortal embryos! No matter how dazzling a canon was, if it couldn't do anything to an immortal embryo, then it wasn't considered Quasi-Immortal battle prowess.

Different canons influenced things in different ways. In parallelism space-time, the fluctuations were parallel overlapping universes. It required the destruction of multiple space-times to affect the real world.

For example, if Li Mengtu were in this situation, then after his poison reached a certain level, his attacks would affect the body in the real world.

It was the same with Sir Star Ring. That was especially true considering he had achieved a breakthrough and become a Quasi-Immortal. Although it wasn't the perfect breakthrough from what he could tell, his battle prowess was definitely extraordinary. He couldn't see other space-

times, but he could sense that his immortal embryo was being damaged. And he... had to launch a counterattack!

Countless chains of order whipped out, glowing with golden light. And they quickly converged into a tool. It was a scale! On one side was Sir Star Ring, while on the other side was Xu Qing! Above order, there was... balance!

The moment it appeared, there was an instant, mysterious connection! When that connection occurred, the intangible tempest Xu Qing had summoned weighed down on the scale, causing it to become unbalanced....

Because of the imbalance, a majestic force swept out of the void, landing on Sir Star Ring, gathering, becoming more boundless, until... balance was restored! It was like he was borrowing power! When Sir Star Ring became a Quasi-Immortal, his canon transformed.

The stronger his enemy was, the more outside power he could borrow. And it would eventually turn into a majestic, crushing force!

This canon caused Xu Qing's eyes to glitter. "Interesting.... I guess we'll have to see who reaches their limit first, you or me."

Inside of himself, he plucked at his ninth extreme like a string on a musical instrument. The infinite timelessness caused by the space-time tempest surged toward the rest of Sir Star Ring's space-times. In the blink of an eye, it devoured 11 of them. Then 12, 13, 14....

An imbalance resulted, only to be followed by another balance. Xu Qing's eyes narrowed, and the tempest raged. 18 space-times had now been swept up. He was definitely using this fight to hone his canon.

Sir Star Ring eventually reached his limit when Xu Qing had swept up the 21st space-time. At that point, the scale... collapsed into nothing.

Xu Qing stood. 21 space-times wasn't his limit. He could now see that if he fully unleashed his ninth extreme, he could cause fluctuations in space-time that would reach the level of about 50.

Sir Star Ring was coughing up blood like mad, and his immortal embryo was covered in wounds. He staggered backward. Inside, he was full of many complicated thoughts. He knew that he was in a disadvantageous position now. For one thing, his opponent's canon was too strong. But also, he had not achieved a perfect breakthrough.

"Xu Qing, you're definitely strong. But you have one obvious weakness. Your immortal embryo... is in the phase of illusory reality!"

Sir Star Ring lurched to a halt and looked up, his eyes full of killing intent.

1. Yu Liuchen talked about True Gods coming back in [chapter 998](#). ㊦

Chapter 1183: Undying Space-Time

Chapter 1183: Undying Space-Time

Outside of the immortal palace, and beyond the Fifth Star Ring's western region... was the eastern planetary system.

At the highest point there was a collection of 1,000,000 pagodas. Even viewed from a distance, the pagodas seemed to go on forever. The pagodas glittered as if with starlight, and were organized in such a way that they apparently corresponded to actual heavenly bodies in the starry sky. What was more, all of the pagodas were connected to each other by a network of chains that represented order.

Located in the very middle of the 1,000,000 pagodas, there was one specific pagoda that was taller than all the others, whose radiant starlight illuminated the sky overhead. This was one of the most prominent pagodas in the entire star ring.

An old man in a daoist robe stood in that pagoda, his hands clasped behind his back as he stared off in the direction of the west. He had the demeanor of a transcendent being, with flowing white hair and eyes that seemed to contain the cyclings of the universe itself.

He was none other than the Pagoda Lord of the Star Ring Pagoda! And he was the Lower Immortal who was entrusted with guarding the east! He was also... Sir Star Ring's Master!

"Sir Star Ring is fated to endure the Sun Lord Tribulation! That type of tribulation didn't exist in the past. But a few years ago, it suddenly appeared.... Like the sudden arrival of an assassin, it restrains the fate of the sun lord. If he passes the tribulation, he will achieve the dao of the great rising sun of the east."

The old man performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, and then... his eyes glittered. "If there are no twists and turns during the tribulation, then how could good fortune spring from extreme adversity? Sir Star Ring must accept the tribulation!"

Tribulation had come!

In the immortal palace's fifth world, Sir Star Ring shook from head to toe. His five yin organs and six yang organs were in chaos. Coughing up a massive mouthful of blood, he staggered backward seven paces. Every step he took caused starlight to glitter around him.

Within him, determination surged. He was Sir Star Ring, the number one chosen in the eastern planetary system. And he was publicly recognized to be number one in his generation in the entire Fifth Star Ring. It was correct to say that he had lived a life of brilliance and glory. Whether because of his family background or his success in cultivation, he was a superstar.

His Master had arranged for him to inherit the Star Ring name from the Star Ring Pagoda, all to further his dao. And his Master had also arranged for Sir Vilespirit and Zhou Zhengli to be whetstones for him to hone his abilities.

Before meeting Xu Qing, his fate, his destiny, and his path had all been unobstructed. He didn't have any misfortune to deal with. But then he met Xu Qing, and had been stymied at every turn. It

was the case with his attempt to maintain order in the fourth world, as well as his attempted breakthrough in the fifth world. In fact, it had reached the point where he was starting to think that all of it had been foreordained.

And yet, even as that feeling rose within him... Sir Star Ring's eyes glittered with cold light, all as a sharp blade within him cut away such thoughts, smashed any barriers, and destroyed thoughts of foreordination.

I'm in control of my life! he thought. He looked at Xu Qing, and the aura of a Quasi-Immortal built within him. The power of a Grand Emperor surged as countless chains appeared out of nowhere all around him. The sense of order was inimitably intense. He still had one move left....

The moment he stepped into the Quasi-Immortal level, he gained enlightenment of the balance that came when he upgraded his canon of order. And during that process, he had extracted something from within his life force. It was a measure of... law!

And that law had a name.

"Heaven's principle!" Sir Star Ring said, reaching out with his right hand and making a grasping gesture. When he spoke, his words resonated like the sounds of heaven. "Come here!"[1]

A ripple spread through the fifth world as Xu Qing took a step forward, then stopped in place, his eyes gleaming. He had just sensed that there was something different about Sir Star Ring compared to earlier.

Earlier, he had perceived Sir Star Ring with great clarity. But now... he was blurry. And it wasn't just Sir Star Ring himself, but also the space-time surrounding him. His past, present, and future, as well as all of his parallels, all became blurry at the same time.

A sense of great danger erupted inside Xu Qing. And the source... was Sir Star Ring's invisible hand! Astonishingly, there was a mote in that hand, something that resembled a speck of dust! The moment Xu Qing spotted it, his heart raced. He suddenly had the sense that he was facing the entire starry sky. It could not be defied or seized!

The Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors who were watching the events play out were visibly taken aback.

"Is that...?"

"Heaven's principle??"

"Very impressive of Sir Star Ring!"

The canon of order could be upgraded to balance. By commanding the canon of balance, Sir Star Ring could walk the path of the Quasi-Immortal. But after breaking out of Quasi-Immortal and stepping into Lower Immortal, balance wouldn't be enough. Sir Star Ring would need to push his canon of order to the highest peak.

After balance came... heaven's principle!

However, it shouldn't have been possible for Sir Star Ring to gain sufficient enlightenment of his canon to push it to the level of heaven's principle. Normally speaking, he would seek enlightenment during the process of transforming his immortal embryo into a mature immortal. It wouldn't be until the very end that he would have a portion of heaven's principle! That was when he would become a Lower Immortal! That was the path he should tread going forward.

He shouldn't have been able to do it now. But he was the number one Shining Star. What was more, he was the only one of the Shining Stars who had not relied on the Senior generation to provide his canon. He had relied only on himself to become the most astounding chosen of the generation. And thus, though seeking heaven's principle had been difficult, in the moment of his cultivation base breakthrough, he had extracted... a mote of heaven's principle!

That mote was the source of the danger Xu Qing sensed. Sir Star Ring waved his hand, and the mote... descended!

An unstoppable force bore down on Xu Qing! This mote of heaven's principle could bury all things. It could reject your ability to even exist! Xu Qing's pupils constricted, and the sense of danger within him grew to an incredible level. However, there was no time to formulate a complicated plan.

As the mote descended, it entered Xu Qing's world and appeared in front of him. It looked like a mote of dust, but it was almost infinitely heavy, and nothing Xu Qing did would enable him to defend against it. Rumbling sounds filled his mind. His fleshly body, unable to sustain the force, began to crumble. The same thing happened to his soul as the mote continued to fall.

Xu Qing struggled to breathe as a sensation of impending death swept over him like tide waters. There was no time for thought or planning. Lunging backward, he left the fifth world, and in fact, he left the immortal palace entirely.

When he reappeared, he was out on the Fallen Immortal Moors. And yet... he was still sinking into death. His life was still draining away. His fleshly body couldn't last any longer, and it exploded. He existed only in drifting soul form as he shot across the Fallen Immortal Moors along with his canon.

Unfortunately, heaven's principle just couldn't be stopped. An instant later... Xu Qing's soul exploded.

As it dissipated, he bitterly thought about the life he had lived. And he thought about how things had gone so poorly in the fourth world. But at least working together with Sir Star Ring, he had managed to maintain order. And that had earned him the right to enter the fifth world. Unfortunately, the destined opportunity he had encountered in the fifth world gave him no choice. Sir Star Ring, who he had considered a friend, ultimately became his greatest enemy.

That was fate. Xu Qing sighed and dispersed into nothing. The space-time around him crumbled before being erased out of existence.

Astonishingly, as that space-time collapsed, another Xu Qing appeared in the immortal palace's fifth world, and he was currently falling back at high speed. There was still a mote falling down toward him. In the end... he was destroyed in body and soul. Yet the battle still went on. A third Xu Qing appeared, also falling back.

As these scenes played out, the Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors who were watching the fight reacted with strange expressions.

“This person... has space-time canon!”

“He’s taken his space-time canon to such a high level that it’s manifesting as law.”

“He’s using space-time selves to substitute for his true body in death!”

As they saw Sir Star Ring’s mote falling, and Xu Qing using substitutions to meet it, something astonishing suddenly happened. A host of space-time fluctuations suddenly appeared, along with numerous instances of different space-times. And all of those space-times began to eat away at the mote of heaven’s principle.

In the blink of an eye, three space-times collapsed. After that, seven of them collapsed. Next, a total of twenty collapsed. As one space-time after another collapsed, the mote of heaven’s principle got lighter and lighter. It got blurrier and blurrier. Finally, after forty-six space-times had been destroyed... the mote collapsed into ashes.

The remaining space-times glittered, and within one of them, Xu Qing looked up at Sir Star Ring, his eyes shining.

“This heaven’s principle is very impressive....” His heart was already starting to pound from the thought of it.

A bitter look appeared on Sir Star Ring’s face as he heard Xu Qing’s words. He was currently looking at the area surrounding his opponent. Endless space-time fluctuations rolled out. He had no idea how many space-times there were, so he had no idea of what limits his opponent had. What was more, he had no way to know who he was talking to. Was it someone from a different space-time, or was it his true body?

This was the canon of parallelism. The magic of overlapping universes ensured that whenever Xu Qing faced an opponent, he could use a version of himself from another space-time to substitute for him in death.

In theory, he could do it endlessly. But in reality, he had a limit. He was hindered because of his immortal embryo, as well as his opponent’s command of canon. Because of that, he couldn’t go past 54 right now!

What was more, there were downsides to his death substitution magic. The versions of himself from other space-times were actually connected to his true self. They were like secondary versions. And therefore, when they died, it did have an effect on his true body in the real world. He could deal with those effects, and they wouldn’t do anything to his foundation.

But what it meant was that the key to killing Xu Qing was... to destroy all of the space-times he was using, and kill all of the space-time selves. Only then could an opponent truly put an end to Xu Qing.

Speaking calmly from within that instance of space-time, Xu Qing said, “What I’m wondering now is if killing you would allow me to extract that mote of heaven’s principle from your life force....”

He extended his hand, and astonishingly, an overflow of sword will spilled out, transforming into... The Emperor's Sword! I wasn't just a single version of The Emperor's Sword. All of the Xu Qing's in the other surrounding space-times also extended their hands and summoned the sword. Then all of them slashed forth!

It was impossible to tell which of them was in the real world. And it wasn't possible to identify which stream of sword energy was real and which was illusory. The streams of sword energy slashed out of their respective space-times, then converged in the fifth world, forming an astonishing and deadly sword that shot toward Sir Star Ring.

In the blink of an eye, they slashed right through him! After going through him, the remaining sword energy tore open a huge hole in the air behind him. As for Sir Star Ring, he shivered from head to toe, and then his body... collapsed and turned into ashes.

All of the space-times began to vanish, and all the other versions of Xu Qing, including the one who had just been speaking, blurred.

That was when the real Xu Qing stepped out of the depths of one of the space-times, and hovered in front of the spot where Sir Star Ring had died. His gaze hardened. He did not sense any change to his Immortal Capital permission medallion.

Not dead?

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed, yet he didn't look very surprised. This was the number one Shining Star, and he had just experienced a breakthrough. It was no stretch of the imagination to assume he would have astonishing life-saving abilities.

But I still want that mote of heaven's principle....

He reached out and made a grasping motion backed by space-time. The spot where Sir Star Ring had died rippled, and then a stream of energy flew from it into Xu Qing's hand.

It was a scrap of energy, evidence left behind by Sir Star Ring that could be used to track him. After taking a moment to study it, Xu Qing's eyes flashed coldly.

"He's not far off!"

1. The term "heaven's principle" or perhaps "heavenly principles" is a real-life term used by Neo-Confucian philosophers to explain the universe. Another dictionary definition is "natural order," and I was even tempted to translate it as that. Considering that Sir Star Ring was on the side of "order," it makes sense. However, the characters are completely different from those I've been translating as "order," and I don't want to create a false character connection. So I will stick with 'heaven's principle.' 天理

Chapter 1184: The Number One Shining Star, Xu Qing

Chapter 1184: The Number One Shining Star, Xu Qing

Sir Star Ring really wasn't very far away. The moment Xu Qing cut down Sir Star Ring in the fifth world, a blurry figure appeared at the entrance of the immortal palace, right past the immortal foyer. This was one of the three paths leading to the immortal palace. Back at the beginning of the event, Xu Qing had looked at this location and just barely seen the bridge in the mist. The mist was currently seething as the figure staggered back from that spot and onto the immortal foyer.

Staggering, he coughed up a massive mouthful of blood onto the limestone. His chest heaved as he struggled to breathe. He looked like someone who had just barely escaped from catastrophe with his life.

He was none other than Sir Star Ring. His aura was in shambles, and he looked extremely weak. In fact, it seemed that nearly half of his body existed in a state between real and illusory.

"Xu Qing..." Sir Star Ring's expression was grim as he sped toward the exit. He was leaving the immortal palace.

The moment he appeared in the Fallen Immortal Moors, he saw a host of people seated cross-legged in the area. Glancing at them, he spotted Li Mengtu as well as Zhou Zhengli.

The seated cultivators sensed his gaze. That was especially true of Li Mengtu and Zhou Zhengli, who looked up at him. Li Mengtu's gaze hardened. Zhou Zhengli looked thoughtful.

Sir Star Ring didn't hesitate for an instant. He walked out, flew up into the air, and raced toward the horizon. He held nothing back in terms of speed. When he reached the border of the Fallen Immortal Moors, he turned to look back at the immortal palace. His body was already reverting from its state of half-illusory into being fully real.

That was the result of the lifesaving skill he had used, which was a secret magic of the Star Ring Pagoda. By sacrificing some of his dao, he could create a version of the Star Ring Pagoda to substitute for him in death. In that way, he could avert deadly crises. Over the years, he had made seven Star Ring Pagodas to serve in that capacity.

I can't believe I had to waste one just now....

When he thought back to what had played out in the fifth world, he felt fear inside of him, and had to admit that his opponent's understanding of canon... surpassed his own by a lot.

Whether in terms of deadliness or stealthiness, his canon is terrifying! If I want to crush him, I need to improve my own canon to the point of being able to destroy all of his space-times. Otherwise... it would be just too difficult to kill him. Unless....

Sir Star Ring's eyes glittered. *The only other option would be to figure out how to crush his true body with heaven's principle! His biggest weakness... is definitely his true body! He has an Imperial Sovereign cultivation base, and his immortal embryo is still forming. That means that the best option is to figure out how to identify his true body amidst the various space-times.... In other words, there definitely is a way to kill him!*

Ultimately, Sir Star Ring shook his head. Theories were, in the end, nothing but theories. Besides, Sir Star Ring knew... that he wasn't in the position to succeed right now.

He took a deep breath and then vanished into thin air. He had no idea of knowing whether his opponent would try to track him down, but he still felt a sensation of danger. He needed to get out of the western planetary system as quickly as possible and get back to the east. Only there would he truly be safe.

Meanwhile, in the immortal palace's fifth world, Xu Qing looked at the scrap of energy in his hand. After a moment, he squeezed it into another instance of space-time, then looked at the surrounding Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors.

Without a word, he took a step forward. He blurred. But then he reverted back to being clear.

I can't get into the sixth world.

Although he knew that no one with battle prowess weaker than a Lower Immortal was supposed to be able to get into the sixth world, he figured he might as well do a test. After confirming that he couldn't get into the sixth world, he took another step forward... but not to try to get into the sixth world. He was going back outside. He vanished, and when he reappeared he was on the immortal foyer.

At the moment, there are no more destined opportunities for me in the immortal palace.

As he stood on the immortal foyer, he looked back at the immortal palace. A host of images played out in his memories. It was as if the River of Time was rumbling past, sweeping up the sand from the bottom of the river.

For a moment, Xu Qing felt like he could see a young man in white clothing. He stood at the very end of that river of the timescape, a marriage contract in his hand. Standing next to him was a young woman in a wedding dress. Both of them looked at him, smiled, and then held hands as they bowed to him.

Their smiles contained indescribable reminiscence. Perhaps they were smiles of youth. Or maybe they were smiles of bitterness, or beauty, or pain. The froth of the raging river filled the image.

Xu Qing turned his head and saw himself standing at the end of the timescape river. He smiled and bowed. The wind and rain from yesterday echoed into today. The flowing river, and the sand that glittered like starlight, eventually dissipated.

Xu Qing straightened from his bow, turned, and walked off of the immortal foyer... and out of the exit.

Out in the Fallen Immortal Moors, he looked up into the sky and saw the crimson aurora. Because of the aurora, the scenery in the area was red, just like before. However, something about it seemed different now. In the past it had been many-colored, but now it was just red. However, the light seemed to be gentler. It seemed to contain the love of a father.

Xu Qing closed his eyes to experience the feeling. When he opened his eyes shortly after, he saw the crowd that was gathered outside the immortal palace. He saw Patriarch Diling, Li Mengtu, Zhou Zhengli, and other cultivators he recognized.

Most of the people who had come out of the immortal palace had chosen to stay behind until the immortal palace event concluded. The receding of the spirit tide that would mark the end of the event would provide opportunities to further their cultivation and seek enlightenment. After all, most of them were only able to operate in the third world, and though most had benefited in some way, their gains were limited.

Clearly, everyone present was hoping to benefit additionally, including Li Mengtu and Zhou Zhengli.

Li Mengtu had a complicated expression on his face, and it looked like he wanted to say something to Xu Qing. The events of the fourth world had affected him deeply, and at the moment, he wasn't sure if he was himself or Zhong Chi....

Zhou Zhengli looked a lot more calm and collected than Li Mengtu. He was not thinking about the reflected version of history and how it related to the real world. To him, the most important thing was to take advantage of the moment to continue his relationship with Xu Qing, and make sure that it developed into the future. That was truer than ever considering he had seen how badly Sir Star Ring was injured when he came out. And he had noted how Sir Star Ring fled so quickly.

Therefore, when Xu Qing looked at him, he hurried forward. When he reached Xu Qing, he acted in the same manner he had in the fourth world.

Bowing very respectfully, he said, "Young Lord, congratulations on your cultivation breakthrough. In one fell swoop, you have become the number one Shining Star!"

Xu Qing looked at Zhou Zhengli. "This isn't the reflection of history."

Zhou Zhengli shook his head. "The person who won me over wasn't Young Lord Aurora."

Xu Qing looked deeply at Zhou Zhengli.

Meanwhile, Patriarch Diling flew over, bowed deeply, and excitedly said, "Welcome back, Senior! I was waiting in anxious anticipation this whole time. After all the kindness you showed me, I was very worried about your safety in the fourth world. Sadly, my cultivation base is too weak, so I couldn't go to the fourth world to help you. Now that you're back safely, I can finally rest at ease.

"Now I can see that you are truly a genius among geniuses, someone who plans out everything meticulously in advance. Presumably, you had already considered all of the challenges you would face in the fourth world. And thus, I had to wait out here, wondering how things would turn out. Clearly, things went very smoothly for you!

"Finally, Senior, I would like to thank you for saving my life. Your actions in the immortal palace are going to make you extremely famous. Congratulations on the glory you will enjoy going forward as one of the Shining Stars!"

Off to the side, Zhou Zhengli looked on with raised eyebrows. Even the shadow beneath Xu Qing's feet seemed shaken by Patriarch Diling's praise.

Before anything else could happen, ripples flowed through the sky above. The crimson aurora glittered more brightly than ever, and thunderous sounds as if from beyond the heavens rang out.

It wasn't just the sky over the immortal palace that was affected.... The sky over the west filled with rumbling. The same happened in the east, south, and north. It was as if some enormous, invisible hand had lifted back the sky over the Fifth Star Ring, revealing a huge starry sky. Some of the stars were bright, others were dim. And that was because each star corresponded to a specific cultivator in the Fifth Star Ring. They were... reflected versions of the Immortal Capital permission medallions!

All of the cultivators in the Fallen Immortal Moors looked up in surprise. They weren't the only ones. Vast numbers of cultivators throughout the Fifth Star Ring also looked up. It was because....

Zhou Zhengli's eyes glittered as he said, "The third and final phase of the Immortal Capital's Trial of the Hunt is going to start!"

This phase was about fighting, and it was an elimination phase! The arrival of the third phase meant that the final rankings were going to be established! All cultivators with permission medallions found that their medallions were shining brightly.

Xu Qing was no exception. At the same time, the sound of killing drums echoed through heaven and earth. The thumping was like heavenly thunder.

The cultivators who had been working on their cultivation outside the immortal palace all got to their feet and began to leave.

Zhou Zhengli took a deep breath and bowed to Xu Qing again. "Young Lord, it's a foregone conclusion that you'll make it to the Immortal Capital. But I have a lot of work to do if I want to catch up and make it there with you! Going forward, everyone with an Immortal Capital permission medallion needs to focus fully on the trial."

With that, Zhou Zhengli shot up into the starry sky above.

Zhou Zhengli was gone, as was almost everyone else. At that point, Li Mengtu finally approached.

Sounding somewhat awkward, he said, "Er... when Hordeslayer and Rampart came out, they were both trying to flee faster than the other.... But based on what I could sense, their auras weren't much different than they were in the fourth world. I suspect the events there affected them out here in the real world.

"As for me, I've experienced some changes to my canon. I never saw Sir Vilespirit. I think he was one of the first to come out, and he left immediately. Yuanshan Su had a strange look on her face when she left. I... have to go do some training. I definitely need to improve my permission medallion ranking. Young L... er, would you like to come along?"

Xu Qing smiled and shook his head. Lifting his hand, he revealed the swirling scrap of Sir Star Ring's energy.

Li Mengtu's gaze hardened. "Are you going—?"

"Sir Star Ring has something of mine. I'm going to go retrieve it." With that, Xu Qing shot toward the horizon.

Chapter 1185: A Gift at the God Blood River

Chapter 1185: A Gift at the God Blood River

The spirit tide in the Fallen Immortal Moors had not yet fully disappeared. And that was because the good fortune and destined opportunities of the immortal palace were not over. It was only over for the first five worlds. The Quasi-Immortals were still attempting to get into the sixth world.

Therefore, when Xu Qing reached the horizon, he hovered in the air looking back at the immortal palace. He could just barely make out a sound like crashing waves. A tremor passed through him. Because of his ownership of the immortal palace, he knew what had just happened.

Someone just entered the sixth world!

His eyes glittered brightly. Only someone with Lower Immortal battle prowess could step into the sixth world. There were destined opportunities for Lower Immortals in the immortal palace.

Either some unknown Lower Immortal got into the immortal palace, or... one of the Quasi-Immortals experienced a breakthrough. It's too bad that, though I own the immortal palace, my cultivation base limits me, and my canon isn't sufficient. I really have no way to get into the sixth world.

He shook his head sadly, but at the same time, wasn't anxious. Now that he owned the place, all he had to do was wait until he did qualify, and he could come back and enter.

Once my immortal embryo is complete and I've gained enlightenment of my tenth extreme, I can return. I wonder what the sixth world is like....

Taking a deep breath, he shot off into the distance. Soon he was outside of the Fallen Immortal Moors.

The star chart in the sky that showed all the Immortal Capital permission medallions was gone. The crimson aurora was back. However, because the third round of the trial had begun, cultivators with permission medallions could now sense each other even more keenly than before. What was more, it was now possible to access the star chart in the permission medallion at any time!

It was now the perfect time to fight and rob others! That was why the third round was such a brutal affair. Of course, there were ways of masking one's permission medallion, though not many people knew how. Clearly, Sir Star Ring was one of them.

Xu Qing found that out quickly when he sent his divine will into the medallion and couldn't find the star representing Sir Star Ring anywhere on the star chart. It actually wasn't a big surprise to him. Sir Star Ring wouldn't make a mistake as obvious as that.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, could use the aura of the violet crystal to cover his permission medallion and keep it hidden. That would ensure that things would go smoothly.

And now to start tracking him down....

Xu Qing's eyes glittered. He lifted his hand, and the scrap of Sir Star Ring's energy that Xu Qing had extracted from space-time appeared. It seemed to pulse as he absorbed it into his divine will. A moment later, he knew which direction to go in, and he flew off.

Time went by. Xu Qing could move very quickly. Unfortunately, so could Sir Star Ring. Sir Star Ring's cultivation base surpassed Xu Qing's. However, using his substitution secret magic to avoid death had weakened him. As a result, Sir Star Ring was limited, and couldn't put very much distance between himself and Xu Qing. Nor could he prevent Xu Qing from locking onto him and tracking him down. Thus, three days passed.

As Xu Qing continued his pursuit, a majestic desert eventually appeared within his senses.

It was... the Desert of Time. This was his third time seeing this desert. The first was when he had been traveling with Yunmen Qianfan. The second time was in the reflection of history, when he was with Immortal Lord Aurora. This was his third time.

Xu Qing landed at the edge of the desert, his heart astir as he stared at it for a short time. Then he walked inside. The sandy wind screamed along, as if it were telling an ancient story. The sand churned as if it were preparing to open the curtain.

As Xu Qing walked through the desert, he could sense the space-time fluctuations, and could hear the story being told. He proceeded on his way. His canon was now advanced enough that he could clearly see the space-time in the desert.

In fact, he was easily able to find the exact spot that Immortal Lord Aurora had taken him to. He stopped walking. He gazed about....

In the reflected history he had experienced, this place had once been the location of a beautiful, colorful sea of flowers. The flowers looked like dancing butterflies, or perhaps like graceful immortal cranes. And every single one exuded a fragrance like perfume.

They... had been planted personally by Immortal Lord Aurora. It was because his wife... had loved orchids. On this very spot, Immortal Lord Aurora had told his son... that he should come back every year to plant more flowers. Eventually, the entire Desert of Time would become a sea of flowers. But now....

Xu Qing saw no life here. The sea of flowers had long since ceased to exist. Yet Xu Qing smiled. And that was because he saw more than the lack of life. Right in the middle of the spot where the sea of flowers had long since withered away, he could see two little flowers that had been planted recently.

The two little flowers were alive and growing. They swayed in the wind, and when they rubbed against each other, they let off a fragrant aroma. Xu Qing could envision Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix, right here, planting the two flowers. And he could hear the voice of

Immortal Lord Aurora, echoing out of the reflection of history, and drifting along with the wind into Xu Qing's ears.

"Remember to come back here every year and plant some more orchids for your mother. Let's make sure this place always stays a sea of flowers."

Xu Qing squatted down, extracted a flower seed from space-time, and planted it. He bowed.

He was certain that more flowers would appear in the years to come. And eventually, the sea of flowers would come back, and the Desert of Time would become the Flower Sea of Time. The gentle light from the crimson aurora shone down onto the orchids. The light from above wasn't golden like it had been when Xu Qing visited as Young Lord Aurora. But there was still a dreamlike romance to the place.

And there was a fragrance that lingered on Xu Qing. Perhaps that fragrance provided a blessing, because only three days after leaving the desert, Xu Qing found a cave in the wilderness where the wounded Sir Star Ring was hiding.

Sir Star Ring was hurt so badly that he couldn't keep up a sustained flight from Xu Qing. He had eventually been forced to hole up in this place, surrounded by protective spell formations, and focus on healing. Sadly for him, Xu Qing showed up and interrupted him. And thus, fighting broke out in the wilderness.

Xu Qing had been able to 'kill' Sir Star Ring even when he was at his peak, so there was little need to mention how it turned out now that Sir Star Ring was so badly wounded. The fight was quick and violent. It didn't last long. And it ended with Sir Star Ring dying a second time!

But this time, it caused Xu Qing to frown deeply as he looked at the spot where Sir Star Ring was crumbling into ashes.

He came here and purposely waited to die.... He wanted to use this opportunity to prevent me from tracking him.

The energy Xu Qing had taken from him was now gone. And there was nothing left in space-time for him to make up for it. He now had no way to lock onto Sir Star Ring, and no way to track him down.

Well, that's just what I would expect of the number one Shining Star. Despite the predicament he's in, he managed to shake my pursuit.

Xu Qing looked off into the distance.

However.... He still needs to get back to the east. And if he wants to leave the western planetary system, he can pick from different paths. But there's only one that could be considered the safest....

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he looked in the direction of the God Blood River. One of the unique things about the God Blood River were the ferry pilots. If you could get onto a ferry boat, then according to the rules of the ferry pilots, you were completely and utterly safe. And the person responsible for your safety was the ferry pilot.

It didn't matter who was chasing you, once you were under the protection of a ferry pilot, no one could do anything to you. At the same time, you could use the time spent on the journey to focus on healing and recovery. For the most part, it was only possible to cross the river three times in your life. For the majority of cultivators, crossing one or two times was the limit of what they could accept.

If I can realize that, so can others.

After some thought, Xu Qing started moving in the direction of the God Blood River. One reason was that he was convinced Sir Star Ring was going in the same direction. Since he had lost track of his quarry, it seemed logical to try to intercept him. If it didn't work... he would just have to wait until later to kill him. They would definitely run into each other eventually.

Another reason he wanted to go to the God Blood River was that Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix had mentioned leaving a gift for him there. Xu Qing had some speculations about what that gift was. But he wasn't completely sure.

If I'm right about the gift... it'll be kind of funny if Sir Star Ring actually does choose the river.

With his decision made, he sped off into the distance.

Half a month passed.

Soon Xu Qing arrived at the banks of the God Blood River. The God Blood River was very long, but there was actually only one spot on this branch of it where you could board a ferry boat.

For aeons, the banks of the river had been in contact with the water, and thus, the river banks were as red as blood. It was for the same reason that the wooden pier was also red and corroded. The wind itself sounded like moaning ghosts that could shake one down to the soul.

Xu Qing walked down the crimson river bank and onto the rickety pier. He heard the sound of the wind, and smelled the blood on the air. The river looked like a huge sea of blood. It wasn't possible to see the other side of the river. All he could see was endless waves, and the river glittering beneath the light of the aurora.

Beneath the crimson sky, and surrounded by what sounded like the wailing of ghosts and howling of wolves... an ancient, pitch-black boat floated across the ghastly river of blood toward him.

The seething river became calm for the boat. The raging wind became docile. It approached as silently as an evil ghost. It neared the pier, and neared Xu Qing.

It was a lone ferry boat. And in the ferry boat... there was no ferry pilot. There was only a woven rush raincoat, a bamboo hat, and a jade slip.

When Xu Qing looked at the jade slip, it shattered, and the voice of Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix filled the area.

"This is my gift to you. There is no karma. There are no restrictions. I have already severed all the karma and removed all the restrictions. I've also assumed responsibility for the ferry pilot mission."

This ferry boat was constructed personally by my father, and it belongs to you. With it, you can cross the river... without giving up any longevity.”

Chapter 1186: Accepting Tribulation

Chapter 1186: Accepting Tribulation

The God Blood River was made from the blood of all the gods that had been killed in the Fifth Star Ring. It contained the blood of Godfire Gods, Altar Gods, and even quite a few True Gods. There were even multiple God Lords whose blood ended up in the river!

Thus, it was no surprise that the river had very intense mutagen levels, as well as an intense aura of death filled with the rage of gods. The banks of the river suppressed all of that with magical barriers. As a result, the mutagen and rancorous energy couldn't really spread out into the world.

However... cultivators who entered the water would be infected. If the body and soul were contaminated, then the karma of gods could cause major problems down the line.

It was only Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors who qualified to cross the river without using a ferry boat. Of course, just because they qualified didn't mean that they would take the risk. The risk was twofold. One part was the possibility of getting contaminated by the mutagen in the river. The other was because there were grues in the river. Over the countless years that had passed, it was impossible to count how many dead gods had contributed to the river, and as such, no one really knew what vile, god-like beings or terrifying entities might exist there. That was why even Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors would be very careful if they had to cross the river.

And unless there was some dire reason, they simply wouldn't do it on their own. It was almost always best to use a ferry boat. And that was where the ferry pilots came into the picture. Though it seemed like they merely ferried people across the river, the reality was that they also had the job of patrolling the river.

The ferry boats were their main tools! Each boat was a precious treasure specifically designed to deal with gods. Thus, it was only natural that they would be able to suppress the aura on the river. Because of how they operated the boats, patrolled the river, and dealt with the godly entities, the ferry pilots were obviously an integral part of the river. Their work was also part of what they did to atone for the crimes they had committed.

The boat that came to Xu Qing was a gift to him from Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. And it had been specially crafted for her by her father, Immortal Lord Nineshores.

Xu Qing looked at the boat, his eyes gleaming. He knew full well why Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix had given him this boat.

It gives me an avenue of retreat....

The ferry boat gave him a new identity, as a ferry boat operator and someone atoning for crimes. Although he was not a ferry pilot, if he ever did commit some big crimes in the Fifth Star Ring....

Well, this ferry boat crafted by Immortal Lord Nineshores would definitely provide him an avenue of retreat that he could use to save his own life. After some thought, Xu Qing took a deep breath and bowed deeply to the dome of heaven.

Walking forward, he stepped onto the ferry boat. The moment he did, the boat trembled, and a black energy swept out to cover Xu Qing. After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, he and the boat had become one. He put on the woven rush raincoat and the bamboo hat.

He sat down cross-legged. An aura of time emanated from the raincoat and hat, which fused with the black energy and completely masked Xu Qing. From a distance, he looked exactly like a ferry pilot.

There he remained in place, completely motionless. He was waiting to see if he really would be able to hook the fish he was after. At the same time, he studied the deepest structures and elements of the boat with his senses.

Xu Qing, of course, was familiar with boats.[1]

In that manner, time passed. Ten days.

All of a sudden, an astonishing streak of light appeared on the horizon, which raced toward the shore. Within the light was a young man. His face was pale, and he looked very weak. He was none other than... Sir Star Ring!

He really had chosen to come to the God Blood River. There had been other options he could have picked from besides the river. But he had come to the conclusion that the God Blood River was the safest option. Thus, he came.

As he neared, a sensation of safety and stability blossomed within him. That was especially true when he saw the ferry boat next to the shore. He could finally breathe a sigh of relief. His long flight had left him weary in body, mind, and cultivation base. He had died twice, and though he had his Star Ring Pagodas to substitute for him in death, each time he woke up afterward he was weaker.

That was especially true considering he had died intentionally the second time. He had suspected that Xu Qing had some way to track him, so he had decided to pay the price of a life to sever any karma and wipe away any evidence that could be used to find him.

He had paid a huge price just to be sure. Ten days had passed since then, and he had not yet fully recovered.

Given the level of my cultivation base, I actually qualify to cross the river myself. But I'm very weak, so I couldn't resist the infection, and that's not to mention that I'm not strong enough to deal with any denizens of the river. Taking a ferry boat is the best option. Thankfully, I've never actually taken a ferry boat before.

Without slowing down at all, he shot through the air until he appeared right on the little pier. With a single leap, he jumped onto the ferry boat. As soon as he was on board, he felt a sensation of ultimate safety covering him. He sighed, long and hard. He bowed respectfully to the figure clad in

the rush raincoat and wide bamboo hat that sat in front of him, surrounded by swirling black energy.

“Well met, Senior. Could you please cast off?”

The figure in the rush raincoat didn’t say anything, but the boat quickly slid away from the pier and started moving across the river of blood. It soon left the pier behind. They got so far along the river that the shore wasn’t visible anymore.

As the waves crashed and the mutagen-filled wind blew, Sir Star Ring gradually began to relax. Sitting down, he looked back at the western planetary system, and his eyes flashed aggressively.

“Xu Qing,” he growled, “our fight is not over yet.”

“You got that right,” said the figure in the raincoat.

Stunned, Sir Star Ring slowly turned his head, his face falling and his eyes shining with incredulity. All of a sudden, his heart was racing. He shot to his feet. “Y-your voice. Y-you... you....”

The figure in the raincoat took off his bamboo hat, and roiling black energy parted to reveal his face. “I’ve been waiting for you a while now.”

Sir Star Ring forgot all about the sound of the waves and wind. His mind filled with so much rumbling it was like the thunder of 10,000,000 lightning bolts. He couldn’t believe it. He wouldn’t believe it. It seemed completely and utterly absurd.

The person in front of him was Xu Qing!

All of a sudden, he felt the same premonition he had felt during his long journey, that he was heading toward complete safety. Except... as the feeling occurred to him, he also heard a familiar old voice echoing in his mind.

“Accept the tribulation.”

A month later....

On the shore of the God Blood River in the southern planetary system, a battered black ferry boat quickly approached the pier. The only person to disembark was Xu Qing.

It was just barely possible to see a mote orbiting around him. It was... a mote of heaven’s principle.[2]

1. Xu Qing got his first boat in [chapter 51](#). ☞

2. I ran a poll a few months ago asking people to guess what OP magical item the MC gets. The correct answer is “a piece of dust.” What did people pick? [Check it out here](#). ☞

Chapter 1187: There's Nothing Embarrassing About Losing to Him

Chapter 1187: There's Nothing Embarrassing About Losing to Him

Waves raced across the surface of the God Blood River, and the wind carried the stench of gore across the shore of the southern planetary system. It seemed connected to the blood-red aurora in the sky overhead.

Within all of the redness was a ferry boat with no one on it, slowly drifting into the depths of the river, never to be seen again. Xu Qing stood on the pier, looking at the ferry boat disappearing into the distance. The gift from Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix was not something he could take with him. It had to stay on the God Blood River. However, it would be waiting there for him if he ever called out to it.

After a while, Xu Qing looked down at the mote floating above his palm.

“Heaven's principle....” he murmured. That was the item he had taken from Sir Star Ring's body after killing him!

It seems like canon or law. But at the same time, it doesn't. It's more like something that came out of imagination. It exists, but also doesn't exist.

He looked at the mote thoughtfully. He had not absorbed it, as he intended to use it externally. And he had spent his time on the river studying it.

As for Sir Star Ring.... Because of the unique properties of the God Blood River, whenever he came back to life after dying, he was still on the ferry boat. And he got weaker each time. All Xu Qing had to do was wait for him. After dying the seventh time, he was truly destroyed in body and soul.

Although I did get Sir Star Ring's Immortal Capital permission medallion, his death served another purpose. After all, the fact that I was able to just sit around waiting for him to show up was a clue in and of itself.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he put away the mote of heaven's principle, then walked off the pier. With the wind against his face, he proceeded into the southern planetary system.

After a while, he ceased to mask his permission medallion, whereupon a terrifying stream of energy emerged from him, becoming a red pillar of light that shot up into the sky. When it reached the aurora above, it became a swirling vortex that was visible to the naked eye. Rumbling sounds echoed out as Xu Qing's aura surged to an astonishing level, causing everything around him to ripple and distort.

Some of it came from him, but some came from the Immortal Capital permission medallion. As a result, the star chart in the sky over the south became clear and visible. Instantly, it was obvious that there were three stars in the south that were brighter than all the others.

One belonged to Xu Qing, and the other two... were the other two Shining Stars from the south! They were Jiang Fan and Yuanshan Su!

Sir Star Ring obviously hadn't taken many other permission medallions. After killing him, my ranking only rose to 73. At least I'm in the top 100, though.

Xu Qing was certainly surprised to find his ranking so low, although he had some ideas about the reason for it. It was most likely that Sir Star Ring had been focused on cultivation rather than going around collecting medallions. He had probably intended to focus on the medallions after he went to the Aurora Immortal Palace and became a Quasi-Immortal.

Xu Qing looked up at the sky.

Those two clearly did things differently than Sir Star Ring. They worked hard to collect medallions earlier, and they're continuing to do that now that we're in the third round.

There are two ways for Fifth Star Ring cultivators to get into the Immortal Capital. One is by means of the Trial of the Hunt. As long as you can get into the top 100, you're almost certain to get in. The other way doesn't require participating in the trial. However, it's harder. After reaching Quasi-Immortal, you have to get to Lower Immortal within 500 years!

Obviously, I'm not going to use that second method. And that means my only option is the first....

Xu Qing's narrowed eyes gleamed. *Getting into the top 100 virtually guarantees that you'll get to the Immortal Capital. However, your exact ranking determines the resources you're given when you arrive!*

Xu Qing was fully aware that, going forward, his cultivation focus wouldn't be just on improving his canon. He needed to acquire ringsource!

With enough ringsource, I can form my immortal embryo more quickly. And ringsource is also the key to fully completing my immortal embryo! This makes it obvious that my true goal... is to take 1st place! I'll step into the Immortal Capital as the winner of the trial!

Having made his decision, his aura surged, and he shot off into the distance. He appeared to be going in the direction of Grand Immortal Mountain. That was where one of the south's two Shining Stars called home. And that person was... Jiang Fan!

If I eliminate all of the other Shining Stars, and take their permission medallions one by one, then I'll definitely be able to take first place. And I'll start with 'Li the Chosen.'

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he raced toward Grand Immortal Mountain.

Ten days later, he appeared in the central region of the southern planetary system. From a distance, he could see an endless mountain range filled with rising and falling mountains that numbered in the hundreds of thousands at the very least.

The place was filled year-round with white mist that seemed filled with occasional drifting forms of immortal beings. Sometimes the wind would blow, thinning the mist and revealing spectacularly beautiful palaces and temples crafted from the finest jade.

It really did seem like an immortal paradise. The immortal spirit energy here surpassed any other area in the south, as this place was the capital. This place was the main orthodox organization in the southern planetary system, Grand Immortal Mountain. And it was Jiang Fan's sect!

Xu Qing did not just barge into the mountains. Though his battle prowess was considered incredible in his own generation, and he could even fight a Quasi-Immortal... the reality was that Grand Immortal Mountain had many Quasi-Immortals. There was even an aura that was far more terrifying than that. It was the might of a Lower Immortal.

That said, according to the rules of the Trial of the Hunt, Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperors cannot participate or interfere. The same goes for Lower Immortals. This fight... will be fair and aboveboard.

Xu Qing let his energy surge and unleashed the aura of the permission medallion. Combined, it formed a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering battle spirit. It was also a battle challenge issued to Grand Immortal Mountain!

"Will you fight me, Jiang Fan?" he said in a cold voice that thrummed with the desire to do battle.

Numerous streams of divine will issued forth from Grand Immortal Mountain, locking onto Xu Qing to inspect him. Among those streams of divine will were several from Quasi-Immortals. None of them did anything to oppose him.

Xu Qing had issued a challenge in a fair and honest way. There were countless people who could bear witness, and the rules set forth by the Immortal Capital were inviolable. This was the Trial of the Hunt, and it was a struggle to get to the Immortal Capital!

Xu Qing's expression remained neutral as the divine will inspected him. He simply hovered in place as he waited for Jiang Fan's response.

In a hall in Grand Immortal Mountain, Jiang Fan sat cross-legged and silent. He could sense Xu Qing's energy, and had heard him clearly. He knew that Xu Qing was challenging him to fight. No one in the sect would push him to accept the challenge. If he wanted to, he could simply hide and refuse to fight. After all, he knew that he wasn't a match for Xu Qing.

And yet, he rose to his feet, his eyes gleaming and his energy building. Then he walked out of the hall, whereupon he found someone standing outside.

Jiang Fan ducked his head and bowed. "Master."

Standing there was an impressive middle-aged man with handsome facial features and a robe embroidered with a cloud motif. In Grand Immortal Mountain, he ranked second only to Immortal Monarch Vastpeak. His name was... Lan Yun. And he was Jiang Fan's Master.[1]

“You’re not a match for him,” Lan Yun said coolly. “Given your ranking, you can just stay here in the sect. When the third round is over, you’ll definitely get into the Immortal Capital.”

Jiang Fan thought for a moment and then shook his head. “Master, I don’t mind losing. And I won’t refuse a challenge. Although it’s very important to me to get to the Immortal Capital... shrinking from a fight is not something I’ll ever do!”

With that, he bowed to his Master, then floated up into the air and off Grand Immortal Mountain. Shortly after... he appeared in front of Xu Qing!

When Jiang Fan looked at Xu Qing, he thought back to the fourth world of the immortal palace, and everything that had played out there. Taking a deep breath, he waved his right hand. Using his canon, he sent his Immortal Capital permission medallion flying off to the side.

“Beat me and you can have it!”

Jiang Fan began to power up, causing swirling mist to build up around him. It covered the area, and then spread out as if to weigh down on all creation. And it bore down on Xu Qing. Jiang Fan’s canon had clearly improved since his time in the immortal palace. The mist seemed mighty enough to devour anything in its path, and to cover over all things and beings. Xu Qing was quickly surrounded by it, and it began to permeate the space-time around him.

But then... before Jiang Fan could even launch an attack, he stopped in place, a bitter feeling rising in his heart. He could see... that the sky, the land, and everything around him was filled with numerous instances of Xu Qing’s space-time.

It was like looking at a kaleidoscope. Of those innumerable space-times, there was only one that had his mist in it. In all the others, Xu Qing was simply staring calmly at him.

Then one version of Xu Qing walked over to him, reached out with his right hand, and patted Jiang Fan on the shoulder. There was nothing Jiang Fan could do to stop him. Rumbling sounds filled Jiang Fan, and a loud cracking sound rang out. That sound didn’t come from the air or the ground, but rather... the space-time he was in. There was no need for Xu Qing to do anything other than that.

Walking past the immobilized Jiang Fan, he picked up the Immortal Capital permission medallion, then waved his hand to dispel all the space-time instances. He walked away without saying a word.

On the highest peak of Grand Immortal Mountain, there was a holy throne in a hall filled with silver light. There was currently a performance going on including singing and dancing. Some sandalwood incense was burning, the smoke curling through the hall and making everything seem hazy and mysterious.

Seated in the position of honor was an old man wearing a silver robe.

“He first understood space-time, and then parallelism. While only an Imperial Sovereign, he developed canon befitting of a Grand Emperor. This kid... is nothing short of spectacular. No wonder the Immortal Paragon has taken a liking to him.”

Jiang Fan hovered there quietly. He knew that he was no match for Xu Qing. But he hadn't realized that he was so far beneath Xu Qing that he couldn't even put up a fight. It filled him with bitterness.

Some time passed, whereupon his Master, Lan Yun, stepped out of thin air. Hovering next to Jiang Fan, he looked at Xu Qing disappearing in the distance.

"There's nothing embarrassing about losing to him," he said calmly.

1. Lan Yun was introduced in [chapter 1100](#) and mentioned again in [chapters 1102](#) and [1136](#).
Immortal Monarch Vastpeak was introduced in [chapter 1120](#). ^{~63}

Chapter 1188: Talentless Hacks

Chapter 1188: Talentless Hacks

The Immortal Capital's Trial of the Hunt was divided into three rounds.

In the first round, a total of 10,000 permission medallions were distributed, and the countless cultivators in the four planetary systems would fight over them. That first round was brutal, and involved a lot of medallions changing hands. That said, cultivators could choose whether or not to participate.

Then came the second round, in which the four Immortal Monarchs would distribute their legacies for everyone to seek enlightenment of. The second round was an indication that the trial would soon speed up. During that round, cultivators with an advantage would get a big boost, while cultivators who had no advantage would be whittled out of the competition. The participants were still allowed to kill each other to take permission medallions during the second round, and at the same time, could get stronger thanks to the legacies. The enticement of the legacies and the medallions made the second round very intense.

Now the third round had come. This was the round in which the final eliminations and selections would take place. It was all about hunting down other participants, and either killing them or robbing them of their medallions. By the time the third round ended, all of the previous fighting and killing ensured that there were far fewer than 10,000 cultivators with medallions.

Only someone with complete canon could unfuse with their permission medallion. Those without complete canon could not get rid of their medallion unless they died first.

When the Immortal Capital's Trial of the Hunt began, people who chose to participate knew there was no turning back. Either you got to the Immortal Capital, or... you died trying and became fodder for other participants. If you got very, very lucky, you could theoretically lose your medallion and live to tell the tale, although that went against the spirit of the competition.

Right now, it was a nearly daily occurrence in the southern planetary system for permission medallions to change hands. There were currently less than 500 medallions left. At that moment,

the cultivators who had those medallions suddenly sensed something shocking, and they quickly took out their medallions to check the star chart.

In the chart that showed the southern region, the star that represented Jiang Fan, which shone brightly at Grand Immortal Mountain, suddenly went dim. Its brightness was being gobbled up by another star. And then, that other star became brighter than all the other stars in the planetary system. The only star who could compare to it was a star in the Yuanshan Clan.

All of the cultivators who had permission medallions were astonished.

“Jiang Fan was defeated?”

“He’s the top Shining Star in the south! Who could beat him?”

“It wasn’t Yuanshan Su. Don’t tell me one of the Shining Stars from one of the other three planetary systems came over here!”

Then the cultivators witnessed something even more shocking, as the star that had just defeated Jiang Fan was now moving with astonishing speed in the direction of... the Yuanshan Clan!

Bedlam ensued in the Yuanshan Clan. They were the top clan in the south, and they had no shortage of powerful experts. But according to the rules of the Trial of the Hunt, none of those experts had the right to challenge the trial participants. As anxiety built in the clan, Yuanshan Su walked out.

Clad in a white gown, she stood atop Mount Skyspirit and looked off into the distance. Surrounding her were other clan cultivators, all with serious expressions on their faces. At first, she hadn’t been completely certain who that third star on the star chart was. But after watching that star go to Grand Immortal Mountain and defeat Jiang Fan... she could guess who it was.

There are only two people who could do that. The first would be Sir Star Ring, and the other is... him. According to the news coming out of the east, Sir Star Ring already perished. And that makes it clear who this person is.

She had a complicated expression on her face. When the events in the fourth world came to a conclusion, she was one of the first people to leave the immortal palace. After returning to her clan, she had thought constantly about everything that happened in the immortal palace. And there was one person who occupied her thoughts more than anyone else.

She had achieved her goal, benefited greatly, and improved her cultivation base a lot. But that person continued to weigh down on her with pressure like a mountain. It made things very complicated.

After all, she had completed an official wedding ceremony with him. Though it had been a requirement in that reflection of history, the ramifications could still affect the real world. With such thoughts filling her mind, she looked at the sky as the wind wailed in the sky and churned the clouds. A person appeared on the horizon.

He wore black garments and had long violet hair, and as he approached, it was like he was walking through waves of time itself. He was none other than Xu Qing.

As he neared, the other cultivators of the Yuanshan Clan looked shocked. There were even some Quasi-Immortal patriarchs who unleashed their energy, causing the surroundings to ripple as if they were facing a major enemy.

Xu Qing didn't pay any attention to the pressure weighing down on him. He simply proceeded, his expression neutral. He passed the Yuanshan cultivators, ignored the gazes of the patriarchs, and landed on Mount Skyspirit in front of Yuanshan Su. He extended his hand.

"Hand it over," Xu Qing said quietly. He didn't say much, but he spoke in a way that indicated he wouldn't take no for an answer.

Yuanshan Su said nothing. The fluctuations from the surrounding patriarchs grew more intense, and their eyes were as cold as ice. But after a moment passed, Yuanshan Su sighed. She reached up and, to the astonishment of the clan cultivators around her, she placed her palm onto her forehead. A popping sound rang out as she stripped her own Immortal Capital permission medallion outside of herself. With the wave of her hand, she sent the brightly shining medallion over to Xu Qing.

It landed on his palm. Not even glancing at it, he gave Yuanshan Su a meaningful look. "Is there a third way to get to the Immortal Capital?"

The indifference with which Yuanshan Su gave him the medallion led Xu Qing to the conclusion that there was likely another way to get to the Immortal Capital.

"Yes," she said. "If I become a Quasi-Immortal during the trial, I can also go there. It's a special right given to the eight Shining Stars."

Xu Qing nodded. He could tell that Yuanshan Su's aura was just on the verge of being that of a Quasi-Immortal. She had clearly benefited a lot in the immortal palace.

However, that had nothing to do with him. He closed his fist over the medallion, and it disappeared. Dazzling light shone up from him and into the sky. A moment later, the star chart once again appeared overhead in the south.

The star that represented Xu Qing was now brighter than all others, making it completely unique. He was number one in the south! Of course, his own permission medallion told him his rank in the Fifth Star Ring as a whole.

5th!

He didn't care who it was that ranked higher than him. If things went according to plan, then no one would be able to stop him from taking 1st.

"Well then," he said, "see you at the Immortal Capital." With a final look at Yuanshan Su, he turned and left.

The Yuanshan Clan cultivators could do nothing but watch him go. Shortly after, the patriarchs landed on the ground next to her.

Yuanshan Su bowed her head. "I've let you down, Patriarchs. I don't even qualify to make a move on him."

A few breaths of time passed, whereupon one of the patriarchs sighed. “Su’er, the truth is... not even we could be fully confident in beating him in a fight. How does he compare to Sir Star Ring?”

Yuanshan Su shook her head. “Sir Star Ring perished. Although I can’t be sure if he’s truly dead or not, I’m fairly certain *he* was the one who did it.”

The patriarchs all sighed.

“People like that sometimes don’t come around for generations....”

Yuanshan Su smiled. “It just makes things more interesting.”

In the northern planetary system of the Fifth Star Ring was the Sword Immortal School!

As an organization, it was very different from Grand Immortal Mountain in the south or the Starry Quarter in the east. The most orthodox organization in the north was built atop a gargantuan meteor. It was surrounded by a permanent tempest of sword energy, and the sound of swords rose up from it into the highest heavens. The meteor itself was shockingly large, like a mountain. If you stood at the bottom and looked up at it, you wouldn’t even be able to see the top.

There were various legends about where the rock came from. Some people said it wasn’t native to the Fifth Star Ring. They claimed it came from outside of the star ring, and that Sword Immortal Blue Mallard had acquired it, gained enlightenment from it, and used it to found the sect. Other people say that it was left over from the days when the starry sky of the Fifth Star Ring was compacted to make the current geography. And there were many other stories.[1]

But the fact remained that the Sword Immortal School really was built on top of the gigantic meteor. On the exterior of the meteor, in the central square of the Sword Immortal School, Hordeslayer and Rampart were carefully erecting a host of warding spells. As they worked, they communicated via divine will.

“He put Sir Star Ring to death!”

“He took Jiang Fan’s medallion!”

“That shrew Yuanshan Su was the biggest pushover of them all. She didn’t even try to fight!”

“He’s on his way here to the north right now....”

“I have the feeling he’s after more than just our medallions....”

“You’re right! He wants to subjugate us!”

“Being forced to bond with him in the fourth world was the biggest humiliation imaginable!”

“We can’t let this matter drop!”

“We can’t let this matter drop!”

“So the plan is to make him pay as soon as he shows up!”

Gritting their teeth, they continued setting up all sorts of warding spells as fast as they could. A few days later, they finally breathed sighs of relief and sat down cross-legged.

“Now we just wait!”

Above them, in the sky over the Sword Immortal School, a person rested within the endless tempest of sword energy. He wore blue clothing and had gray hair. Orbiting around him was an ancient blue sword. The sword’s name was Blue Mallard, and as a result, he was known as Sword Immortal Blue Mallard.

As he rested within the sword energy, he sipped alcohol and looked down at his two apprentices. A moment later, he sighed.

I was so blind back then. Why did I pick these two talentless hacks as apprentices? They can’t even beat him two versus one? They have to set up warding spells as well? And they’re planning an ambush?

1. Sword Immortal Blue Mallard first appeared in [chapter 1120](#). 

Chapter 1189: A Ruthless Trap

Chapter 1189: A Ruthless Trap

The Fifth Star Ring was divided into east, west, south and north.

The north there was unlike the north in the Revered Ancient mainland. There was no snow in the northern planetary system. It was quite the opposite. Most locations there were very hot. Of course... when big events played out that got all the cultivators in the north talking, then it wasn’t just the weather that heated up.

In a small town not far from the Sword Immortal School, a local teahouse buzzed with conversation.

“This area has become one of the busiest locations imaginable recently.”

“The big sects, clans, and tribes have all sent direct bloodline elites and core disciples here.”

“The two Shining Stars from the Sword Immortal School achieved major success in the dao of the sword. It’s only natural that the north is all stirred up because of the upcoming Sword Activation Ceremony.”

“They’re the most dazzling chosen in the north! All cultivators of this generation basically worship them!”

“The Sword Activation Ceremony is definitely going to be watched by everybody.”

“Seems to me that their trip to the Fallen Immortal Moors was really a success. They made some shocking gains.”

“I heard that when they were at the Fallen Immortal Moors, both of them managed to form immortal wills in their sword spirits!”

Everyone in the teahouse was talking about Hordeslayer and Rampart.

Xu Qing sat next to a window in the teahouse, his expression neutral as he smelled the aroma of tea wafting up from his cup and listened to the chatter. Northern cultivators didn’t usually drink alcohol. They were fonder of spirit tea. As a result, cities usually had a lot of teahouses.

Those two swords are very interesting.

Xu Qing took a sip of tea. There was something uniquely bitter in the tea, but when the tea passed along your tongue, it changed into something sweet.

It was Xu Qing’s third day in the northern planetary system. Because of his lack of familiarity with the north, he had masked the aura of his permission medallion, thus removing himself from the star chart.

It was only after arriving that he heard about the upcoming Sword Activation Ceremony for Hordeslayer and Rampart. The ceremony was to start in three days, and was supposed to last for two months. It would end at the same time as the third round of the Trial of the Hunt.

Are they... scared?

Though news about what Xu Qing had done in the south had not spread very much, he was certain that Hordeslayer and Rampart knew about it.

Why are they so confident that they’ll be safe for the next two months during their ceremony? It can’t be the sect. The trial rules prohibit that. They must have things set up as part of the ceremony. Or are they waiting for me to go find them?

After some thought, Xu Qing finished the rest of his tea in one gulp.

Three days later....

More and more cultivators were gathering around the meteor where the Sword Immortal School was located. All sorts of organizations from the north were present, and the atmosphere was very lively. Everyone was waiting for the ceremony.

The atmosphere was similarly lively inside the Sword Immortal School. Whether it was cultivators who were members of the Sword Immortal School, or representatives from other places, they were all gathered around the central square, chatting and laughing as they waited for the formalities to begin.

Eventually, the auspicious hour arrived, and rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth. Two astonishing beams of light rose up from the central square. They reached the aurora in the canopy of heaven, and crimson light spread out like a vast sea.

Two huge vortexes formed. As the rumbling sounds grew more intense, the meteor was affected, and sent out streams of blue light. The blue light rose up and connected to the red above. And thus, the entire Sword Immortal School was bathed in a combination of blue and red light.

Everyone observing from outside the sect looked on intently. Everyone observing from inside the sect watched happily, their hearts filled with anticipation.

However, as the crowds looked on and the sword energy raged, Hordeslayer and Rampart were feeling surprised. They were still communicating via projection.

“He didn’t come after all?”

“I thought for sure he would come before the ceremony, but as it turns out, he didn’t!”

“Don’t tell me he’s planning to show up during the actual ceremony.”

“It doesn’t matter. We’re prepared. If he’s so scared he doesn’t come, then fine. But if he does show up, then today—”

“Will be the day we get revenge!”

“But... what if we can’t beat him?”

“Then we just surrender! If that happens, we won’t be the ones to lose face. It’ll be Master! If he, an immortal monarch, can’t even protect his two apprentices when they’re in the middle of seeking enlightenment, then just imagine the humiliation he’ll experience!”

“You’re right, brother!”

Hordeslayer and Rampart exchanged a look, and both could see the bravado in each other’s eyes. Taking a deep breath, they each took a step forward and unleashed their sword energy. As they absorbed the blue and red light, two streams of immortal will surged within them.

Astonishingly, two blurry swords appeared over their heads! The swords seemed extremely ancient, as if they contained an aura of time itself. The moment the swords appeared, they attracted the attention of everyone in the area.

If any of the other Shining Stars were present, they would recognize the swords immediately. They were... the very same immortal swords that had come out of the sword furnace in the fourth world.

Next, the blue light and the light from the aurora acted like sharpening sand that flowed back and forth across the blurry immortal swords. It was as if the swords were being sharpened, causing their sword energy to grow stronger and more incisive! It was the same with the sword light.

The ceremony involved this sharpening process going on for two months. During that time, the immortal swords would grow increasingly dazzling, and the sword will they emanated would provide the onlookers with a chance to seek enlightenment.

Hordeslayer and Rampart sat there cross-legged, their eyes closed and their minds focused.

Exclamations of admiration could be heard everywhere. All of the onlookers were paying very close attention.

Meanwhile, in the Sword Pavilion elsewhere in the Sword Immortal School, someone was speaking sarcastically.

“Brother Blue, those two apprentices of yours are truly extraordinary.” The speaker was a middle-aged man clad in red, who was currently watching the scene in the central square.

Seated next to him was Sword Immortal Blue Mallard. At the moment, Sword Immortal Blue Mallard was shaking his head helplessly. “Extraordinary my ass! Those two are gutless cowards! I bet that if something goes wrong, they’ll spout some bullshit excuse and blame me for everything.”

The man in red chuckled. Looking down into the crowd, he saw someone that seemed to both exist and not exist at the same time. It was correct to say that he didn’t exist, because none of the other cultivators in the crowd seemed to notice him. But it was also correct to say that he existed, because there were certain people who could see him with absolute clarity.

“So they’re scared of that guy? No wonder the Immortal Paragon has taken a liking to him. You know what? His canon reminds me of... Immortal Lord Aurora from back in the day.” The man in red seemed wistful. “Brother Blue, now that I think about it, weren’t you the apprentice of the top-ranking true monarch from the Aurora Immortal Palace back then...?”

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard sighed. “Technically speaking, yes. But my Master was cheap. He only came to see me a few times, and he never took me to the immortal palace. If he had, I’d be long gone. I guess—”

“I guess it all comes down to karma,” the man in red said softly.

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard sighed again. “You know what annoys me most about you?”

“Yes.”

“It’s annoying that you always say what I’m about to say, before I say it!”

“I said I know! Oh, hey, that fellow is looking at us.” Smiling, he pointed down.

Down in the crowd in the Sword Immortal School, Xu Qing looked up at the tallest building present. He could just barely sense an aggressive aura there. Though he couldn't see who it came from, he could guess.

After a moment of consideration, he clasped hands and bowed. Then he strode forward.

He made his way through the crowd, across the square, and then flew right up to the two pillars of sword energy.... He was now hovering right in front of the two immortal swords that were being sharpened.

He waved his hand. That simple gesture caused the swords to vibrate. An instant later... to the absolute shock of the crowd, the swords seemed to seethe with excitement, and then, they turned and shot toward Xu Qing.

Hordeslayer and Rampart suddenly opened their eyes. They were instantly inclined to feel excited, but they quickly suppressed the sensation.

"He's here!"

"Those are our swords!"

"We have to go all out!"

Without any hesitation, and ignoring the fact that so many people were watching, Hordeslayer and Rampart both performed incantation gestures and then smacked their hands onto the ground. Numerous halos of light instantly rose up from the ground, hundreds of them, and each of them pulsing with terrifying mightiness. They all shot toward Xu Qing.

Then Hordeslayer and Rampart shot to their feet, performed an incantation gesture, and grimly shouted, "Rising Sword. Sword Falls!"

A massive, illusory sword rose up from the square, shining with dazzling light and pulsing with magnificent sword energy. It instantly slashed upward toward Xu Qing.

At the same time, a giant sword emerged from the sea of light and slashed toward Xu Qing from above.

Things weren't over yet. As the hundreds of halos and double swords closed in on Xu Qing, Hordeslayer and Rampart moved as one, performing another incantation gesture and then spitting out mouthfuls of blood.

"Meteor Swords!"

The meteor that the Sword Immortal School was built on erupted with blue light. And within that light were thousands of long, blue swords, all of which shot toward Xu Qing and then started orbiting around him in a huge sword formation. That, combined with the halos and double swords, were bringing a torrent of death.

These were the warding spells that Hordeslayer and Rampart had prepared to deal with Xu Qing.

After doing all that in one short moment, their eyes shimmered with determination. With yet another incantation gesture, they blurred into motion, superimposing over each other as they fused into one! They became one person! Blood oozed out of their eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. They drained their ringsource. And they performed a double-handed incantation gesture and pointed toward the excited immortal swords orbiting around Xu Qing.[1]

The two swords vibrated, and their excitement seemed to be quashed. Thrumming aggressively, they spun to point at Xu Qing. All of this takes a bit of time to describe, but it happened at the exact same moment that Xu Qing revealed himself.

In response to all of that, Xu Qing's expression remained neutral. He waved his hand, and a mote like a piece of dust flew out. It began to fall. The sky rumbled. Heaven and earth shook. The air trembled. Space-time oscillated.

It was... a mote of heaven's principle.

1. Although it says they "became one person," the author then goes on to refrain from using pronouns at all, which is easy to do in Chinese. In other words, he doesn't call the fused version "he" or "them." He just uses their names. This continues into the next chapter. Unfortunately, that gets clunky real fast in English, especially in a fight scene, so I'm just going to refer to them with plural pronouns. It's not as if they became a new individual entity when they fused. They're just occupying the same body. Or something like that. ㄟ(ゝ)

Chapter 1190: Brothers Act in Unison!

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The moment that dust mote appeared, the heaven and earth of the Sword Immortal School began to shake. A terrifying pressure began to weigh down, like the might of heaven itself. The world stilted. The air shattered.

The countless cultivators present were all reacting with visible shock. In fact, they were so terrified that they immediately turned and fled. In the face of that mote, all things and beings had no choice but to flee. It could not be defied!

After order came balance. And from that came this, which was part of the power of an immortal!

The former number one Shining Star, Sir Star Ring, had relied on a lifetime of resources and destined opportunities, as well as reserve powers from the Star Ring Pagoda, to acquire this precious treasure at the moment he became a Quasi-Immortal! You could even call it a corroboration of Sir Star Ring's dao of immortals.

There weren't even enough words to describe its grandeur. As it fell, it was only natural for dramatic things to happen!

All onlookers felt like they were looking at an entire starry sky! That was especially true considering that nothing like it had ever appeared in the north before. Actually, the only people

who had ever seen it were the Quasi-Immortals in the fifth world of the immortal palace, who had witnessed the fight between Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring.

But now, it was here in the north, at the Sword Immortal School, right above Hordeslayer and Rampart. And thus, it was an absolutely astonishing development that shook everyone down to their soul.

That was particularly true of Hordeslayer and Rampart. All of their advance preparations were child's play. The trap they had laid was nothing more than a joke.

The two enormous swords that had appeared, one above and one below, couldn't continue to exist. Their sword might was broken. The swords... trembled and emitted sounds that resembled wailing. After that, the two enormous swords... crumbled into pieces. The cloud of thousands of storms whipping around Xu Qing also collapsed.

When facing a mote of heaven's principle, sword energy ceased, and sword light went dim. The tempest of swords... disappeared. None of it existed any longer.

As for the two immortal swords by Xu Qing, which Hordeslayer and Rampart had tried to seize back control of, as they inched closer to Xu Qing, they began to tremble violently. And then, they tumbled away.

Hordeslayer and Rampart in fused form were bleeding profusely, and finally, their killing intent turned into nothing as they tumbled backward.

This level of force was unstoppable! A dust mote might not seem like something very heavy, but to Hordeslayer and Rampart, this dust mote was as heavy as the entire starry sky. The terror they felt had reached a peak.

And yet, in the face of a mote of heaven's principle, fleeing was useless. Heaven's principle could bury anything and cause it to cease to exist!

As they reeled mentally, their combined fleshly body couldn't stay together any longer, and they exploded apart. After separating, blood sprayed out of their mouths like mad, and their bodies were disintegrating. Their souls were also starting to fall apart. A sensation of death slammed into them like a wave.

However, just as the mote was about to completely wipe Hordeslayer and Rampart out of existence... a sigh drifted out of the tallest building in the Sword Immortal School.

"Could you give me some face....?"

Along with the sigh flew a stream of sword energy that appeared beneath the mote. Because of the sword energy, the mote stopped in place.

Taking advantage of that moment, Hordeslayer and Rampart fled with all the power they could muster toward the tall building. They had recognized their Master's voice, and were now convinced that he was interfering on their behalf. They had been terrified out of their minds by the sensation of impending doom, and knew that their only hope of survival lay with their Master.

Though they fled at top speed... space-time ripples suddenly appeared in front of them, blocking their path. And that tall building became like something that didn't even exist. The space-time ripples overlapped, creating a space-time tempest. Then time flowed like a river, and a time wave swept over Hordeslayer and Rampart.

When the foam cleared, the two of them were gone. They had been swept up by the wave and sent into a time that wasn't the present!

Then Xu Qing stepped forward onto the wave before disappearing without a trace. He... was entering the same space-time where he had sent Hordeslayer and Rampart. Xu Qing had appeared, Hordeslayer and Rampart had launched their trap, then tried to flee. Then Xu Qing sent them into space-time and followed with the intent to kill....

All of that happened in only a few short breaths of time!

All of the organizations in the north were shaken to the core. This was an unforgettable event the likes of which rarely occurred.

For one thing, Hordeslayer and Rampart alone were very famous, so to see the tables turned on them was shocking. Even more shocking was that nobody knew who attacked them. All they knew was that he had terrifying canon.

This battle between Shining Stars surpassed the Imperial Sovereign level. Even Quasi-Immortals were shocked by what they were seeing. In fact, it was no surprise that some people even assumed that Xu Qing was actually Sir Star Ring.

"Who was that guy...?"

"Sir Star Ring?"

"It didn't seem like it...."

Inside the Sword Immortal School, in the Sword Pavilion, Sword Immortal Blue Mallard sighed, took a step forward, and seemed about to say something.

Before he could, the man in red chuckled and said, "Oh, kids. They'll surpass us in time, I'm sure. Not even willing to give face to a Lower Immortal."

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard stopped in his tracks and looked at the man in red who annoyed him so much. After a moment of thought, he was about to say something, but again, the man in red spoke first.

"But since they're your apprentices, it would be reasonable to step in at least to save their lives. And you could also make sure that lad understands that face should be given to Lower Immortals."

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard said nothing. This person was being more annoying than ever. He really was just blurting out everything before Sword Immortal Blue Mallard could say it, leaving him somewhat at a loss for words. He was currently frowning, and was so irritated he was about to let loose a harrumph.

The man in red snorted coldly.

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard snapped at that point. “This is ridiculous! I can’t even snort coldly without you beating me to the punch!”

The man in red laughed quietly.

Fuming, Sword Immortal Blue Mallard took a step forward and vanished.

Meanwhile, in another space-time was a desert.

Hordeslayer and Rampart were fleeing wildly in the hopes of finding their way out of it. A space-time wave had swept them up and taken them away from the real world, delivering them to this space-time. When they popped out, they had no idea where they were or if it was real. This space-time, and this desert, seemed real.

But the intense sensation of deadly crisis in the two brothers made it impossible for them to analyze the situation. They were overwhelmed with anxiety and bitterness.

“Dammit, dammit, DAMMIT! This is all your fault!”

“What are you blaming me for? You were the one who came up with that idiotic plan. You wanted to lay a trap and ambush him. Now how stupid do you feel, huh??”

“Me? Stupid? It was all because *you* said nobody could help us, not even Master. You said to lure him out and kill him to negate the karma that resulted from bonding with him!”

“You make it sound like I’m the only one who got bonded. You did too!”

“It’s all your fault!”

“It’s all *your* fault!”

As the two brothers raced along, they were arguing with each other so heatedly they were yelling.

“Master’s also a useless piece of trash!”

“That old codger! He’s an actual immortal and he just sat around watching us about to get killed!”

“That’s right. That guy obviously doesn’t care about giving face to Master!”

“That’s why Master has always been so shameless!”

“You are absolutely, positively correct. Now, if he was the Immortal Paragon, then maybe that guy would give him some face.”

“And that means...”

“It’s all Master’s fault!!”

Now that they had found a way to vent together, they were back to being in each other’s good graces. After venting for a while, they felt better, and even managed to speed up a bit. It looked like they were about to break free of the desert.

But that was when a wind kicked up. Sand grains flew through the air, filling the world, and buffeting the fleeing brothers and slowing them down to a standstill. No matter how they launched attacks or howled in rage, they were helpless. Eventually, the sand formed a huge face that filled half the sky.

It was Xu Qing. He opened his mouth to devour them.

Hordeslayer and Rampart shared a despairing glance. Then they gritted their teeth, and their eyes shone with defiance. Then they quickly communicated with each other via divine will.

“I’d rather die than surrender, lil’ bro!”

“Even if it means dying while standing up, big brother, I refuse to bend the knee!”

“Let’s just fly up there and self-detonate!”

“Okay, sure. We’ll fly up and detonate at the same time!”

Howling, they were about to fly up into the air when... they simultaneously dropped to their knees.

“Young Lord....”

But then they sensed something had changed. The two of them instinctively looked up, whereupon shocked expressions appeared on their faces. They opened their mouths to speak... but before they could, brilliant blue light appeared in the sky.

It was like a raging sea that spread out rapidly, and caused the huge face of Xu Qing to hesitate for a moment. An enraged voice echoed out from the blue light.

“You disgraceful fools!”

Hordeslayer and Rampart were delighted, and quickly jumped to their feet as Sword Immortal Blue Mallard appeared out of the blue light. Not interested in hearing anything from them, Sword Immortal Blue Mallard slapped both of them hard. The brothers shivered as their Immortal Capital permission medallions were ripped away from them.

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard threw the medallions up into the sky. Then he waved his hand, and an indescribably terrifying energy surged off him, causing the surrounding space-time to shatter.

Ripples spread through all of the space-time instance. All it took was a single thought, and he could reduce the space-time to ashes.

Having accomplished that, he coolly said, “Can you give me some face, lad?”

Xu Qing stepped out into the open, put away the two permission medallions, and then bowed at the waist.

“I’m happy to comply with your orders, Senior.” With that, Xu Qing took a step back and vanished. The instance of space-time also vanished.

Everything blurred, and when it became clear again, the surroundings had once again become the Sword Immortal School. They weren’t in the central square, but rather, in the Sword Pavilion.

Hordeslayer and Rampart looked around, stunned. Then, they jubilantly prepared to bow to their Master.

However, Sword Immortal Blue Mallard just glared at them and then kicked each of them, sending them flying over to the corner of the room. As the two of them howled in grief, he walked over and proceeded to kick them several more times.

“Disgraceful moron! Shameless fool! I must have been drunk back when I said you had amazing potential. You don’t have any freaking preheaven sword bodies! You have preheaven whored bodies!”^[1]

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard gave a cold snort, and then looked at the man in red without saying a word.

The man in red also didn’t say a word.

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard frowned and waited a bit longer. “Why aren’t you saying what I’m about to say?”

“I don’t feel like it,” said the man in red, smiling.

Sighing helplessly, Sword Immortal Blue Mallard said, “Elder Brother... these two imbeciles are your Sect Nephews. You have the right, so why not... give them two new permission medallions?”

1. In Chinese, there is a character that means many things, including inexpensive, lowly, base, whore/whorish, slut/slutty etc., and has the *exact* same pronunciation as sword. By chance, the word whored rhymes with sword, so I used it. In reality, this joke wouldn’t work in spoken Chinese dialogue, as the pronunciation of the two is exactly the same. The English equivalent would be something like “they weren’t *bred* bears they were *bread* bears.” It only works when you can see the character/word, so it’s a “written” joke. Although, to be fair, most TV shows and movies in China have subtitles anyway, so I guess it could work visually as well. But it definitely wouldn’t work in audiobook format. I supposed I could have done something with “sored/sword,” but the slutty/whore aspect is what makes it really funny in Chinese, so I’d rather go with something like that. ㄟ