

Beyond the Timescape

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Chapter 1201: Acquisitioners

This iron skewer was different compared to the skewer Xu Qing had left behind on the Revered Ancient mainland.

First of all, it looked different. His Revered Ancient iron skewer looked like a golden vajra scepter. It didn't look very much at all like it had looked when Xu Qing originally started using it.[1]

This one looked exactly like his original iron skewer. It was long and thin, with an extremely sharp tip.

That said, you couldn't necessarily say that this new one was stronger than the other. After all, his original iron skewer had been refined many times. Master Seventh himself had personally worked on it, and it also had a spirit automaton. It had the capacity to do all sorts of things. The main limitation had been Xu Qing's cultivation base, which held him back from unleashing its true potential.

But in terms of suitability... this new skewer perfectly conformed to Xu Qing's canon. Right now, canon was the most important part of Xu Qing's battle prowess. And an iron skewer with his own canon in it was obviously the perfect canon treasure for him.

By means of his canon, it could enter overlapping universes, traverse multiple space-times, and form a perfect resonance with him! Most importantly, it was true and real, and thanks to the resonance, wasn't just stronger than expected, but could transpose with Xu Qing, so that when he used his canon, he could act much more effectively.

What was more, it had the mote of heaven's principle in it, which meant that the skewer had immensely high personhood, and was also extremely heavy! It was so heavy that even Quasi-Immortals would have to respect it!

In the final analysis, this iron skewer definitely deserved to be called the most powerful canon treasure Xu Qing could possibly have! No one else would even be able to wield it! If someone else even touched it, they would be sucked into space-time and encounter Infinite Timelessness. Only someone as strong as a Lower Immortal could possibly deal with it.

The old man in red had added a few extra ingredients to the iron skewer, and was clearly very pleased with the results. "Not a bad treasure. At the very least, it will boost your battle prowess a few times over."

He waved his hand, and the iron skewer thrummed as it flew out of the fire pit and toward Xu Qing. It stopped in front of Xu Qing, where it hovered motionless.

Filled with excitement, Xu Qing reached out and grabbed the skewer. Given how familiar he was with wielding an iron skewer, as soon as it landed on his palm, he connected to it mentally. The skewer and its kaleidoscopic space-time projections disappeared. It immediately formed a resonance with his space-time canon, and it immediately started to power up.

Xu Qing was very pleased with what he could sense from it. Clasp hands, he bowed deeply to the old man in the red robe.

“Many thanks, Senior. Might I ask to know your most honored name and surname, so that I can engrave this kindness on my heart for all time?”

Xu Qing was thanking this Lower Immortal from the depths of his heart, in all sincerity. Not only had he fixed his Sageheaven Pagoda, but also, he had forged a truly precious treasure. He had even added some of his own, personal ingredients into the mix. Xu Qing knew that he had been treated with immense grace.

“There’s no need for that. It was all well-deserved. You can just call me True Monarch Jiushi.” The old man smiled. “I’m Linshan’s Second Elder Brother.” [2]

Xu Qing was stunned as he realized what that meant. Lower Immortals were addressed as monarchs. But ‘true monarch’ was a special title that only the apprentices of an Immortal Lord would be given. Xu Qing now knew who this person was. Zhou Linshan was the actual name of Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix!

“My Junior Sister sent word to us, her Elder Brothers, and asked us to take good care of you. Going forward, if you need any help from me, just come here to the Daoforge Universe. Now, be off with you.”

True Monarch Jiushi waved his hand, and the surroundings blurred.

When Xu Qing could see clearly again, he was no longer in the forge, but rather, out on one of the bands of light. There were a lot of cultivators in the area, but it was a different band of light than he had left from. This one contained people who were leaving the forge with their completed equipment.

Xu Qing turned and looked at the forge. He bowed again. In his heart, he felt true gratitude. His journey to the Aurora Immortal Palace had involved helping Young Lord Aurora and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix to complete the marriage that had been interrupted by fate. Those scenes remained in his mind like lingering incense. And then, here in the Nineshores Heaven, they once again stirred.

I wonder where they are now...?

As he thought back to how everything had played out, he wished them well. Then he turned to leave. He had previously assumed this errand would take a long time. But things had gone very smoothly, leaving him a lot of extra time.

I might as well take a trip to the Heroic Immortal Tombs as well!

Having made his decision, he took out the immortal slip and prepared to teleport to the Heroic Immortal Tombs. However, that was when he suddenly heard some familiar voices, causing his eyebrows to shoot up. Instead of teleporting away, he chose to fly in the direction of the voices. The voices were getting louder.

“This is bullying! Outrageous bullying! Who do you think we two brothers are? Dirt beneath your feet??”

“That’s right! Insulting us two brothers is equivalent to insulting all of the ascendees! It’s equivalent to insulting our Master, who is none other than Sword Immortal Blue Mallard! And it’s equivalent to insulting everyone from the Sword Immortal School!”

The speakers were none other than the sword cultivators Hordeslayer and Rampart.

“Well, here we are and here are our swords!”

The two brothers were calling on all of their influence as they shouted in rage at three people blocking their path.

The three people were dressed alike in a garment called a ‘hundred-pocket robe.’ The ‘hundred-pocket’ part of the name was literal. Each gray robe had a total of one hundred pockets, and just a glance at them was enough to determine that those pockets were dimensional holding spaces that could be filled with entire cosmoses.

The three people were also surrounded by a faint aura of death. They were not the source of it, but rather had been around so much death that it had stuck to them. They all had different facial features, but there was something about the temperament that seemed similar. It was... a feeling like that of a jackal. It was a sinister greed that seemed to come instinctively to them.

In terms of cultivation base, two of them were peak Imperial Sovereigns, while the one standing in the middle was a Quasi-Immortal. In response to Hordeslayer and Rampart yelling at them, they merely grinned nonchalantly.

As for the Quasi-Immortal, he dug into his ear with his pinky finger, blew the tip of his finger clean, and chuckled. “Of course I’m aware that you’re ascendees. Unfortunately... who around here *isn’t* an ascendee? Guess what? We also ascended, only a few times ago.

“Furthermore, while it’s true that the sects from the Immortal Capital have connections here... that counts for everybody. Besides, we just want to have a little talk with the two of you. We want to buy those swords. That’s all. If you don’t want to sell, that’s fine. We’re not going to force you.

“That said... we have a big responsibility. And we do have the right to conscript people into our forces. I’m just asking you two to cooperate. Unfortunately, you don’t have the option of refusing.”

Hordeslayer and Rampart scowled.

Quite a few cultivators in the area were looking on and discussing the scene playing out.

“Look at the clothes those three are wearing. They’re obviously a bunch of greedy Acquisitioners!”

“Hmph! The Department of Acquisitions is full of jackals. They run amok in universe after universe under the guise of collecting funds for the war. They’re hated wherever they go!”

“What’s worse is that the envoy squadrons usually have dozens or even hundreds of cultivators in them. They’re all corrupt scumbags, but they’re also very united. Ordinary folk like us don’t dare provoke them.”

“That’s exactly what’s happening right here. Those three jackals took a liking to those two brothers’ swords. Except, the brothers won’t sell. And since they’re new ascendees, the Acquisitioners are going to conscript them.”

“If they get conscripted, they probably won’t be killed outright. But they won’t be able to keep their immortal swords.”

It was obvious from the chatter that the Department of Acquisitions had a horrible reputation, and that no one was willing to step in.

Hordeslayer and Rampart were very nervous. They had just arrived here, and hadn’t had time to connect with any fellow disciples who were also ascendees. And they knew that if they left the Nineshores Heaven, it would be like going from the river out into the sea.

In the Fifth Star Ring, fighting was permitted according to the law. If they weren’t strong enough to defend their immortal swords, then it would be a simple case of *the weak falling prey to the strong*. At the moment, it would be hard for them to feel more anxious.

Xu Qing could see that *the swords were drawn and the arrows were nocked*, and that conflict would break out any moment.... As he stood unnoticed in the crowd, he considered the situation and tried to decide whether or not to interfere. After all, those two swords were, at least in some way, his.

Before he could make a decision, a domineering beam of light appeared from off in the distance. Within the beam of light was a young man wearing a black robe, with flowing black hair. He had a cold facial expression, and pulsed with the aura of a Quasi-Immortal. Surrounding him were numerous chains of order. He immediately attracted a lot of attention.

He was Sir Star Ring. His purpose in coming was not to provide assistance. He had come to get his magical treasure, and just happened to be passing by.

As he neared, his domineering aura, which he made no effort to conceal, caused the eyes of Hordeslayer and Rampart to shine. Without any hesitation, they started calling out to him.

“Greetings, Eldest Brother!”

“Eldest Brother, we need your help!”

The use of the address “Eldest Brother” was forced but appropriate.

As the anxious Hordeslayer and Rampart bowed formally, Sir Star Ring stopped in place. He frowned. This matter had nothing to do with him. At a glance, he could tell what was happening,

and he had no intention of interfering. But before he could do anything, Hordeslayer and Rampart flew over and cowered behind him. If he left now, it would come across as him being scared.

Sir Star Ring felt a bit irritated, but his eyes remained cold as he looked at the three cultivators in hundred-pocket robes who were now rushing after Hordeslayer and Rampart. He suddenly surged with a Quasi-Immortal aura.

The three Acquisitioners stopped in place. The two who were Imperial Sovereign had serious looks on their faces, but the Quasi-Immortal's eyes were narrowed. They didn't advance any further.

Seeing that, Sir Star Ring looked away from them and flew off into the distance. Hordeslayer and Rampart breathed sighs of relief as they followed. The three of them soon disappeared in the distance.

Everyone else present looked on with glittering eyes.

As for the Quasi-Immortal Acquisitioner, he suddenly said, "He must be the 1st place ascende! I guess we underestimated this group. They have some really impressive people. Let's go figure out who that guy is!"

1. Quite a long time ago, I posted some pics of what the upgraded skewer looked like in the form of a golden vajra scepter. In case you'd like a refresher, [here are the pics](#). 📷

2. This is a very unique name, and once I saw it, I felt like my mind was being struck by 10,000,000 lightning bolts. And sure enough, the Chinese readers in the comments section reacted the same way. There were a *ton* of comments on this paragraph. Everyone seemed to agree that this person is likely Ke Jiusi from *[I Shall Seal the Heavens](#)*. The name is just too unusual and specific to be randomly used by the author. Ke Jiusi was in too many chapters to list them out, but I can tell you he first appeared by name in [chapter 567](#). That chapter also has the explanation of his name, which is very meaningful. If it's true, and this old man really is Ke Jiusi, and he was also a true monarch and Linshan's Second Elder Brother, well... I'm still trying to wrap my mind about all the implications. 📷

Chapter 1202: Seeing A God Again

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What Xu Qing saw on his way out of the Daoforge Universe was a little interlude and nothing more. Sir Star Ring showed up, and thus, Xu Qing didn't end up revealing himself. Hordeslayer, Rampart, and even Sir Star Ring himself, were merely passing travelers to him. At the very most, he might end up taking the two swords if the need arose one day.

However, the three evil cultivators Hordeslayer and Rampart had run into were of note to Xu Qing. Two were Imperial Sovereigns, and one was a Quasi-Immortal. It was obvious how greedy and domineering they were.

Xu Qing had never been under the illusion that everyone with a high cultivation base had some sort of transcendent personality. In the chiliocosm of worlds, there was no end to the cultivators that

existed. Powerful experts were as numerous as clouds in the sky, and it was only natural that they would have all sorts of personalities.

And of course, they would act differently and hold themselves to different standards. Some people were sinister, some were extraordinary. There were broad-minded people like Grand Emperor Swordsage, and of course, there would be greedy and evil people like those he had just seen.

It was the same even in the Quasi-Immortal level. People were people, and they all had different personalities. There were many Quasi-Immortals in the Fifth Star Ring, largely because of the different environment.

It wasn't like the Revered Ancient mainland, where life was tough and the resources were scarce. In Revered Ancient, Quasi-Immortals and even Imperial Sovereigns were *as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns*. The higher you climbed, the more mountains you encountered. The further you traveled, the more scenery you saw.

It was just how things worked. When all was said and done, personality was largely the result of one's experiences. There were some people who lived for thousands or tens of thousands of years, and who experienced all the joy and sorrow of life, that eventually became numb, blank, and returned to their primal state. Otherwise, it would be hard to escape the colorful reality of human nature.

Of course, in some cases, one couldn't just take things at face value. In the end, Xu Qing wasn't surprised at all to find some powerful experts, and even a Quasi-Immortal, who would try to rob others in public. But what he did find surprising was who those three people were.

Acquisitioners... for some war...?

Xu Qing was lost in thought as he left. What was especially noteworthy was the mention of war.

They acquire resources for war...? What war is the Fifth Star Ring fighting? Maybe with another star ring?

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. There were some things that you wouldn't be able to see clearly until you reached the proper vantage point and had a wide view. Up to this point, Xu Qing had not been aware of any war being fought by or in the Fifth Star Ring. However, listening to the conversations of the other cultivators had given him an idea of what was going on.

"I suppose things will be made clear in the Reception Universe."

With such thoughts in his mind, he crushed the immortal slip for the Heroic Immortal Tombs, and vanished in a teleportation.

The starry sky blurred.

The Heroic Immortal Tombs didn't just exist in the Nineshores Heaven. Similar things existed in all of the heavens beyond heaven. From ancient times until now, whenever immortals fell in battle, they would be buried somewhere. In some cases, their corpses were interred intact. In the vast

majority of cases, their remains were mangled. In some cases, the only thing left behind was a grave marker.

The Heroic Immortal Tombs were located in the Heroic Immortal Star Domain in the Immortal Eulogy Universe. It was isolated by unique barriers, and the only entrance was an immense ancient door made of bronze. Outside of the door was a black stone staircase of the most ancient construction.

Seated right in front of the door at the top of the staircase was an old man in a black robe. He was nothing special to look at, and his aura was imperceptible as he sat there motionless.

When Xu Qing materialized, he was on the stairs outside the door. He looked up at the huge door, and then at the old man, and his heart trembled. There was a strong feeling of death coming from the old man, as well as a sensation of lonely bleakness.

The sight caused his canon to ripple, as if it were being drawn to the old man. At the same time, a host of information filled him. He suddenly got the feeling that this old man shouldn't exist, and yet did exist. The feeling grew very strong before vanishing.

After hesitating for a moment, he bowed. Then he walked up the stairs and disappeared into the door.

After Xu Qing was gone, the old man opened his eyes. He lifted a flagon of alcohol and took a drink. Looking at the door, he hoarsely murmured, "Nobody has come for a while now. That's good. There have been few memorial services, but that just means not many people have died in the war recently. That's excellent.... All of you are long gone. Why did you leave me behind guarding your tombs here in the mortal world...?"

The old man's eyes seemed to fill with reminiscence.

Upon stepping through the door, the starry sky again blurred to Xu Qing, and when things became clear, he was looking at a host of galaxies. They were tombs!

In the Heroic Immortal Star Domain, each galaxy was a tomb. Each one had a stone stele above it inscribed with writing. In some cases, the writing told the life story of the individual interred therein. In other cases, there were only a few words written down. In the case of the latter, it was usually an epitaph explaining the ideals of the buried individual.

There weren't many galaxies; there were only a bit more than a hundred. That said, this was a place of buried immortals. In other words, from ancient times until now, there had only been a bit more than a hundred Lower Immortals who had perished in battle in the Nineshores Heaven.

Xu Qing knew that history went back for countless years. But to walk through that huge door and see all these galaxies, and the stone steles above them, left him feeling deeply shaken.

He could just barely make out a sound like a sigh, echoing through the starry sky. It was like the battle cry of a valiant warrior, drifting amongst the galaxies. It was like a blessing from the aeons, lingering among death.

They had defended their home. They had defended their people. They had fought heroically for humankind and their star ring! They risked life and limb with no thought given to their personal interest.

Even though Xu Qing wasn't native to the Fifth Star Ring, he felt his mood sinking. He couldn't help but feel deep reverence for the heroism these people had shown. The stone steles he was looking at became inscribed on his heart.

After a moment passed, he began to pass amidst the swirling stars and look at the stone steles.

"I practiced cultivation for 9,000 years. I hailed from Grand Immortal Mountain, practiced cloud cultivation, and when I became an immortal, I was given the title immortal monarch. During my life, I cut down seven True Gods. I couldn't be prouder."

"I was a rogue cultivator who refused to give up. I eventually rose to the level of immortal, and in the star ring war, I participated in the God Lord Siege. Though I died, I had no regrets."

"Spirits become gods. Beasts become specters. Ghosts become freaks. In that case... what is an immortal? When a human becomes a mountain, all to defend humankind, well that person is an immortal!"[1]

"I lived for too long and began to lose my humanity. I could not kill any True Gods, but I wanted to accomplish something, so I went hunting. I planned to kill as many Altar God chosen as I could, and sever the lineage of whatever gods I found!"

"Later generations of cultivators shall not come to offer respects empty-handed. I require the blood of gods! Offer some to me!"

As Xu Qing went from stone stele to stone stele and read the script, he felt like he heard people laughing heartily. In other cases he heard weeping or even insane babble. It was like a great river of history flowing past him.

The stone steles and their inscriptions linked past, present, and future into an indelible marking. Anyone who came here would be moved.

It was pure poetry. *The green mountains are full of loyal bones, the annals of history record the mighty deeds. The spirit of the heroes fills heaven and earth. The illustrious names will be spoken of throughout the ages.*[2]

Eventually, Xu Qing settled down cross-legged in the middle of the starry sky and looked around at all the stone steles.

"Seniors, I am Xu Qing. I'm not a native of the Fifth Star Ring. But I promise I won't let you down. Is there any of you willing to give me some of your inheritance? I promise to never give up on my ideals."

The response was silence. Nothing stirred.

Xu Qing settled his energy, cleared his mind, and began to seek enlightenment. Nothing happened. He frowned, and after some thought, decided not to seek enlightenment. Instead, he let his thoughts expand. Gradually, he began to recall the past.

His youth had been a struggle. After growing up, he faced endless slaughter. He faced the evil of the gods. He encountered the wrath of the gods. But when the empress reached godly ascension, he gained an understanding amidst the confusion.

And that was when he realized what the real question was. It was as if a voice was asking him.

What are the gods?

In the past, Xu Qing had been able to answer succinctly. But now that he thought about the question again, and considered Empress Summer Departure, he suddenly spoke in a calm voice.

“The vast majority of gods are sons of bitches like they’ve always been! But there are some of them who are still human!”

The stone steles began vibrating.

1. This entire passage is full of wordplay that doesn’t translate perfectly. He basically takes two-character descriptions of things like gods, ghosts, etc. and breaks them up into their component characters to describe them. The point of the last part is something Er Gen readers have seen before in other novels. The character for immortal 仙 has the character for person/man/human on the left 人 and the character for mountain on the right 山. In this particular passage, the 人 character is associated specifically with the word for humankind or humans as a species. ㊦

2. As far as I can tell, this poem is an invention of the author, although it contains some common poetic phrases. ㊦

Chapter 1203: More Human than Many Humans

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It wasn’t just the stone steles that reacted. The more than one hundred galaxies began to shine with dazzling light. Apparently, the sentiment Xu Qing had just expressed was not considered enlightened in the Fifth Star Ring. Streams of divine will emerged from the stone steles, along with voices.

“Preposterous!”

“Gods are just gods!”

“How could they be human?”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re talking about preheaven gods, or all of those postheaven gods. Anyone who chooses the path of the gods has forfeited their humanity!”

“What you have seen and felt is simply a part of the process of god cultivation. The gods are more than willing to fool you to make progress easy!”

“You are not the first to be scammed by the gods, nor will you be the last.”

“Young one, take some advice... don’t let them fool you!”

“From ancient times until now, all who befriend the gods end up regretting that decision. There are no exceptions!”

“Now, take back what you said, and I’ll give you some of my inheritance!”

The streams of divine will echoed in the star domain, entering Xu Qing’s heart and mind.

Xu Qing didn’t say anything. His eyes contained reminiscence. After some more thought, he made his decision.

The remains of the immortals here had no souls. And what he was hearing wasn’t actual divine will. It was more like the lingering obsession of the immortals who had died in battle. They had fought gods their entire lives. From birth to death, they had stood in opposition to them. And thus, from their point of view, gods... really were all the same.

Xu Qing used to think in the same way. But then he had witnessed Empress Summer Departure reach godly ascension. And that had changed his worldview!

“Seniors,” he said calmly, “where I come from, there are things called holy lands. When the gods wreaked havoc, my people, even the children, were infected by the mutagen of the gods.... And you know what the humans in the holy lands did? They didn’t care about us. They left. They abandoned humankind.

“They were so high and mighty that it didn’t bother them at all that other humans were dying. And then their descendants came back and continued to exploit and manipulate things from behind the scenes.

“Over time, humans fell into decline. One emperor after another shed blood, sweat, and tears to keep humans safe. And then there was Grand Emperor Swordsage, who sacrificed everything to defend us.

“Despite all that, humans struggled to survive, much less rise to prominence. Countless humans... became food for nonhumans. They suffered in bitterness. I have seen things worse than even cannibalism. Our species struggled in the darkness, gradually losing touch with our humanity, until we were on the verge of being wiped out.

“But then someone came along within that tribulation and destruction. She was the empress of the humans back at my home! Unfortunately, her ideals were vanquished, and in the end, she had only two choices. Either let humans be wiped out. Or become a god!

“In the end, she chose godly ascension! Was it rebellious? Heretical? Did it besmirch the ancestral edicts? Maybe. But she chose to shoulder the responsibility!

“She said that she didn’t care if the holy lands were populated by humans. She was going to do everything to make sure that the joss flame of humankind still burned in Revered Ancient! She said that humans deserved to be happy. And if heaven and earth wouldn’t do it for humankind, she would. So she would bring peace to humans in Revered Ancient!

“She said that she didn’t care about living forever. She just wanted humans to have a chance to flourish, and once again be glorious in Revered Ancient. She said that she wasn’t becoming a god for her own sake. And she brought all of the old emperors with her to also reach godly ascension.

“She said that the five old emperors would be zombie gods. They would lack thinking faculties, but they would have godly might. And then she drew on the destiny aura of humankind to defend the last bastion of humankind, and strike fear into the hearts of the nonhumans.

“She said she would become a human god, to safeguard humankind and bring peace for generations to come! And lastly, she said that she knew her actions would result in karma that would bring catastrophe and tribulation. But she... would bear sole responsibility!”[1]

Xu Qing’s words echoed out into the star domain. They contained all of his reminiscence, and all of the emotions he felt. He used his words and voice to paint a detailed picture of the heroic spirits, describing how and why Empress Summer Departure became a god. In the end, he looked around at the stone steles.

“As far as I’m concerned, a god like that is more human than many humans! I also know that not all gods are like that. But humans can also be good and evil. It’s the same with gods. It doesn’t matter how many there are that are good. They do exist. And that’s why I’m not going to change my mind!”

Ducking his head, Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed.

Afterward, the galaxies in the star domain all seemed to emanate pure coldness. The stone steles didn’t vibrate, and the words on them disappeared from view. As for inheritances and legacies... not one came out! They did not agree with Xu Qing’s opinion, and thus... they had nothing further to say.

Xu Qing quietly turned. He was not disappointed at the results. One needed to walk one’s own path in life. And the scenery one would inevitably encounter on the way would mold one’s way of thinking. It would mold one’s view of life, one’s understanding of the world, and one’s perception of things living and inanimate. All of that would converge into a unique way of thinking. That was what it meant to be human.

Going forward, Xu Qing would still kill gods. He would still rob them and treat them cold-bloodedly. But there were some gods, such as the empress, whom he would fight for! Because he knew that, in her heart, the empress was not a god. She was human. And she was more human than many humans.

It was with such thoughts, and without any regrets, that Xu Qing calmly walked toward the door. He was ready to go back to the Inksun Universe and wait until the time came for his formal reception into the Nineshores Heaven.

But as he neared the door, and just before he stepped through it... the door trembled loudly. A somber, killing aura began to pulse from it.

Xu Qing stopped in place, his gaze hardening. Someone was coming through the door. In fact, it wasn't a single person. It was over a hundred.

They all wore unique suits of armor that were stained with blood, both the blood of gods, and their own blood. They looked exhausted, and deep down inside, full of sorrow. They approached silently. Amidst this procession were a dozen or so cultivators carrying... a huge coffin. Draped atop the coffin was the flag of the Fifth Star Ring.

Xu Qing quietly stepped to the side to make way.

None of the cultivators paid any attention to him. They sorrowfully made their way off into the distance.

As Xu Qing watched them pass, he could sense sorrow, but more than that, desolation. That desolation didn't come when cultivators fought and killed each other. It was something Xu Qing was familiar with. It was the powerful desolation that built up on soldiers when they spent time on the field of battle! These people had come from the war!

As for who rested in the coffin... Xu Qing could guess who it was. It definitely contained the remains of an immortal. An immortal had died on the field of battle and was being sent here for a hero's burial!

Xu Qing felt more somber than ever.

Off in the stance, the procession stopped. They all bowed as the coffin was sent forth. And they began to sing an ancient song of mourning. The lyrics seemed to tug at the soul. It was a eulogy. And as the lyrics drifted out, stars appeared, like sand or dirt that covered the coffin. Soon it wasn't visible.

The sand of stars then turned into a galaxy, and a stone stele appeared above it.

The cultivators stood, and the leader amongst them saluted.

"Rest in peace, Immortal Monarch!"

After the soldier passionately bade farewell, they turned somberly and left.

After all of this happened, Xu Qing didn't just leave. He went over to the galaxy where the heroic immortal had just been laid to rest. After bowing, he looked at the inscription on the stone stele.

"Life is like a dream, and time is like a song. The starry sea eventually comes to an end. I am Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade. I eradicated a True God and drank his blood. I wiped out his mark like the turtledove occupying the magpie's nest. Let's see what happens in the future.... Will it be he who

returns, or me? If hē returns, my corpse will emanate golden light, and later generations can erase the True God from existence. But if it's me... then silver light will shine, and I will slay gods again!"

This immortal seemed different than the others. He seemed to be attempting to use the natural laws governing gods to effectuate his own return!

Eyes shining, Xu Qing was about to investigate further when he heard a sigh from behind him. Looking over his shoulder, he saw a stooped old man, who was the guard from outside.

The old man approached and stood in front of the stele.

"We've reached the next stage of the war. There are going to be a lot more heroic spirits here soon. According to what I heard, this one had been searching his whole life for an explanation about why True Gods are undying."

The old man sighed.

Xu Qing backed up a few steps, then bowed thoughtfully. "Senior, what's the war about?"

The old man turned and looked at him deeply. "When the rain falls, it falls on everyone equally. But if one party doesn't feel the rain, it indicates that someone has gone out of their way to prevent the rain from falling on them. Immortal Lord Deepgloom is that person. He is stationed on the border, preventing the Fourth Star Ring from invading. It's a star ring war, but also, a war between gods and immortals."

The old man looked off into the distance. He lifted his hand, within which was a bell that lacked a bell clapper. It seemed ordinary in nature, but its mere presence caused colorful ripples to spread through the starry sky.

"I had a good friend who died in the war, killed by a God Lord. Though he perished, and this treasure of his was damaged, it survived in this state. It contains the might of a God Lord. He wanted me to find someone connected to him by destiny, and pass it on to them."

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he looked at the old man.

The old man waved his hand, and the bell floated over to Xu Qing. He turned and started walking off.

"I heard what you said, and I greatly admire that empress you mentioned. We live in a complicated world. And human nature is complicated. Don't care too much what others think.

"I'm confident that if these old friends of mine were actually alive, they would understand. Unfortunately, all that's left behind here are remnants of their obsession, and their will to defy the gods. An outstanding person like you shouldn't leave here empty-handed. Take that as a gift from me."

The old man disappeared, leaving behind a few words. "I've met gods like those you described... those who are more human than many humans."

1. Xu Qing is summarizing the empress' words from chapters 951 and 952. In some cases, the wording is very similar, in others not. So it comes across more like him telling his version, rather than reciting exactly what she said. ❸

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1204: Prohibition!

Upon leaving the Heroic Immortal Tombs, Xu Qing listened to his heart and gazed in the direction he imagined was where the Ninth Star Ring lay. It was a haze of stars, and truth be told, he had no idea if the Ninth Star Ring really was in that direction. He had a clone in Revered Ancient, and he could sense it, but it was so incredibly far away that it was little more than a vague feeling.

But though he couldn't see anything, or even be certain that he was looking toward the Ninth Star Ring, he knew why he felt inclined to do this. He missed home. He missed the Revered Ancient mainland, he missed the people there, and the things there, and everything....

The day is going to come when Revered Ancient is like here in the Fifth Star Ring. The mutagen will be gone, and immortal energy will fill the place. The gods there will change their dao, and abandon the cultivation of gods!

Eventually, he looked away. It wasn't time to leave yet. He still needed to get stronger. He had not yet reached the point where he could go back to keep anyone safe, or change anything.

"Soon..."

Collecting his thoughts, he took out his Inksun Universe immortal slip and squeezed it. Everything blurred, and ripples spread out as the teleportation began.

Majestic spatial power was required to perform inter-universe teleportations. It also required the support of high-level canon. Neither could be lacking. When both qualifications were met, cultivators in the Nineshores Heaven could go through with such teleportations.

Given the current level of Xu Qing's cultivation base, he did have a good understanding of space, but his view was limited. He had no way to see into the deeper levels.

There are mysteries at play here.... I suppose it has something to do with Immortal Lord Nineshores.

Immortal Lords were currently unfathomable to him. As a result, he could only vaguely make out bits and pieces of the whole. His vision blurred, and the void around him changed. The starry sky... slowly transformed.

When everything went back to normal, Xu Qing was no longer at the Heroic Immortal Tombs. Instead, he was in his immortal hall on the asteroid in the Inksun Universe!

When he opened the doors of the hall, the Inksun Universe stretched out in front of him. He took a step forward and vanished. When he reappeared, he was outside the Inkland black hole.

He saw Starfire lying there on a divan, enjoying life and surrounded by a host of dancing, chatting maidens.

Upon noticing Xu Qing, shē first looked surprised, and then shē pouted slightly. “Back so soon, you devil? Why didn’t you let me know you were coming? I could have gotten ready. What is this supposed to be, a surprise inspection? Whatever. I’m not going to argue with you. Well, did things go smoothly?”

Xu Qing had long since become immune to Starfire’s flirting. “Very smoothly. You can carry on.”

Xu Qing sat down cross-legged. Ignoring Starfire, he took out the gift the old man had given him and sent his divine will inside to study it.

Seeing that Xu Qing was ignoring hēr caused Starfire to chuckle softly. Shē wasn’t offended. He was used to dealing with hēr, and shē had long since become used to dealing with him. Shē loved flirting, and shē loved how he refused her.

Within that relationship, shē had managed to latch on to some of hēr human nature that had long since begun to disappear. It was happiness. And it reminded hēr that shē was alive. Thus, shē chose to ignore hēr godly nature and immerse hērsel in human nature. As the beautiful maidens around hēr danced, shē glanced at Xu Qing sitting there. Shē smiled. Shē was surrounded by beautiful women. And shē was sitting next to a beautiful man.

This is the beautiful scenery I’ve built for myself!

Shē was fully aware that shē was different from preheaven gods. Hēr human nature had not fully disappeared. Nor did shē want it to. And flirting with Xu Qing kept hēr human nature active.

This is great.

Starfire ate an immortal fruit, and hēr eyes narrowed into crescent moons of happiness and comfort.

Time passed. Months went by.

Starfire felt wonderful that entire time.

As for Xu Qing, he was immersed in studying the bell. It was made from a fantastic material. Despite performing many experiments, Xu Qing had been unable to leave even a scratch on it. Not even his canon of parallelism would work on it. It could not be sent to other space-times! There was some sort of force surrounding it that prevented it from leaving its own space-time!

I suppose it’s what that guard said.... It’s a scrap of God Lord might! The owner of this item was killed by a God Lord. But the item itself was not destroyed. It was taken away... and not seized by the God Lord. Unless the God Lord did that on purpose for some reason, it indicates this thing is extraordinary!

That said, the bell has no clapper. But at least I learned a few things during the past couple months!

His eyes glittered brightly.

Though he had not been able to leave even a tiny mark on the bell using external force, by means of his immortal embryo, he was able to make a connection to the bell by nourishing it. At first, the connection wasn't very strong. The bell was masterless, and though it didn't exactly reject the nourishment he offered, it also didn't cooperate. It wasn't like parched dirt thirsty for even a drop of dew.

But Xu Qing was cautious in the way he treated it. As he slowly provided nourishment, he gradually reached the point of being able to exercise some ownership over it. And when that happened, he seized that control and didn't let go. If he made the slightest mistake, the connection would sever.

It seems to me that the key to unleashing the power of this treasure is going to be sound!

Xu Qing waved his hand, and the iron skewer he had acquired in the Daoforge Universe flew out, bright and glittering. Xu Qing had a good idea of how to deal with the bell.

After reviewing his thought process to make sure he hadn't forgotten anything important, his face flashed with determination, and he sent the iron skewer to hit the side of the ball. The moment they made contact, the bell vibrated. The crisp but ethereal sound of a chiming bell echoed out.

The cup of fine wine that Starfire had lifted to her lips suddenly collapsed into nothing. So did all the dancing maidens around

Starfire leaped up, only to stagger backward, her body blurring, revealing her god altar. Shocked, she said, "What is this thing?!"

Starfire wasn't the only one to react in that way. The entire starry sky shook. The bell echoed out infinitely, reaching into the minds of all living beings, and echoed into all objects. The entire Inksun Universe filled with the sound of the bell, and nothing else. Within that silence, all illusions ceased to exist. All magical techniques collapsed, and all divine abilities shattered.

Xu Qing was visibly moved. Now he knew what this bell treasure could do!

It prohibits all magical arts! And given what just happened to Starfire, it seems gods fall under the umbrella of the prohibition as well!

Unfortunately, once the sound of the bell vanished, everything went back to normal. The dancing and bustle around Starfire came back. The immortal fruit that had vanished once again appeared in her hand. At the moment, she wasn't interested in eating it.

Looking seriously at Xu Qing, she said, "That treasure... can prohibit gods!"

Xu Qing nodded. "It's actually a deadly weapon!"

Face filling with concentration, he continued studying the bell.

After a long moment passed, Starfire sighed. Here in the Fifth Star Ring, she had really come to understand what it meant to be terrified.

Once he finishes his studies here, the kid's gonna go back to Revered Ancient and shake things up among the gods there. Well, who cares? What's that got to do with me?

Starfire went back to enjoying herself. Time continued to pass.

Xu Qing spent a few months in study, and then he focused on cultivation. He stabilized his immortal embryo, and began laying the foundation for his next breakthrough. He was currently very stable in his existing state.

Before long, the one-year deadline approached. The day of reception was nearing.

When the day came, a dignified voice drifted out from his universe's jade slip.

“All ascendees have twenty-four universe-hours to check in at the Reception Universe and receive your new orders. You will be given permanent assignments in the Nineshores Heaven, and will begin to truly assimilate here.”

The voice didn't just echo in Xu Qing's mind. It reached all of the ascendees. It didn't matter what universe they were in or what they were doing. All of them looked up with expressions that were both serious and full of anticipation.

Xu Qing opened his eyes and stood. “The time is here. Finally.”

Starfire retracted all her magical arts, strolled over to Xu Qing, and stretched. “I've been idle for too long. Time for excitement. I've really been looking forward to this!”

Chapter 1205: Reception Universe

Chapter 1205: Reception Universe

All of the new ascendees were given universes after entering the heaven beyond heaven, as well as a year to rest. That year was intended to give the new ascendees time to get familiar with the heaven beyond heaven, as well as their personal universe. They also had time to get their rewards.

When the rest period ended, they were then summoned to the Nineshores Heavens' Reception Universe. There, they would be told about the assignment that had been arranged for them.

By the time Xu Qing got the message, he was already back at the Inksun Universe's immortal hall. Without any hesitation, he stepped onto the immortal hall's teleportation portal and began the teleportation. Starfire was now a special symbol sealed onto his arm.

The immortal hall trembled as terrifying teleportation fluctuations rolled out through it. This teleportation took much longer than any Xu Qing had experienced before. Clearly, the Reception Universe was a great distance away from the Inksun Universe. He wasn't sure exactly how long it took, as the process was like a mottled dream. Within that dream, everything was blurry and colorful.

Eventually, the distorted glow faded away, and he could see clearly again. Stretching out in front of him was a vast golden river. The river was made of innumerable star domains, countless star whirlpools, and uncountable planets.

The planets all emanated a unique golden light. They didn't move. Rather, starlight flowed around them, which made it seem like they were in motion. It was Xu Qing's first time seeing a golden river of stars like this.

This place was the Reception Universe!

It was also one of the seventy-two centers of government in the Nineshores Heaven, which were second only to the immortal palace in terms of power and authority. It controlled general operations in the Nineshores Heaven, and during this epoch, it was the headquarters that oversaw the reception of visitors from other heavens beyond heaven.

It didn't just receive new ascendees. It provided direction to the minor worlds under the Fifth Star Ring, as well as the nonhumans in all the star ring's various universes. It was like a military command center, and at the same time, a personnel coordination department. It went without saying that a lot of Lower Immortals were stationed there.

As Xu Qing looked in astonishment at the majestic golden river, a stream of starlight emerged from it and shot toward him. The golden light was insignificant in comparison to the river as a whole, but as they neared, they seemed similarly majestic. The stream swirled around him and began to draw him toward the river.

The golden starlight that had come out to receive Xu Qing originated in... a location in the lower reaches of the golden river, to a specific planet in a star whirlpool in a star domain.

Streams of starlight were drawing people in from all over the Reception Universe. It happened to all cultivators who had teleported there. And depending on why they had come here, the light would lead them to different places.

As the light tugged at Xu Qing, he shot toward the planet. He was moving so fast that he felt like he was being stretched out like a shooting star.

In the shortest of moments, he was pulled from outside the star river to its interior. He entered a group of planets, and eventually neared the one that he was being pulled toward. His view rapidly transformed. Everything started rumbling.

And then he dropped onto a huge sea on the planet. The sea was black and viscous, almost like gelatin. And he had been tugged toward it at such incredible speed that he hit it with a great amount of force.

Given the level of Xu Qing's cultivation base, he could deal with the force. However, a lower-level cultivator who experienced that impact would lose their soul and find their fleshly body crumbling. Of course, though his cultivation base was sufficient to avoid injury, when he hit the surface of the sea, he slammed down into it, all while creating a huge crater above him.

A short time later, he struggled out of the crater and looked around. The sky was golden, and the black, viscous sea around him stretched on forever.

Up in midair were other beams of golden starlight bringing other cultivators. Booms rang out on the surface of the sea. Soon, there were dozens of craters. Some of the cultivators slammed into the

sea and then emerged looking bedraggled. A few even had to wipe blood from their mouths, and had looks of lingering fear in their eyes.

Xu Qing spotted Zhou Zhengli in the crowd, as well as Sir Vilespirit, Li Mengtu, Yuanshan Su, Hordeslayer, and Rampart.

Sir Star Ring was also there, who looked to be in much better shape than the other fellow ascendees. Almost as soon as Xu Qing looked at him, he turned and looked back. Their gazes met. Both remained expressionless.

Time passed as more people arrived. Some people stuck to themselves, while others gathered in groups. People had obviously begun to form into factions over the past year, based on their experiences.

Sir Vilespirit was still operating alone. Yuanshan Su had originally planned to stick to herself, but had been unable to avoid some of the other female ascendees, who had chosen to ally themselves with her. Hordeslayer and Rampart were sticking close to Sir Star Ring, as were a group of a few dozen other cultivators.

The biggest group had gathered around Xu Qing. He had taken 1st place, so many people, upon spotting him, came over and cheerfully offered greetings. Zhou Zhengli and Li Mengtu were among them.

The former was acting like usual. Smiling, he offered an obsequious bow.

The latter had a serious look on his face. Keeping his voice low, he said, “Brother Xu, it looks like eleven from our group have gone missing. I just counted, and there are only eighty-nine people present!”

Xu Qing nodded.

Zhou Zhengli chuckled. “Dead, I suppose. We were given a year to rest and acclimate. But our star ring has always focused on raising venomous bugs in a jar. And thus....”

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Zhou Zhengli looked at Xu Qing. The truth was that Zhou Zhengli had learned a lot about this heaven beyond heaven in the past year, and was on guard about what was to come. More than ever, he felt that it was important to maintain a good relationship with Xu Qing.

Therefore, he opened his mouth and said, “Things aren’t just brutal in the four great planetary systems. This entire heaven beyond heaven is very intense. To the higher-ups, only people who are truly important are those who have, at the very least, Quasi-Immortal battle prowess. In other words, you, Young Lord, as well as Sir Star Ring and Yuanshan Su. But that’s it. Just you three. Imperial Sovereigns... well, the higher-ups don’t care much about them. So, unless you have very good connections, advancing to a better position requires having a lot of resources and allying with a Quasi-Immortal.”

Zhou Zhengli didn’t bother to lower his voice when he said these things. The other ascendees in the area all heard him very clearly. All of them suddenly seemed very thoughtful.

Xu Qing looked at Zhou Zhengli. Zhou Zhengli smiled back obsequiously.

Xu Qing looked away and thought back to what Zhou Zhengli had said to him the previous year.

“My guess... is that a year from now, the whole lot of us are going to get the same assignment...”

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. Time passed as everyone waited. There were no other cultivators atop the vast sea. No one had come to receive them.

But these were all extraordinary individuals, so none of them were going to get impatient being asked to wait. One by one, many of them sat down cross-legged.

Another two hours went by.

Eventually, a loud wind picked up, whereupon Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring both seemed to sense something. They looked up into the sky. Yuanshan Su was the third to notice what was happening. Everyone else, noticing the reaction of those three, did the same.

The sky was rippling, and golden light had appeared. It was the same type of light that had drawn them to this planet. There were a total of seventy or eighty streams of it, with a handful of them in front of the others. Heaven and earth began to tremble.

Only some of the cultivators in the group slammed into the surface of the sea and made craters. Most of them alighted stably on the water. They had been to this place before, and had the skill to maintain control.

All of these people were dressed the same way. They had on the same clothes that Xu Qing had first seen in the Daoforge Universe.... Each wore a gray hundred-pocket robe! Those robes were the signature clothing of the notorious Acquisitioners!

There were eight who were Quasi-Immortals, and they were obviously the leaders.

After they landed, Xu Qing’s expression didn’t change, but many of the other ascendees suddenly looked very serious.

The new arrivals looked at the gathered ascendees, particularly Xu Qing and the people surrounding him. Their gazes were like those of jackals. They seemed indifferent to life and full of unfeeling callousness. None of them said a word. Then their leaders shot off into the distance, followed by the others.

“Young Lord,” Zhou Zhengli said in a low voice, “they’re Acquisitioners.... Presumably, we’ve been drawn to this planet because of them.”

Xu Qing nodded.

However, things weren’t over yet. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, more golden light appeared in the sky. Again, dozens of cultivators arrived in hundred-pocket robes. After landing on the sea, they raced away.

In that manner, time passed. Group after group of Acquisitioners arrived. None of them paid any attention to Xu Qing and the other ascendees.

After observing them, Xu Qing realized that they all had cold, greedy auras. And the higher their cultivation base, the more obvious it was that they had corpse energy and death auras. The reek of gore was especially prominent. Clearly, these people had long-term contact with corpses and death.

Eventually, when the golden light in the sky started to dim, another several dozen beams of light shot down and resolved into figures in front of them.

The one in the lead had an extremely terrifying aura. He was an old man who resembled a vulture, and his immortal embryo was at the great circle. He was just a step away from being an immortal! Upon landing, he turned to lead everyone away. But then....

A middle-aged cultivator in the group behind the old man stopped in place. Turning, he looked at Xu Qing and the others. And then... he looked behind Sir Star Ring, Hordeslayer, and Rampart. He smiled.

Xu Qing had seen this person before. He was the very same Quasi-Immortal cultivator who had caused trouble for Hordeslayer and Rampart back in the Daoforge Universe! His gaze came to rest on Sir Star Ring. Meanwhile, some of his fellows had stopped in place just like him.

Hurrying over to the terrifying old man, the middle-aged cultivator said a few words. The old man frowned, but eventually nodded. With the old man's approval, the middle-aged Quasi-Immortal looked at Sir Star Ring and smiled.

"I've lost a few members of my squadron in the war. I need to make up some numbers, so as of this moment, you three are conscripted!"

Chapter 1206: Unexpected Arrival

Chapter 1206: Unexpected Arrival

Hordeslayer and Rampart were visibly taken aback!

Sir Star Ring frowned. Eyes cold, he looked at the people approaching and growled, "Screw off!"

His words were like an icy wind, filled with killing intent. That was just how Sir Star Ring acted. Though Xu Qing had killed him, he had been born again, and his personality hadn't changed. He was arrogant and ice-cold down to his soul. It didn't matter if he was facing a Quasi-Immortal just like himself, who had a lot of friends with him, and even a peak Quasi-Immortal backing him up. He cultivated order, and would rather break than bend!

The middle-aged cultivator laughed. "You've got quite a temper."

Eyes flashing, he turned to his leader and bowed. The old man frowned, but yet again nodded.

The middle-aged cultivator's aura flared. He seemed to be borrowing outside power! He waved his hand, then pushed down, and ripples flowed out over the surface of the black sea.

Astonishingly, a host of flying black insects emerged. They were extremely vicious and ugly. What was more, they were not corporeal. In the shortest of moments, there were so many of them they were impossible to count. After rising up from the black sea, they charged toward Sir Star Ring.

Sir Star Ring's eyes flashed coldly as a host of chains materialized around him. Clanking sounds could be heard as they swirled into a vortex. The might of order could suppress all. The dao of balance could eradicate anything. Hordeslayer and Rampart cooperated smoothly, as both of them unleashed sword energy that bolstered Sir Star Ring.

In the face of their divine abilities, the black insects began to collapse en masse. Sir Star Ring's vortex of order chains was whipping up into a tempest. From a distance, it looked as if the black insects would be routed in one move.

However, the collapsing insects didn't completely disappear. Instead, the resulting black ash and dust became a cloud that spread out rapidly. At the same time, the middle-aged cultivator performed an incantation gesture and pointed out. The black cloud swept around him, surrounding him in layer after layer, even covering his face. It was almost like it was molding him a new body.

In the blink of an eye, the middle-aged cultivator's face disappeared, to be replaced by a featureless mask. Moments later, the face blurred, and a new set of facial features became visible. They were different from before! They were the facial features of Sir Star Ring!

His facial expression, aura, and soul now seemed to be exactly the same as Sir Star Ring! Next, black smoke converged on either side of his head, where it formed two additional heads. They looked like Hordeslayer and Rampart.

The other ascendees' hearts sank.

Next, the middle-aged cultivator in his terrifying three-headed giant form looked at Sir Star Ring and the others and laughed loudly. Then he simply ignored them and walked back to his companions. His companions didn't seem to find this unusual at all, as if it happened all the time. And their leader, without so much as a backward glance, started to walk away. The entire group was clearly going to leave.

But then, a very strange event unfolded. The departure of the middle-aged cultivator seemed to do something to Sir Star Ring, Hordeslayer, and Rampart. The three of them... started trudging forward as if they had lost control of their own bodies.

Hordeslayer and Rampart had completely blank looks on their faces, as if their souls had been extracted. Though Sir Star Ring continued forward, his eyes shone with an aggressive light, and creaking sounds echoed out with every step he took. The control exerted over him was clearly crumbling.

The middle-aged cultivator made an exclamation of surprise. Even the old man looked over his shoulder at Sir Star Ring.

"Impressive," the old man said. "Go get him."

Three members of the squadron walked out and flew toward Sir Star Ring.

Zhou Zhengli looked on thoughtfully, all while Sir Vilespirit licked his lips. Yuanshan Su frowned. The other ascendees said nothing, but some seemed to be bristling aggressively. These were cultivators who had risen through slaughter to become ascendees, so they were a proud lot. Even though they weren't necessarily friends with these people... it didn't sit right with them to see their fellows being treated like this and not interfere.

Unfortunately, these Acquisitioners were clearly stronger than them, having several Quasi-Immortals and the old man who was stronger than anyone else. There was a big disparity between the two groups. So though they were agitated, no one dared to step forward.

This didn't sit right with Xu Qing either. Those two swords belonged to him. As for Sir Star Ring....

After a bit of thought, Xu Qing came to the conclusion that something fishy was going on. If this were happening elsewhere, it might make sense. But this was the Reception Universe. The new ascendees were supposed to be getting their permanent assignments. For them to be conscripted by the Department of Acquisitions at this moment seemed to indicate that the so-called 'reception' they were being given was nothing more than a joke.

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Something out of the ordinary is going on!

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed, and he casually stepped forward. As he did, his aura erupted. The canon of space-time filled heaven and earth, and a bell flew out from his forehead. The bell chimed. The sound echoed out ethereally, filling the hearts and minds of everyone present.

All faces reacted with shock. That included all of Xu Qing's fellow ascendees and the members of the Acquisitioner squadron. The bell entered their ears like thunder, shaking them inside and out. Their cultivation bases went still, and all of their magical techniques... stopped working! Some people even fell out of midair and crashed onto the ground.

The three cultivators who had been flying toward Sir Star Ring shivered, and their eyes filled with shock as they realized they couldn't advance any further.

The brothers Hordeslayer and Rampart also shivered. But when the bell chimed, they suddenly felt very clear-headed. Sir Star Ring, whose head had already been starting to clear, completely woke up! Killing intent blazed in his eyes.

But the person affected the most was the middle-aged cultivator. His three heads all exploded, and the fleshly body of black ash collapsed. Black smoke poured out in all directions as his true body was revealed. His pupils were constricted as he looked in Xu Qing's direction. He looked very serious, as if he was facing an arch-nemesis. At the same time, he was filled with a sensation of having barely escaped a big catastrophe.

And that was because, at some point in the past few moments, an iron skewer had come to appear right in front of him! The skewer was incredibly sharp and emanated a cold aura that clamped down on the middle-aged cultivator's soul. He really had no idea when that skewer had come to be

in front of him, but he knew that he had somehow barely avoided having it stabbed into his forehead.

In fact, there were two fingers holding onto the skewer and preventing it from hurting him. The person holding the iron skewer was his leader, the old man who was indescribably close to the peak of Quasi-Immortal!

The old man turned and looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing did nothing to avoid his gaze. Voice cool, he said, “Those are my swords. And my people.”

The old man looked deeply at him for a moment. Then he looked up into the sky, clasped hands, and bowed. “Arch-Immortal, my squadron has already finished the extra mission you assigned us. May we leave?”

Astonished, everyone looked up into the sky. Xu Qing did as well.

Ripples spread out in the previously calm dome of heaven, as the previously dim sky suddenly started to fill with color. It was a dazzling assortment of colors that gathered together into a patch of absolute brilliance. The outline of a figure appeared, walking through the brilliance.

He was an unprepossessing old man. He wore rough, hemp garments that made him look like a fisherman. And in one hand he held a roughly-carved walking stick. The walking stick was covered with cracks, much like the wrinkles on his face.

The moment he appeared, the old man who was nearly at the peak of Quasi-Immortal bowed his head. All of the members of his squadron followed his lead.

The moment Li Mengtu saw the new arrival, his expression flickered dramatically. His eyes went wide with disbelief, and he exclaimed, “Master!”

It was hard to tell how sincere he was in his excitement.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, was shaken to the core. There was something very familiar about this old man. It was his canon that Xu Qing had ultimately abandoned. He was Li Mengtu’s master, and he was the immortal from the Dao Immortal Sect in the western planetary system!

Poison Monarch!

Xu Qing’s guard immediately went up. He knew full well that Poison Monarch was not a virtuous person. He had provided his canon, not out of good intentions, but because that canon contained karma that he could lend out and take back.

If Xu Qing had not gained enlightenment of his space-time canon, then the other canon would have caused him immeasurable harm. It was a dao that could be given and taken. That was why he had ultimately chosen to abandon it.

Right now, Xu Qing couldn’t fathom why this person... would appear right here and now.

What was more... he didn't just serve as Poison Monarch. He wasn't just a heavenly inspector in the Dao Immortal Sect. He also had another post!

Looking around at everyone, Poison Monarch spoke in a raspy voice. "I am the director of the Department of Acquisitions."

Chapter 1207: Covert and Overt

Chapter 1207: Covert and Overt

As Poison Monarch spoke, his voice transformed into numerous five-colored butterflies that appeared in front of Xu Qing and the other ascendees. They were very unique jade slips. As they flapped their wings, they transmitted information directly into the minds of everyone present.

The Department of Acquisitions was one of the 324 departments in the Reception Universe. The director was tasked with providing special materials for the war. Usually, the department was sent to a specific area with a specific deadline to acquire funds and provisions. They would then be sent back to the Reception Universe, where the profits would be transferred to the Department of Transportation, and beyond that, to the front lines. Because of the wartime situation, everything the Department of Acquisitions did was centered around the acquisitions.

In terms of what the department sought to acquire... it boiled down to one thing! It was something that all Imperial Sovereigns and higher desperately needed: ringsource! Unfortunately, the ringsource needs of the war effort surpassed those of individual cultivators. As a result, there was no way they could go about acquiring ringsource in the way Xu Qing had done in the Inksun Universe, in other words, by fishing.

The focus of the Department of Acquisitions... were the nonhuman universes in the heavens beyond heaven in the Fifth Star Ring. It was extracted from their blood and their life force. That included... the various god prisons located in large numbers in the various heavens beyond heaven.

Of course, there were different types of prisons. Some were operated on the universe-level, some belonged to the heavens beyond heaven. Others were run by clans, and were considered private ventures. The gods held in the prisons served as the origin of ringsource.

As the information poured into Xu Qing's mind, his gaze hardened. Now he understood why the Acquisitioner squadrons had such strong auras of death. Their main job was killing and extracting! What was more, they did things in a very domineering fashion. After getting used to acting in that way, it was only natural that they would be filled with perverse energy.

The information also provided a clear explanation of who Poison Monarch really was. Poison Monarch had long since performed amazing services. Though he was indeed in charge of the Dao Immortal Sect in the western planetary system of the Immortal Capital, he was also the director of the Department of Acquisitions.

Thanks to the information from the butterflies, everyone now had a much better understanding of the Department of Acquisitions. Up in midair, Poison Monarch looked at the squadron that had clashed with Xu Qing and the ascendees.

“The lot of you go turn in your ringsource.”

The old leader of the squadron bowed along with the other cultivators, and then they flew off into the distance.

The cultivator who had very nearly been stabbed in the forehead by Xu Qing’s iron skewer stopped in the distance and looked back at him. His eyes flickered with both fear and defiance.

Xu Qing could sense that, and committed the man to memory.

After they were gone, Xu Qing and the other ascendees were left alone on the black sea, digesting the information about the Department of Acquisitions.

Xu Qing’s guard was up, and Li Mengtu was feeling nervous. But no one else had ever dealt with Poison Monarch, so as far as they were concerned, he was just an immortal and their future commanding officer. Regardless of the level of their cultivation base, the ascendees all bowed respectfully. After all, failing to respect immortals was a grave crime in the Fifth Star Ring.

“Starting on this very day—” started Poison Monarch, but he paused after only five words. All of a sudden, great pressure swept over the group. He didn’t pay any attention to his own apprentice, Li Mengtu. Nor did he seem to care about Xu Qing. He wasn’t concerned about things that had happened in the past. His previous actions had been little more than a standard test. But as he looked around, everyone bowed their heads.

A moment later, Poison Monarch continued in a raspy voice. “This group of ascendees is all being assigned to posts in the Department of Acquisitions. Since you all have the same assignment... then you might as well be a squadron of your own. As for the captain....”

Poison Monarch looked at Xu Qing, then Sir Star Ring and Yuanshan Su, as well as... Zhou Zhengli.

Of those four, two had Quasi-Immortal cultivation bases, one had Quasi-Immortal battle prowess, and as for Zhou Zhengli... when he realized he was being looked at, he stepped back, seemingly terrified and deferential.

Sir Star Ring looked surprised. Clearly, he had just come to the realization that everything that had just played out was a test. And more importantly than that... someone had been trying to split them up! But thanks to Xu Qing interfering, that effort had failed. It was easy to imagine that if they had been split up, then they wouldn’t have ultimately been put into one squadron. They would have been split up into two or more groups.

It had never occurred to Sir Star Ring that Xu Qing would help him. After a moment of silence, he said, “I’m not interested in the position of captain.”

At almost the same time, Yuanshan Su quietly took a step backward. Her personality had changed. After everything that happened in the Aurora Immortal Palace, she had come to truly revere Xu Qing. One reason was because of his methods. The other... as one of the very last Shining Stars to leave the immortal palace, she knew a lot more than many of them. She also had certain speculations.

For instance, she was certain she knew who had taken the identity of Young Lord Aurora. And she was fairly certain... that the real Young Lord Aurora wasn't dead. She was also convinced... that the identity she had taken was also still alive! Given all that, she didn't want to be the leader of their squadron.

Face completely expressionless, Poison Monarch looked at Xu Qing. "Xu Qing."

Xu Qing looked up with clasped hands. The more he was convinced Poison Monarch had sinister intentions, the more he knew that he couldn't reveal any weaknesses. That included failing to show respect to immortals.

"You are assigned to be the leader of this squadron. You will leave immediately for your appointed destination to carry out resource acquisitions. Your deadline... is in five months!" He waved his hand, and a ring of holding flew over and hovered in front of Xu Qing. "In there you'll find your Acquisitioner uniforms, identity medallions, and also the information about your mission.

"And now, all of you can go out and wait outside the Reception Universe, with the exception of you, Xu Qing. You stay behind."

Poison Monarch flicked his sleeve. Heaven and earth trembled, and everything blurred as all the other ascendees except for Xu Qing vanished. They had been teleported away by an incredible force.

Xu Qing's pupils had constricted slightly, though it wasn't easy to tell. He just stood there looking as respectful as possible.

Poison Monarch hovered in the air. He stood on the sea. The atmosphere became as still as death.

Neither of them spoke. A long moment passed, and then Poison Monarch took a step forward, blurring slightly as he appeared in front of Xu Qing.

An immortal filled with evil intentions stood right in front of Xu Qing. The pressure he felt was incredible. Especially noteworthy was the fact that Xu Qing could sense that this was no ordinary immortal. Even though he was a Lower Immortal, it was obvious that he ranked near the very top among that group.

Someone like that could obviously kill Xu Qing with a thought. Thankfully... this was the Reception Universe, in the Nineshores Heaven, a heaven beyond heaven in the Fifth Star Ring. As long as Xu Qing had not committed any crime, then he would be safe. That was why he was making sure to maintain a very respectful attitude.

"You're clearly an extremely vigilant person," Poison Monarch said. "You're uneasy, but aren't showing it at all. Xu Qing, though this is my first time meeting you in person, I have to admit that you've surprised me."

"I'm grateful for your approval, Arch-Immortal," Xu Qing said in a tone that was neither supercilious nor obsequious. "Your humble servant is honored to receive such praise."

Poison Monarch looked at him deeply, then started walking across the black sea. Xu Qing hesitated briefly and then followed. The wind blew, stirring the sea.

A short time passed, and then Poison Monarch said, “Xu Qing, I previously wanted to take your dao to break through into the Immortal Lord level.”

Xu Qing didn’t say anything.

“Many, many years have passed here in the Fifth Star Ring since Immortal Lord Aurora perished. During that time, not a single new Immortal Lord has risen up. The pace of the war is speeding up. Momentum is increasing....” Poison Monarch’s voice seemed to drift along like a helpless sigh.

“The main reason that’s happening is that a new God Lord has appeared in the Fourth Star Ring! That God Lord’s overall strength has pushed us to a point of life or death in this war between star rings! Do you understand, Xu Qing? It is vital for everyone involved... that the Fifth Star Ring get a new Immortal Lord! As for myself....”

Poison Monarch stopped walking. “I am the person in the Fifth Star Ring who is in the best position to break through and become an Immortal Lord among Lower Immortals!”

Xu Qing somberly clasped hands and bowed. “Your humble servant offers congratulations, Arch-Immortal. I hope that your breakthrough comes soon, and that you quickly rise to the glorious position of Immortal Lord!”

Poison Monarch turned to look at him.

Xu Qing’s expression was sincere.

Eventually, Poison Monarch shook his head and laughed softly again. “Although I failed to take your dao, you’re still connected to me by destiny.... I kept you behind today because I have an errand for you to handle for me.

“A few years ago, Immortal Lord Nineshores gave the Department of Acquisitions a mission. We were tasked with finding a mysterious piece of nine-colored ice that was capable of extinguishing the fire of a God Lord. I’ve been looking this entire time for that nine-colored ice, but have failed to find it. I have never entrusted the task to anyone else. But today, I’m giving you a chance. Are you willing to look for it?”

Poison Monarch looked over at Xu Qing. He wanted to see if Xu Qing understood the implications of this offer.

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered, and his impression of Poison Monarch suddenly improved. The meaning in the words was obvious.

He was being given a good opportunity!

There was a tacit understanding among Acquisitioners. As long as they met their acquisition quota... anything left over could be kept for personal use. As long as the Acquisitioner didn’t get too greedy, they could benefit a lot.

What was more, it was a mission from an Immortal Lord... and not just any Immortal Lord, but Immortal Lord Nineshores himself. Given that, Xu Qing would have major protection in carrying out the assignment! With that protection... and his status as an Acquisitioner, he could do just

about anything he wanted, and most likely make out like a bandit. In just about any circumstance that arose, he could just say that he was looking for that nine-colored ice at the behest of the Immortal Lord. This also meant he could fast-track his cultivation!

At the same time, it was a double-edged sword. After all, there could be some severe downsides. For example, failing! Poison Monarch could punish him at any time for failing to acquire the object in question.

If he accepted the mission, he would be under the complete control of Poison Monarch.

This entire thing was both a covert conspiracy and an overt conspiracy. If he said he understood, it would be an overt conspiracy. If he said he didn't understand, it would be a covert conspiracy.

Chapter 1208: Aurora's Heaven Beyond Heaven

Chapter 1208: Aurora's Heaven Beyond Heaven

It was a poisoned immortal fruit!

Xu Qing looked at Poison Monarch, then bowed deeply at the waist. "Your humble servant accepts the mission!"

He wanted the poisoned fruit!

Poison Monarch didn't seem surprised. He thought Xu Qing to be much like himself. If you wanted to get stronger, break through, and reach higher heights, you could definitely *ask a tiger for its skin!* In this case, Poison Monarch was the tiger. At the same time, Xu Qing was providing a tiger skin to Poison Monarch. After all, the Immortal Paragon had ordered that no one infect Xu Qing with their karma.

That's just going to make things interesting. Poison Monarch flicked his sleeve and started walking away. He blurred, as if he were becoming one with heaven and earth. Ultimately, he vanished, leaving behind a few words echoing about. "You're on your own now, Xu Qing."

After he was gone, everything went back to normal. Then a golden stream of starlight descended from above, wrapped around Xu Qing, and drew him up into the sky.

He rose up into the canopy of heaven and ultimately left the planet that housed the Department of Acquisitions headquarters. He didn't resist. He allowed the starlight to guide him up. As the planet grew smaller and smaller in his view, his thoughts wandered.

Although the immortal fruit was poisoned, it was extremely fresh and of good quality. The downsides and upsides were clear to see.

Furthermore, Xu Qing wasn't under the illusion that eating the poisoned immortal fruit would mean that the other party's evil intentions would go away completely. Those evil intentions were

related to personal progress, so it was almost certain that the two of them would clash again later. Rather than place his hope on the off chance that the other party would simply give up, Xu Qing preferred to take control.

Besides, he was well aware that he currently had a severe lack of cultivation resources. With a good excuse to work with, he was definitely going to be able to make some advancement. And thus, rather than worry about when the poison might flare up... he figured it would be better to just eat the fruit and grow stronger as quickly as possible.

It was similar to how, back when he had no cultivation base, and was stuck in that city that the broken face had just looked at, he ultimately chose to start practicing cultivation, if for no other reason than to get rid of mutagen more quickly. That same frame of mind applied here.

Besides, to a certain degree, Poison Monarch was right. The two of them really were very similar.

In any case, it's still possible that I could deal with a poison flare-up if it happens.... Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as the planet grew smaller and smaller, all while the Reception Universe as a whole filled his field of view. Eventually... the entire universe was visible to him, and the starlight took him completely out.

When he appeared in the starry sky, he caught sight of Sir Star Ring and everyone else. They were waiting for him.

Coming to a stop in front of them, he waved his hand to open the ring of holding. The Acquisitioner identity medallions flew out. They were gray pieces of jade.

Everyone took their medallion and sent some divine will inside. Light flared, which then turned into gray hundred-pocket robes. Everything around Xu Qing blurred as he also donned a hundred-pocket robe. From a distance, the group of 89 cultivators were all dressed alike, causing an indescribable air of prestige to surround them.

Looking very serious, Zhou Zhengli strode forward and bowed to Xu Qing.

"Greetings, Captain!"

The other ascendees, regardless of what they were thinking inside, also offered formal greetings.

That included Yuanshan Su. As for Hordeslayer and Rampart, they were about to join in when they realized Sir Star Ring wasn't moving a muscle. All of a sudden, Hordeslayer and Rampart seemed to stand a bit taller. Xu Qing didn't seem to care either way about any of it. Taking out the mission jade slip, he sent the mission information into the minds of everyone present.

Their first mission as Acquisitioners was to take place in the Helioterra Universe. They were to go there and search for resources![1]

There was something unique about the Helioterra Universe. It was not in the Nineshores Heaven! It was located in another heaven beyond heaven. However, that heaven beyond heaven was not listed alongside the eleven Immortal Lords! Put most precisely, this heaven beyond heaven belonged to a perished Immortal Lord. As a result, that heaven was masterless.... The name of that heaven beyond heaven had long since been erased.

After looking at the mission jade slip, Xu Qing was instantly shaken inside. He wasn't the only one. Other ascendees, particularly Sir Star Ring and the other Shining Stars, all had odd looks on their faces.

In all of the Fifth Star Ring, there was only one place that matched that description.... It was, of course, the Aurora heaven beyond heaven!

Prompted by instinct, Li Mengtu and Zhou Zhengli looked at Xu Qing. Even Hordeslayer, Rampart, Yuanshan Su and Sir Star Ring... all looked in his direction. After what all of them had experienced in the historical reflection of the Aurora Immortal Palace, they had come to view Xu Qing as Young Lord Aurora. The entire event had left a deep impression on them.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he checked the details of the mission. It said that to get to the Helioterra Universe, they had to take the mission jade slip to a teleportation facility, where arrangements had been made for them to teleport to their destination.

Because that heaven beyond heaven was masterless, it had become a public place. What was more, because of the historical events of the past, the nonhumans there had become quite rebellious by nature. After all, there was no heaven for them to be subordinate to.

When people from other heavens beyond heaven went inside, they would usually split up based on who backed them. Compared to other heavens beyond heaven, it was a wild and disorderly place, where everything was a complicated jianghu-like world.

It had countless universes within it, all sorts of nonhumans, and a mish-mash of organizations. There were also a host of god prisons. Because of that, it was considered to rank high among the heavens beyond heaven. Back in the day, Immortal Lord Aurora was considered to have peak battle prowess among the Immortal Lords.

Based on the description in the mission jade slip, the Helioterra Universe was on the edge of the heaven beyond heaven. It was administered by the imperial clan of the Helioterra race, who were known as Helioterrans. It had a total of thirty-one god prisons in it. Of those thirty-one prisons, the biggest was A29, and within it were imprisoned, for the most part, Altar Gods.

After everyone had familiarized themselves with the information from the jade slip, Xu Qing put it away. He swept the gathered crowd with his gaze, and then without a word, headed to the nearest teleportation facility, just as the mission had directed.

Zhou Zhengli and Li Mengtu exchanged a glance and then followed. Everyone else started moving with glittering eyes. And thus, the group became a stream of 89 beams of light that pierced through the starry sky.

As they sped by at top speed, the cultivators they passed mostly just frowned and got out of their way. These were obviously notorious Acquisitioners, and they were like tigers or jackals that no one wanted to get close to, let alone provoke.

Half a month passed.

In the depths of the Nineshores Heaven was an ancient planet that had a teleportation facility built into it. As Xu Qing and the others descended, Xu Qing produced the mission jade slip, and the

portal filled with rumbling sounds. A powerful force of teleportation power caused majestic pulses to flow out in all directions.

Xu Qing and the others instantly disappeared. It took them five days to reach their destination.

When they reappeared, they were in an unfamiliar starry sky, and they were standing on an ancient and crumbling platform made of crimson stone. The platform was hot, but was rapidly cooling down. It took a huge amount of resources to use a teleportation portal that teleported you to another heaven beyond heaven.

The requirements for a cultivator to use such a portal were high. Someone without a sufficient cultivation base, would likely be killed by the process itself. One could not have any mental flaws either, as one could lose one's mind and ultimately die.

When the group materialized, a few dozen people coughed up blood and immediately settled down cross-legged to recover. Some seemed dazed, as if they had been shaken down to their souls.

Only Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring appeared to be completely unfazed.

Thankfully, these were all ascendees. Based on everything they had experienced to get to this point, they were elite chosen both in terms of cultivation base and mental acuity. Even though some were affected by such a massive teleportation between heavens beyond heaven, they quickly recovered and began to study their surroundings with divine will.

There was very little light in the sky. The stars here were dim. The spirit energy was scarce. The place was truly a wilderness.

"So, this is the Helioterra Universe," Xu Qing murmured as he stood on the stone platform and looked around. Then he glanced at Zhou Zhengli.

Zhou Zhengli understood the meaning of his glance. Stepping forward, he bowed and said, "Young Lord, everyone is aware of the mission and the parameters. I suggest we split up. Regardless of how we fare, we'll pool our resources when we meet back up.

"If anyone runs into a situation too difficult to handle, they can use up some of their ringsource to call for help from nearby. If even that fails to resolve any sticky situation, then the young master can intervene. Of course, the premise is that the ringsource at hand is worth it. What do you say, sir?"

Zhou Zhengli looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing nodded. He wasn't inclined to waste time and energy making complicated arrangements. Besides, he knew that everyone was after ringsource, so there was no way he could completely avoid people taking some for their own. It made more sense to give people some leniency in that regard.

"I'll handle Prison A29. The rest of you can decide amongst yourselves where you want to go other than that."

With that, Xu Qing blurred off into the distance. After he was gone, everyone exchanged glances. There was some brief communication, and then some people went off on their own, while others stuck together in groups of between three to five. And thus, they were like a cloud of locusts that dispersed in different directions.

In the depths of the Helioterra Universe was a galaxy in which floated an amazing imperial palace. There was currently a lot of singing and dancing going on in the palace.

Seated on the imperial throne was a red-skinned giant with two faces, resting his head on one hand. All of a sudden, a jade slip flew into the palace and stopped in front of the giant. There, it popped, producing the projected image of a figure who immediately prostrated to the two-faced giant.

“Your Majesty, an Acquisitions squadron from the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven just entered our Helioterra Universe!”

The two-faced giant didn’t look at the newly arrived messenger. He just kept watching the singing and dancing. “You know the drill. Make sure they find some ringsource. If these jackals know what’s good for them, they’ll take some scraps and then leave. But if they don’t know what’s good for them, then we’ll make sure they understand who’s *really* in charge of the Helioterra Universe.”

1. What I’m rendering as “Helioterra” is a reference to an ancient Chinese theory about the nature of the universe. There were two common theories, which are generally rendered as heliocentric theory and geocentric theory. In this case, “helio” refers to the sun and “geo” to the earth. I think you can get the meaning just on that, but to be absolutely clear, they were conflicting theories about whether the center of the universe was the sun or the earth. A third theory eventually came around that was a mixture of the two. I’m using “helioterra” because it mixes two words related to sun and earth. It also works in other contexts as you will see. 晴

Chapter 1209: God Fodder

Chapter 1209: God Fodder

Xu Qing was like a shooting star zipping through the starry sky, leaving behind a wake of distortions. The ripples of his passage were a result of his cultivation base, as well as the might of his immortal embryo.

In some respects, it was similar to the gods. It was just what happened when cultivation reached a certain level. Just as there were many ways for the weak to be vulnerable, the strength of the powerful was often a convergence.

Xu Qing had his destination locked in, but wasn’t going all out in terms of speed. He was taking time to study his immortal embryo, but at the same time, he was paying attention to the universe around him, this new heaven beyond heaven.

The events at the Fallen Immortal Moors were only a reflection of history.... And yet... the effects of Hordeslayer and Rampart acknowledging me as owner spread into the real world. Li Mengtu's poison canon also gained something of an origin.... And in the Inkland, Starfire summoned a manifestation of the Hundred Flowers Palace.

It all goes to show that though the events in the reflection of history didn't change anything in the real world, they did have some effect.

What's more, I was given command over the Aurora Immortal Palace there! The immortal palace is the most integral aspect of a heaven beyond heaven. The most paramount location. That's why the Aurora Immortal Palace only appears when there's a spirit tide. The real immortal palace is most likely in this very heaven beyond heaven. If I call on my command of the immortal palace in this heaven beyond heaven....

Xu Qing's eyes glittered, and his heart raced with curiosity. As he proceeded along, he sent out his divine will to try to find the immortal palace. It didn't work. Perhaps it was because too much time had passed, or perhaps it was because the immortal palace had sunk into ruin. Eventually, he sighed and abandoned such attempts.

His destination was Prison A29. It was the biggest god prison in the Helioterra Universe, and it was also where the largest portion of ringsource came from.

As the captain of an Acquisitioner squad, it was only natural that he was able to take the biggest slice of cake. He wasn't concerned with whatever danger his so-called subordinates got into. Nor was he concerned with where they got ringsource in the Helioterra Universe. Whether it was from god prisons or nonhumans, it didn't matter to him.

If they ran into obstacles trying to collect ringsource, or got into conflicts with nonhumans, others would step in, if for no other reason than to get more ringsource for their own collections. Unless things really got out of hand, Xu Qing didn't have any intention of interfering with anyone. He was completely and utterly focused on one thing.

I need to collect ringsource and upgrade my immortal embryo!

Eyes sparkling, and heart full of determination, he accelerated. He even took advantage of some teleportation portals he encountered. In that manner, he spent about ten days going halfway across the Helioterra Universe. That was when he reached his destination.

Picturesque Places Around the World: Tips for Visiting Open

It was a red starry sky. The red color didn't come from starlight. Rather, it came from a shockingly enormous red kelp plant! It had nineteen leaves, each of which was so long that it could wrap around a planet.

The nineteen leaves all met at the base, which was where a network of fine roots grew downward. The roots surrounded and were embedded into a huge sun, from which they constantly extracted nutrients.

Xu Qing looked at the kelp plant, his eyes shining.

A plant growing in the starry sky.... I wonder if my god vine could eventually grow into something like this.

Xu Qing cast his senses into the Sageheaven Pagoda, and the god vine that was part of it. The god vine was asleep, but based on its aura, it seemed like it would be able to wake up fairly soon.

Xu Qing looked back at the kelp plant. As he looked at it more closely, he realized that upon the nineteen leaves were spots of various sizes.

Each spot is a minor world. They're all prison blocks! And the biggest prison block of all is in that sun.

As Xu Qing studied the kelp, it flickered with red light, and then a terrifying stream of divine will spread out from it. It locked onto Xu Qing, and it was so terrifying that it felt like he was dealing with an immortal.

Xu Qing's eyes hardened. He could tell that this red kelp was not the prison. It was responsible for keeping the prison in check. He took out his Acquisitioner medallion, as well as his mission jade slip.

"I'm here on a mission from the Nineshores Heaven to collect ringsource!"

The divine will from the red kelp swept around Xu Qing and examined the medallion and jade slip. A moment later, it seemed to make a decision. The divine will retracted slowly, and one of the leaves slowly drifted up to Xu Qing.

He looked at the leaf, and then looked at the sun surrounded by the kelp plant's roots. After considering the situation momentarily, he stepped onto the leaf and raced toward one of the spots on it. The spot grew larger and larger from his perspective, until it was a world. He pierced through the barriers of the world, and then rumbling sounds echoed out.

He landed on black soil. Everything was rotten and full of death as far as the eye could see. There was no wind, no spirit, no mutagen. Everything was barren and deathly. He studied his surroundings, looked down at the ground, and then, without an expression on his face, stomped his foot down.

"Wake up!" he said coolly. Rumbling sounds echoed out as a wind picked up, spirit filled the world, and mutagen turned into a tempest. It kicked up black soil in all directions, causing it to fill the sky, and obscuring Xu Qing himself.

If you could stand at a very high vantage point and looked down at that exact moment, you would clearly see... that there was a huge line on the surface of the ground. And that line was currently rising up, lifting the soil like a wave in the sea. And then the line parted, revealing an enormous, bloodshot eye. Its eye had opened!

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The black ground had merely been covering that eye, and once Xu Qing had stepped down, the eye had no choice but to open. As the tempest raged around Xu Qing, he stood unmoving, right on top of the pupil of the eye!

It looked at Xu Qing coldly, without happiness or anger.

“Inferior species. Slave.”

Xu Qing’s facial expression remained the same as usual. This was the eye of a Flawless God.

“You’re Flawless... relatively speaking,” Xu Qing said calmly to the eye of the god beneath his feet. Long ago, Xu Qing had encountered similar eyes back in the Revered Ancient mainland. [1]

Every eye he had seen had caused him to tremble as mutagen assailed him. In some cases, the gaze of such eyes made it feel like his flesh and blood were independent entities that wanted to separate from him. That was the result of the vast disparity in the levels of life force involved.

But right now, his gaze was calm and unruffled. In fact, the eye of the god seemed to be contorting and becoming increasingly bloodshot. This god was not like it had been in the past. And even where it was at its peak, it would still react similarly to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing lifted his hand to reveal his Acquisitioner’s medallion. The medallion served to confirm his status, and the rights that came with it. It also had the unique function of being able to extract ringsource. He held out the medallion and pushed it down in front of him.

The god’s eye contorted with greater intensity, and a sound like a howl rose up. Golden ringsource began to seep out of the eye. Every strand that was extracted caused immeasurable pain to the god’s eye. Eventually, after forty-nine strands had been extracted, the god’s eye became as gray as ash. That was the limit. The eye twitched as it began to close, to return to a state of slumber.

Xu Qing frowned.

That’s not very much.

The ringsource he had collected was hardly larger than the fist of an infant. It wasn’t nearly as pure as the ringsource he had collected from the Inkland. Naturally speaking, he would need far more than this to be able to make use of it.

With that thought in mind, his eyes flashed coldly. Then, instead of putting away his identity medallion, he pushed it down toward the closing eye of the god! It hit the eye just as the eyelids were about to meet!

The eye snapped open, and this time it emanated a different type of fluctuation. It was the terror that intelligent beings experienced in the face of death! The terror didn’t last for long. Xu Qing held nothing back to extract many more golden threads from the eye.

This wasn’t just ringsource. This was pure life force! A cry of anguish echoed out for a time, before vanishing.... And then the eye of the god collapsed into ash, having been completely destroyed. Its death caused even more ringsource to appear.

Because of all the ringsource, Xu Qing could sense the mark of Starfire on his arm trembling. Xu Qing took a strand of ringsource and put it above the mark.

“Want it?” he asked.

Starfire ceased trembling, and then a gravitational force sprang out of the mark. The ringsource was sucked in, and then Xu Qing heard a silken voice speaking in his mind.

“Thank you, Young Lord. You’re truly amazing.”

Face expressionless, Xu Qing hovered in place and began to absorb the ringsource. As the ringsource entered him, his immortal embryo glittered, and its aura improved. Eventually, Xu Qing’s eyes shone and he licked his lips.

Not enough, by far. I need much, much more....

Xu Qing burst into motion as he went to another minor world.

In that manner, time passed.

Xu Qing went to one minor world after another on the leaf. In every one, a god died to provide ringsource. And thus, his immortal embryo began to shine more and more brightly.

As far as Xu Qing was concerned, there was no advantage in leaving the gods alive. The mission jade slip had not left any instructions to do so. He collected every scrap that was available, keeping some aside for the mission, and taking the rest for himself.

Meanwhile, the other ascendees were in other locations doing their best to collect ringsource in whatever ways they could. Some they kept for the mission, but the rest... they used for their personal cultivation. Looking at them from a different perspective, they really did seem like jackals.

1. Some of the eyes Xu Qing encountered were in [chapters 49](#), [369](#), [524.2](#), and [838](#). I believe there were others. These were just the first three I was able to easily find. 📖

Chapter 1210: Accepting Bribes

Chapter 1210: Accepting Bribes

When perspectives differed, so did attitudes and actions. It wasn’t a simple matter of good or evil. After all, good versus evil often played out even among members of the same species.

There was little need to mention hatred, fury, or ambivalence toward nonhumans. After all, their ancestors were gods. If the immortal revolution hadn’t occurred in the Fifth Star Ring, then they would be the ruling class. Humans would be slaves that they could take advantage of at will.

But the gods had been either slaughtered or rounded up and imprisoned. So the nonhumans were like fish on the chopping block. In some ways, it was like reincarnation.

It wasn’t possible to say who was wrong or right. It was only possible to say... that regardless of which species was in question, and regardless of whether it was immortals or gods, perspective determined everything. The weak were doomed to be devoured by the strong. Those who fell behind would lose the right to continue onward.

Cultivators did not live the way the gods had lived in the past. But that was a fundamental magical law of the higher star rings, or perhaps, of all living beings in general. Victims wouldn't always be victims. And the victimizers wouldn't always be victimizers. In the end, everything was cyclical.

It was a truth Xu Qing had come to understand back in the Revered Ancient mainland.

After everything he had experienced in the Fifth Star Ring, he understood more than ever how to deal with the gods here. It was all according to the laws that bound everything. It was just like the discarnate wills of obsession in the Heroic Immortal Tombs. That was how the Fifth Star Ring treated the gods, as well as the nonhumans.

In the end, it was the same with Xu Qing. And yet, based on his judgment, among all of those apathetic gods, there were some that were more human than most humans.

Unfortunately, these imprisoned gods were not among them. Xu Qing wasn't some sort of loving philanthropist who would take time getting to know each and every god before deciding what to do with them. He had no qualms about *draining the pond to get at the fish*, and thus, it didn't take long for him to reach the last minor world on the leaf.

The environment consisted of a viscous black sea. The sea was calm, but did not seem auspicious and peaceful. The water stank, and powerful mutagen roiled in all directions.

A head was buried in the seafloor. It looked like the head of a bird, covered with tentacles that constantly excreted a viscous fluid. Over time, that fluid had turned into a black sea.

When Xu Qing arrived, the mutagen kicked up into a frenzy. Huge waves rolled across the surface of the sea, and the head below looked up, eyes opening. Golden light shone up through the sea as the head looked up.

A strange sound that could shake the mind and heart filled Xu Qing's ears. It became a host of thoughts that weren't his own, growing in his head. As the intangible thoughts formed and took shape, they became strands of excreted black fluid that wrapped around his head.

The mutagen became a tempest that raged toward Xu Qing. The waves grew larger, and the entire world began to spin. The sea became the sky. The sky became the earth below.

And then... the black sea began to pour down like rain. And thanks to the power of the inversion, the head broke free! The world blurred as rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth.

A few breaths of time passed, whereupon a dense immortal energy erupted from the chaotic blur. Mountain-toppling, sea-draining force spread out, crushing everything and driving everything away.

Everything then became clear and bright. The mutagen began to dissolve within the immortal energy. The viscous sea vaporized. Xu Qing became clear.

He reached out with his right hand and grabbed a head that was vastly larger than his own body. His five fingers stabbed into the flesh of the head. Though there was a huge disparity in size, there was only one source of terror, and it was the head!

It was trembling! Golden strands of ringsource were extracted, and poured into the medallion in Xu Qing's hand. Eventually, an anguished howl echoed out. The god's head trembled, turned gray, and collapsed into dust.

Xu Qing hovered alone in midair, his gaze sharp as he looked around.

The marks sealing this place are on the verge of fading away.... That's why the god was able to take the initiative. But the sealing mark wasn't touched by the god. It seems to have been affected by something else. Something was helping it break down the seal. It was giving it a chance to break free of the prison. Was it nonhumans? Or was it... the jail itself accepting bribes?

Xu Qing had been a jailer in the past, so he knew full well how jailers could shamelessly seek personal gain.

He pondered that for a time, his eyes narrowing. Then he flew out of the minor world and appeared out in the starry sky. He looked at the red kelp plant. He closely examined the other leaves.

The kelp plant swayed.

Finally, Xu Qing said, "The gods in the other leaves are almost all dead. You... ate them, didn't you?"

The swaying kelp leaves suddenly began drifting rapidly toward Xu Qing.

Xu Qing didn't move a muscle. "The leaf you offered to me was prepared in advance for collection purposes, so that no one would realize you had been accepting bribes. Am I right?"

A terrifying will built up, aggressive and full of astonishing pressure. Cracking sounds echoed out in the surrounding starry sky, all while gruish symbols floated up, locking the place down.

Eyes narrowing, Xu Qing continued, "I have a good relationship with Young Lord Aurora. Check my aura. You'll find I have command over the Aurora Immortal Palace. Immortal Lord Nineshores cares a lot about me. Surely you can sense the aura on this object." Xu Qing took out the wooden slip that was the authentication token for the God Blood River ferry boat. "I'm also the 1st place ascende. If I perish here, you'll never get away with it."

The kelp plant hesitated, and the terrifying will reached out to the wooden slip. The terrifying will trembled. The stream of will left the slip and surrounded Xu Qing. It checked him more thoroughly.

Xu Qing's facial expression remained the same as usual. After the mirrored history of the Aurora Immortal Palace concluded, everyone else experienced lingering effects in the real world, and there was no reason to assume he wouldn't.

Though he had not been able to sense the Aurora Immortal Palace in this heaven beyond heaven, he got the feeling it was because the immortal palace was in concealment. He might not be able to sense it, but that didn't mean that this kelp plant, which was native to this heaven beyond heaven, couldn't sense it.

In other words, he was trying to use a roundabout method to confirm his own identity! It wouldn't matter if he failed, as his biggest protection was Immortal Lord Nineshores, as well as the fact that he was the 1st place ascende.

And thus, he submitted to the inspection.

Moments later, he could sense great fluctuations in the will of the kelp. In fact, the actual plant itself was visibly shaking. Xu Qing's eyes gleamed. He had guessed correctly!

The kelp trembled, and its aura became chaotic, as if it had come to a decision. Thanks to the deep inspection the kelp had just carried out, it realized that, hidden within this human was the ability to command the Aurora Immortal Palace. There was obviously some major karma at play. The command wielded by this human scared it.

And the reason was that it was subservient to the Aurora Immortal Palace! Although the Aurora heaven beyond heaven had no master now, the kelp's status was the same as ever. And its actions really did constitute a crime. It was faced with a difficult choice....

However, that was when Xu Qing spoke again. "You've been keeping an eye on this god prison for countless years. Nobody will fault you for having an occasional snack when you get hungry."

The kelp froze.

"And considering the food is almost gone, the fact that you left a whole leaf is really an expression of loyalty!"

The will of the kelp surged.

"After all, I came late. That's not really your fault."

The leaves on the kelp plant swayed back and forth, and the pressure reduced significantly. As far as it could tell, this human wasn't joking around. He was being completely serious.

"Therefore, let's just forget about the past. And now, I want to ask you a question. Do you... want to eat that?" Xu Qing pointed at the sun wrapped up in the roots.

The kelp leaves all twitched, and then divine will echoed around Xu Qing, like a deep voice.

"Yes!"

Xu Qing nodded. "Let me in. Protect me. And I'll see... how we can split whatever's inside!"

The kelp hesitated and checked Xu Qing's aura again. Then the roots shifted aside to reveal a path. Before it was completely open, the kelp suddenly sent out its divine will to scan the area. It had sensed something.

"There's no need to be nervous," Xu Qing said calmly. "It's a friend of mine. Let him in."

The kelp seemed to consider his words, then created an opening in the sealing barrier.

Zhou Zhengli shot inside. He quickly looked around. Then, acting as if nothing unusual had just happened, bowed to Xu Qing.

“What is it?” Xu Qing asked.

“Young Lord,” Zhou Zhengli said respectfully, “some of the others have had no trouble collecting ringsource. Others ran into trouble, but everything has been easy to resolve.

“Unfortunately, something unusual happened with the Helioterran imperial clan. That’s why your humble servant has come. Young Lord, can you use your status here in the Aurora heaven beyond heaven... to crush those fools who think this place really has no one in charge??

“Of course, if you’re not inclined to help, your humble servant can always go ask Sir Star Ring to handle the situation.”

Xu Qing looked at him. There was no doubt that Zhou Zhengli was very intelligent. If it weren’t for the fact that Xu Qing knew he could turn into an adversary at any time, he would probably be very pleased with how he acted.

“Have Sir Star Ring deal with it,” Xu Qing said.

“Yes, sir, Young Lord Aurora!” Zhou Zhengli backed up and then hurried away.

When he was gone, the kelp re-sealed the area.

Xu Qing turned back to the roots. “Alright. Open it up. I’m hungry, and I bet you’re hungry too.”

Without any hesitation, the kelp continued to open the path into the depths of the sun. Eyes glittering, Xu Qing stepped onto the path!

Chapter 1211: The Way of the Ox

Chapter 1211: The Way of the Ox

Heatwaves buffeted Xu Qing’s face. Burning fire was all that could be seen in all directions. Heaven and earth was bright red and dazzling! Everything was made of fire, with the occasional burst of liquid fire here and there. The liquid fire would fly into the air and then explode, leaving behind streams of mysterious magical symbols. From a distance, it looked like an eternal rain of magical symbols.

When the symbols landed, they became crimson kelp plants that tried to grow, but unfortunately... couldn’t survive in the heat. They would eventually crumble into ashes that then became part of the liquid fire. There were only a very small amount that, by random circumstances, would manage to take root and grow.

It was a difficult process, and even while growing, they would occasionally burst into flames. Xu Qing only spotted a few here and there that managed to survive long-term. Most were severely withered, and looked like they might be incinerated at any moment.

This is only one small area of this sun. But even if you estimate mathematically, you can conclude that... not much kelp can survive here.

As he acclimated to the heat, he looked off into the distance and said, “Where are the gods locked up?”

He was asking the huge kelp plant that existed outside. A moment later, a vague response came from the will of the kelp.

“In the middle... immortal oath, so I can’t go in very deep, the kelp here... my will can help....”

The voice of the will came and went. It was clear that even the mighty kelp plant was afraid of this sun. Perhaps it was because of the immortal oath, or maybe it was something else.

Checks and balances of some sort? Or is it more targeted?

Thinking back to what he had experienced here so far, Xu Qing decided the first possibility wasn’t likely. So he would need to be more careful in case it was the second possibility.

With that, he started moving. He wanted to get a more complete picture of this sun, as well as whatever god was sealed in the middle of it. Only then would he start thinking about taking the ringsource.

In that manner, time passed.

A few days later, Xu Qing slowed down. Thanks to his cultivation base, he was quickly acclimating to the place. But even still, he needed to stop every so often and use surrounding bits of kelp to help the process. Only then would he continue.

After traveling for about half a month, he reached his limit and had to stop in front of a piece of growing kelp.

He hadn’t actually entered the central region, but his divine will could detect exactly where that spot was. When he sent his senses forward to that spot, his eyes hardened. By means of his senses, he could ‘see’ an astonishing sword there! It was stabbed right into the sun. The part sticking out into the open was a hilt like a huge mountain peak. It seemed likely that, on the opposite side of the sun, there was a sword tip piercing out in astonishing fashion.

The moment Xu Qing’s senses reached the sword, he came to a sudden realization.

There is no god imprisoned in this sun. Rather... it is the sun! This sun is a god! It’s the type of god equivalent to a Lower Immortal. It’s... a True God!

Xu Qing’s pupils constricted as he looked down at the ground and the withered kelp in the area. He felt shaken.

That sword is what’s keeping the True God here. It’s sealing the god’s body! It’s stabbed right through the god, leaving the god in a state of neither life nor death. Apparently... it can’t rely on its true name to return!

To other gods, the kelp leaves suffice to serve as a prison. But to True Gods, the kelp is the jailer!

The kelp wants to use the True God for its own cultivation, even more than I do. That's why it's continuously dropping seeds here in the hope of establishing a firm connection. It's all in the hopes of absorbing the god! All of the scattered kelp plants here are being used to try to absorb the True God's ringsource....

Unfortunately, because of the environment and personhood here, there's simply not enough of the kelp to absorb any significant amount of ringsource.

After a moment of thought, Xu Qing lifted his right hand to reveal the Acquisitioners medallion designed to absorb ringsource. He pushed it down toward the ground. He unleashed all of his cultivation base.

This was different from when he had absorbed the other gods. This time, his actions didn't cause the ground to tremble. The sun didn't even seem to react at all. Several strands of golden ringsource quietly rose up. However, there weren't many of them. It was as if there was some profound force blocking ringsource. Though the extraction effort wasn't a complete failure, it wasn't very successful either.

Shortly after, Xu Qing stopped and looked up. Focusing his senses on the sword hilt, his eyes began to shine.

"The surface beneath my feet is like a shell," he said out loud. "That means collecting ringsource here is going to be very difficult. The best place is going to be where the sword is stabbed inside! That's essentially an injury to the god!"

His eyes narrowed. "If I really want to eat my fill here, that's where I need to go all out.... In that case, it's time to tap into everything you've prepared. Don't hold anything back. And I won't either. Maybe we'll get an opportunity to really stuff ourselves. The alternative is that we make do with the little bit I got just now."

Xu Qing stopped speaking and waited.

Shortly after, a withered kelp plant in front of him suddenly swayed, almost decisively. And then it reverted from its withered state into being bright red. It wasn't the only one. All of the other living kelp on the sun transformed from being withered into a state of vibrant red. It looked almost like a host of red pāramitā lilies swaying in all directions. And they were moving toward Xu Qing.

Along the way, many of the kelp plants collapsed into dust. But as a group, they continued onward. In short order, Xu Qing was surrounded by a host of undulating kelp. He didn't avoid the plants. They gathered around him in layer after layer over the course of a few dozen breaths of time.

Soon, Xu Qing looked very different. He was now a figure in a crimson suit of plant armor, several hundred meters tall. He was like a giant. Majestic life force pulsed from the kelp, filling Xu Qing and giving him astonishing levels of protection. This kelp had been building up on the sun for countless years, and each little bit of force it provided was now being pooled together into an astonishing reserve power!

Xu Qing's eyes glittered brightly. He could sense that the kelp was really going for broke.

Without any hesitation, he unleashed five extremes, using the mutual restraining factors of the five elements to create a peak level of resistance. Then he used his space-time canon to summon overlapping universes. In that manner, he dispelled the pressure weighing down on the path in front of him.

Next, his immortal embryo glittered, making him like a person surrounded by flowing lightning. He shot forward. He headed... directly toward the huge sword he had just sensed!

As he neared, the pressure grew more intense, and the fire more terrifying. Xu Qing's external kelp armor was sizzling and crumbling into ashes. He was fully aware that, acting on his own, he would never make it this far. And the moment the kelp armor completely went away, he would be incinerated.

After all, this was a True God!

But none of that could reduce Xu Qing's resolve. He accelerated! His eyes flashed with a crazy look!

If Erniu were here to see, he would let loose exclamations of admiration, and would confirm that little Ah Qing had truly mastered the Way of the Ox.[1]

In that manner, time passed.

As Xu Qing hurtled onward with that crazy look in his eyes, and as the kelp armor bolstered him, he crossed a vast distance toward the central part of the sun.

Soon he spotted the actual sword off in the distance. The sight of it caused him to breathe heavily, and he trembled from head to toe. His soul and fleshly body were very close to catching ablaze. But the fire couldn't do anything to the crazy look in his eyes. If anything, it grew more intense the moment he spotted the huge sword!

Acting on instinct, Xu Qing bit his tongue and spat out a mouthful of blood. He was using something akin to a blood escape art to get a burst of speed. About seventy percent of the kelp armor was gone, and the heat was incredibly intense. But he reached the sword!

Now he could see the area clearly. There was a massive ravine in the spot where the sword was stabbed into the surface. There was flesh trying to close up the wound and push the sword out. But the sword was incredibly tough, and couldn't be moved. As a result, there was no way that the wound could close up. It was something of a deadlock.

The moment Xu Qing arrived, he felt a sensation of impending death. He knew that the kelp wasn't going to last much longer, and that he had no way to stand up to the heat.

But... he also sensed an incredible reserve of ringsource within the wound!

Given what Xu Qing had seen, this ringsource was unprecedented. The only thing that could come close to comparing was the depths of the Inkland, which he couldn't enter. This destined opportunity. This good fortune....

As the craziness in Xu Qing built, he sent an internal message with divine will.

“Cover me, Starfire!”

The mark on his arm immediately unleashed pure coldness. Shē was unleashing hēr god power to bolster Xu Qing. Not only was it buying time, it was also there to protect against any sudden malicious act by the kelp.

And thus, Xu Qing dropped into a cross-legged position, pulled out the Acquisitioners medallion, and pushed it down. Instantly, rumbling sounds echoed out as golden strands emerged from the sword wound.

It looked like a geyser!

Starfire was shaken to the core. The kelp plant was filled with excitement.

Xu Qing was going crazy!

1. I’m sure I don’t need to remind you that the “niu” in Erniu’s name means cow/ox. 牛

Chapter 1212: Snatching Food From the Tiger’s Mouth

Chapter 1212: Snatching Food From the Tiger’s Mouth

The amount of ringsource was flabbergasting. After all, this was a True God! In the higher star rings, True Gods were like darling children, and were doted on by all of the natural and magical laws.

That was one of the main reasons there was a big difference in the undying nature of True Gods versus Lower Immortals! As long as the true name of a True God still existed, as long as it was remembered... then the True God was not truly dead. It was part of the immutable substructure of higher star rings.

Not even the Immortal Paragon could change that. Maybe he could crush countless True Gods, but he could not prevent them from returning.

That was just the higher nature of True Gods. When it came to preheaven entities, immortals... could not equal gods.

What was more, there was only one Immortal Paragon. But after the level of God Paragon was the legendary Living God level. And in the system of the cultivators... Immortal Paragon was the end. There was no path after Immortal Paragon. Or if there was, no one had found it.

And thus, in order to truly destroy a True God down to its substructure, the Immortal Paragon needed to find that path and start walking it, to eventually reach that legendary immortal level that was equivalent to Living God.

That innate higher ability of True Gods was one of the reasons why the Fifth Star Ring suppressed and imprisoned them in a special way. Those True Gods existed between life and death. Such gods had lost freedom, but were not dead, and thus there was no need to contemplate the gods' resurrection. That was really the only way to reduce the total number of True Gods in a star ring.

Right now, three low-level entities had appeared in front of this True God, entities that, when it was in its prime, could have crushed them like gnats. And now they were crazily absorbing its ringsource!

Starfire inhaled deeply. This entire situation was just too stimulating to hēr. Up to this point in hēr life, shē had never even encountered a True God! In hēr god soul was the legacy of a god, and thus, shē inherently felt great reverence and longing toward True Gods. It led hēr to instinctively bow hēr head.

Normally speaking, shē wouldn't dare to think of stealing from a True God. In fact, back when Xu Qing and Erniu had stolen the flesh and blood of the broken face, Sunfire, Moonfire, and Starfire had looked on in astonishment, but hadn't dared to sow karma by joining in.

Starfire still felt the same. The main difference was that this True God was imprisoned, so if karma was sown, it wouldn't be too problematic.

Another difference was that Starfire was no longer just a Flawless God in the Godfire Level like before. Shē was now an Altar God. All shē had to do was break through to one additional level, and shē would also be a True God!

Another reason in hēr decision... was that Xu Qing was going crazy absorbing the ringsource! Someone was setting an example! And thus, Starfire just gritted hēr teeth and ignored the reverence shē felt toward True Gods thanks to the legacy of a god within

A crazy look appeared in hēr eyes. Dense ringsource swept into Starfire, filling hēr god body, nourishing hēr god soul, completing hēr godly authority, and elevating hēr personhood. As a result, hēr godly authority... was advancing toward godhood! It felt wonderful to get stronger and stronger. Hēr life force was leaping, and as a result, shē couldn't help but moan in delight.

It was a deeply moving sight. Unfortunately, neither Xu Qing nor the kelp were even slightly moved.

The kelp was excited for itself. It was a special life form. Technically speaking, it was nonhuman, but it was also the only example of its species in the entire Fifth Star Ring. For all intents and purposes, it was the species.

It did not need to practice cultivation to exist. From the moment it had been born, it simply absorbed the ringsource available in the starry sky to grow. In fact, not even it knew how mature it was in terms of growth. It just knew that it needed ringsource. A lot of ringsource. Unfortunately, even after all of the years standing guard over the prison, it had not come close to reaching maturity.

As far as it was concerned, maturity was being similar to a Lower Immortal or a True God. It had worked hard until now, and only now did it finally see hope. Thus, it devoured the ringsource with abandon.

Even more than those two, Xu Qing was putting everything on the line. He knew that time was limited! Even though the three of them were working together, they wouldn't be able to stay in this spot for long. He needed to take advantage of every moment to absorb as much ringsource as possible.

Therefore, he unleashed his space-time. Overlapping universes and different versions of himself from other space-times appeared. And acting as one... they absorbed the ringsource! By using this space-time as the nexus, and drawing out other space-times along with other space-time versions of himself... Xu Qing was able to absorb the ringsource at an astonishing rate.

And thus, ringsource poured out of the wound in the sun, with about seventy percent of it going toward Xu Qing. He didn't hesitate to devour it. Though he couldn't digest much in a short time, he was well prepared. Being unable to absorb all of it on his own, he sent the rest to the other space-time versions of himself. Working together, they absorbed ringsource nonstop.

The nourishment brought to Xu Qing's immortal embryo by the ringsource was unprecedented. His head filled with rumbling sounds, his soul rose to a higher level, his fleshly body improved, and his immortal embryo advanced! His immortal embryo had already entered the undying level, but now it was going past that. In the blink of an eye, it became more solid. And as the ringsource filled it, it glittered with dazzling light.

Light swirled as an undying will grew stronger and stronger in his immortal embryo. He almost instantly achieved major success! He trembled from head to toe, and his eyes shone brightly.

He knew full well that after the undying level of the immortal embryo, he needed to fuse the illusory reality with the undying. And to do that would require a huge boost of ringsource. By combining those elements, he would be able to complete his immortal embryo. And that would mean... that his cultivation base had broken out of Imperial Sovereign and into Quasi-Immortal!

The destined opportunity and good fortune at hand caused Xu Qing to go even more crazy.

When Xu Qing achieved major success with his immortal embryo, his space-time canon became full, and he gained even more control over space-time parallelism.

In the blink of an eye, he acquired a hundred worlds! One hundred worlds. One hundred versions of himself. And thus, he was able to devour even more ringsource. It was like a snowball effect.

Starfire and the kelp went even more mad, and went all out trying to snatch as much ringsource as they could. And thus, as the three of them worked as hard as they could, the first wave of ringsource began to weaken.

Seeing that, Xu Qing's eyes glittered, and he struggled to push the Acquisitioners medallion down a bit deeper. More ringsource gushed forth as a result. Starfire and the kelp excitedly cried out and prepared to devour it.

But even as the second wave of ringsource issued forth... the enormous sword began to glitter with silver light. The blinding light created a halo around the sword, almost like a sealing mark, and it began to settle over the wound, as if to cover it. As the wound was covered over, the flow of ringsource stopped. Intense rumbling echoed out, because the ringsource... was unable to emerge!

And then a deep, angry sound pulsed out of the silver light with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force.

“Who has the outrageous gall to steal the god fodder of an immortal like me??”

A burst of killing intent swept out in all directions.

Xu Qing’s gaze hardened. As he watched, the silver light became a sealing mark. The sword and the sealing mark did not have the same origin, as if the latter were a postheaven construction. However, now wasn’t the time to sit around contemplating the matter. As the killing intent flared, he backed up, all while sending space-time canon ahead of himself, and using the canon of parallelism to defend himself.

Starfire once again became a mark on his arm, where shē went all out to bolster Xu Qing. Xu Qing sped backward, just beyond the reach of the killing intent.

Even being just on the edge of the reach of the killing intent, it still managed to destroy many of his space-time bodies.

His true body coughed up mouthful after mouthful of blood. That said, he didn’t waste the blood. He used it to unleash various blood escape arts. Rumbling booms echoed out one after another as he teleported backward to safety.

Gasping for breath, he continued to flee. Eventually, he reached the exit point, where he dashed outside. Once he was hovering out in the starry sky, he managed to relax a bit. After checking himself, he scanned the ringsource he had stored in his parallel space-times.

Once I digest all of that, I should be able to reach complete success with my immortal embryo, and become a Quasi-Immortal! However, it’s going to be close. I’d rather have a bit more, just to be safe. And then my battle prowess would soar when I reached Quasi-Immortal!

Licking his lips, he looked deeply at the sun. The killing intent from just now was not something that a Quasi-Immortal would possess.

That was a Lower Immortal.... This place was set up by a Lower Immortal as a place to gather ringsource. It’s all being confined here.... When I came along to snatch a bit of it for myself, it unleashed that sealing power.

As Xu Qing pondered the situation, he turned, looking away from the sun and at the huge kelp plant. After what it had absorbed just now, it had acquired an additional leaf. Though it was only a tiny bud at the moment, its aura was strong.

“You knew all along, didn’t you?” Xu Qing suddenly said.

The kelp was silent for a moment. Then it projected a message via divine will. *“He is the last warden in this universe of the Aurora heaven beyond heaven. Years ago, he was a Quasi-Immortal, but eventually he became a Lower Immortal. He moved up in the world thanks to that, but in the process, some problems cropped up. And as a result, he hasn’t been able to leave his secluded meditation facilities.”*

The kelp had answered honestly. Apparently, now that it got a good serving of ringsource, it didn't feel the need to keep anything hidden.

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. When Immortal Lord Aurora perished, the Aurora Immortal Palace lost its glory. All of the high-level officials there experienced tribulation, although it was limited to the immortals. People who didn't qualify to attend the wedding and witness the succession, of which there were many, continued to live life as normal.

Without dealing with that sealing, it will be impossible to continue absorbing ringsource. Unfortunately, I can't quite resign myself to giving up now.

His eyes glittered with cold light. Maybe he was dealing with an immortal, but the Fifth Star Ring was not a place of complete anarchy.

If I call for help, and we act as official Acquisitors... then it won't matter if this is an immortal. He can't just defy the rules of the Fifth Star Ring! The more people we have working together to deal with the sealing power, the better. I'll need Yuanshan Su and Sir Star Ring. Their cultivation bases will be a lot of help.

Having reached the conclusion that this was definitely the best idea, his eyes flashed and prepared to call out to them. But then the kelp shivered, and Xu Qing's jade slip vibrated as a message came in.

It was Sir Star Ring!

"The imperial clan of the Helioterrans are keeping some big secrets. I can sense that they have something I need. Unfortunately, they possess an exemption order from the Spiritlight heaven beyond heaven. Because of that order, their species can ignore the Department of Acquisitions. What's more, they have some powerful experts!"

"At the moment, they're using that order to refuse us entry. Also, their powerful experts are a real threat. Xu Qing, I'm willing to share the item I need with you. 50/50. Do you dare to work with me on this?"

The message was a request for help, although it was worded very tersely. That just conformed to Sir Star Ring's proud personality.

Xu Qing's eyebrows shot up. If Sir Star Ring was willing to ask for help, it indicated that he desperately needed the item in question. And it also meant that the powerful experts he mentioned were extremely strong! After some thought, Xu Qing sent a message back.

"I'll help you if you agree to help me with a situation over here afterward."

Sir Star Ring didn't hesitate. He instantly responded. *"Deal!"*

"Deal!" Xu Qing put away the jade slip and prepared to leave. But after some thought, he looked curiously at the kelp. "Are you able to leave this place?"

Chapter 1213: The Inheritance of Fourth True Monarch

Chapter 1213: The Inheritance of Fourth True Monarch

The Helioterran imperial clan in the Helioterra Universe had once possessed amazing innate abilities. Originally, their skin was half crimson red and half azure blue, and they had four faces, one looking in each direction. They had also been huge. At birth, they would be 300 meters tall, and by the time they reached maturity, they would be 3,000 meters tall. Some would even eventually reach a height of 30,000 meters.

Back then, their total population was vastly beyond most other species. In terms of cultivation, they didn't have special techniques. They inherited legacies through soul and blood, and could automatically absorb the ringsource of the higher star ring. All of that was because their species descended from a True God!

Years ago, their species had conquered the Helioterra Universe, and had even spread their influence beyond that. In the past, they had been considered one of the central factors in the god cultivation system in the Fifth Star Ring.

Unfortunately... when immortals and gods waged war, the gods were eventually defeated. The immortals rose to power, and the Helioterrans' glory became a thing of the past. Their True God ended up imprisoned.

And as a species, they withdrew from the war. In fact, they were one of the first species to surrender to the immortals. That was how they ended up surviving after the war ended. They were rewarded with the right to rule the Helioterra Universe, and were also allowed to have an imperial clan, which in the end was quite an honor.

There were similar imperial clans throughout the Fifth Star Ring, but all of them existed because of similar arrangements. That said, all such species in the Fifth Star Ring... had bloodline restrictions placed on them.

And thus, while the Helioterrans had once been dual-colored, their skin was now only a single color. And instead of having four faces, they had two. Their full-grown height was also limited. They could now grow no taller than 300 meters.

Something similar happened to their cultivation. Because of the limitations on their bloodline legacy, they lost their innate abilities. Eventually, they had to switch from the path of gods to that of cultivators. They had to learn to absorb spirit energy, and could only strive for immortal ascension, not godly ascension.

As generations passed, their two-face trait disappeared, and their numbers decreased. In the end, members of the so-called Helioterran imperial clan were mostly about 30 meters tall, and they only had one face.

But then the Aurora Immortal Palace went dark. The heaven beyond heaven had no lord, and finally, the Helioterran imperial clan had hope. Members of their species experienced ancestral awakenings, and they once again began to develop two faces. And they soon took over the universe.

Right now, in the depths of the Helioterra Universe, Sir Star Ring hovered outside of the Helioterrans imperial palace. Chains of order swirled around him, and his face was cold as he looked at the palace.

He was surrounded by countless Helioterrans, all of whom were 30 meters tall. They wore black armor, and pulsed with baleful auras as they glared coldly at him.

Directly in front of him, blocking the way to the imperial palace, were three figures. The three of them were over 200 meters tall, but not quite 300. One of them wielded a spear, one held a pagoda, and the last one had an enormous banner rising up behind him. Astonishingly, all of them pulsed with Quasi-Immortal auras.

Something like this could never happen in any of the other heavens beyond heaven. Nonhumans weren't allowed to achieve immortal ascension. In fact, they weren't even permitted to become Quasi-Immortals! But these three didn't just emit Quasi-Immortal auras. They also pulsed with the fluctuations of the gods! They were cultivating the path of both immortals and gods!

As they stared at Sir Star Ring, the Helioterran with the banner at his back spoke in a raspy voice.

"Sire, you have fought with the three of us several times now, and every time it ends in a draw. What's the point of continuing? You people came to this universe to collect a certain amount of ringsource. And yet, despite learning that we have an exemption medallion, you just keep pushing the issue. This... is just too much!

"We Helioterrans have a bottom line. Sire, I suggest... you not do anything to harm your own interests!"

Sir Star Ring's expression was cold. He had been in this place for a while, but had only been able to fight up to this spot, no further. Any one of this group of three would be no problem for him to kill if he was fighting them alone. And if he had to fight two, he could wipe them out if he was willing to pay a heavy price. But three.... They worked together too well, making it impossible for him to make any headway.

In response to them, he coldly said, "It doesn't matter to me if we get enough ringsource. It doesn't matter to me that your species has broken the rules. It doesn't matter to me if you achieve immortal ascension or godly ascension. In fact, it doesn't even matter to me who you have backing and protecting you.

"The same goes for that exemption medallion. I just want... that lump of clay you have enshrined in your imperial palace!"

Sir Star Ring pointed directly at the palace off in the distance.

The imperial palace glittered, and a yellow lump of clay floated up inside of it, sending terrifying pulses out into the starry sky that contained the might of Heaven's Principle!

“You want this?” said a cold voice from within the palace, its tone mocking. It was the emperor of the Helioterrans, who was 300 meters tall, pure red, and with two faces. “That’s the inheritance of Fourth True Monarch. You can’t have it.”

The emperor waved his hand, and the clay with Heaven’s Principle returned to him. Voice cold, he said, “Drive him away.”

The three Helioterrans who were blocking Sir Star Ring’s path suddenly surged with energy. It was very clear that they possessed, not just the will of immortals, but the will of gods. They started striding toward Sir Star Ring.

The other surrounding Helioterrans pulsed with baleful auras, and all of the energy combined, surrounding Sir Star Ring and forming a total of eighteen illusory statues wielding huge dagger-axes. Each of the eighteen statues was 30,000 meters tall and pulsed with terrifying fluctuations. As they surrounded Sir Star Ring, they seemed to bear down on him with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force. Rumbling sounds echoed out loudly.

Facing such opponents caused Sir Star Ring’s eyes to blaze with killing intent. Yet he still backed away. Of course, he had only been defeated once in his life, so despite facing so many powerful foes, he still wanted to fight. The chains of order swirled around him, and his canon of balance erupted. He was ready to fight this battle all on his own!

The two sides faced off, and neither seemed superior.

The eighteen statues and three Quasi-Immortals weren’t capable of crushing Sir Star Ring! That was how valiant Sir Star Ring was. His canon of order could maintain a sense of order between himself and enemies. And his canon of balance could ensure that disparities between weak and strong could be smoothed out. The stronger his opponent was, the more his canon of balance could bolster him and improve his battle prowess.

Back when Xu Qing fought him, Xu Qing had to rely on his parallel universes and alternate versions of himself. That was how he had disrupted Sir Star Ring’s balance. From that, it could be seen how strong Sir Star Ring was.

A sigh of admiration echoed out from the imperial palace. “You must be the strongest of the Acquisitioners who came here. For someone so young to have battle prowess like that proves that you’re truly a chosen. If you ever reach immortal ascension, you’ll definitely be an extremely powerful immortal!

“I guess I can’t blame you for coveting Fourth True Monarch’s inheritance.... It’s a perfect fit for your canon. That so-called balance of yours is going to be hard to sustain for long periods of time. For you, using your balance to maintain peak fighting prowess is your top strategy in a fight.

“Sadly, you have nothing to sustain your strongest state. I suppose if I gave you this bit of Heaven’s Principle, it would be the missing link you need to perfect that strategy.”

Sir Star Ring didn’t say a word in response. Originally, he had been about to say something....

“Well, I suppose I could give it to you. Become an ally of the Helioterran Dynasty, and my personal vassal. Fight for us three times. And then... I’ll give you Fourth True Monarch’s inheritance!”

Sir Star Ring looked coldly at the emperor, as if he were looking at an ant. “You think that you, a nothing species full of bloodline criminals, are worthy enough to have me as an ally?”

The surrounding Helioterrans glared at him with fury, and their baleful auras surged.

Inside the palace, the emperor laughed coldly. “I’m not worthy?”

He extended his right hand and pointed out with his index finger. The starry sky surrounding the imperial palace distorted and blurred. The colors seemed to peel away, leaving behind only black and white. Within that black and white, a huge finger of ink appeared, which majestically pushed down toward Sir Star Ring. As it passed, the void shattered and the starry sky withered.

A grim look appeared on Sir Star Ring as he backed up at top speed, all while performing a double-handed incantation gesture. He was getting ready to go all out.

That was when a familiar voice echoed through the starry sky.

“You’re right. You aren’t worthy.”

Endless crimson light spilled out of nowhere, inundating the black and white, and causing the colorless region to turn bright red! Within that red was a leafy kelp plant. It had a total of twelve leaves, which swayed back and forth like whips. Then they lashed toward the finger.

A pop rang out. Unstoppable force surged forth, destroying the void and shattering the starry sky. The finger stopped moving and then dissipated.

The eighteen statues shivered and crumbled. The three Helioterran experts looked shocked as they were sent tumbling backward, coughing up blood like mad.

Inside the imperial palace, the previously composed Helioterran emperor had the same expression on both faces: astonishment. Then his divine will swept out, converging outside of the palace into the form of a face that looked at the huge kelp plant! And it was looking at... the young man in black standing on the kelp!

The young man had his hands clasped behind his back. His eyes sparkled like stars as he looked calmly at the face. Unsurprisingly, the emperor recognized the kelp! And because he recognized it, he was shaken to the core.

Prison A29... actually came with this guy?? This guy’s aura is clearly stronger than the fellow with the canon of order. Don’t tell me he’s actually the leader of this Acquisitioner squad?

This was a different heaven beyond heaven, so the Helioterran emperor wasn’t as up-to-date on the news from the Nineshores Heaven.

Meanwhile, Sir Star Ring did not suddenly feel calmer thanks to Xu Qing’s arrival. In fact, quite the opposite. And that was because....

Xu Qing has gotten even stronger!

Xu Qing was indeed stronger. Along the way, he had absorbed some of the ringsource stored in other space-times. As of now, he was only a tiny sliver away from achieving major success in the undying illusory reality of the immortal embryo! And because of that improvement, his canon was far mightier.

As he stood on the kelp leaf looking at the huge face of the emperor, he coolly said, “Hand it over.”

Chapter 1214: There’s Ice Here

Chapter 1214: There’s Ice Here

Xu Qing said the words very calmly from atop the kelp leaf. It almost sounded like his voice aligned with the principles of nature, making what he said completely and utterly reasonable. There was no need for any additional prestige. It didn’t matter that the only people present other than Sir Star Ring were the Helioterrans. In fact, the calmer he seemed, the greater and more intense the pressure felt by the Helioterrans.

This was the Fifth Star Ring. And humans reigned supreme!

Outside of the imperial palace, the members of the Helioterran imperial palace had grave expressions on their faces. A powerful enemy had arrived, and their hearts were sinking. They had already been convinced that Sir Star Ring was extremely strong. But now a second powerful expert had shown up, and they were shaken deeply.

Then there was the kelp plant! They were all fully aware that this was the true form of prison A29. The fact that this person had brought the kelp plant with him, and that it would fight for him... was profoundly significant.

They were all shaken with deep intensity. The Helioterrans were no longer glorious like they used to be. What was more, not one living member of their species had even witnessed that previous glory.

The current generation had all been born under the rulership of humankind. It didn’t matter that the Aurora heaven beyond heaven didn’t have a lord. In their bones, these nonhumans felt reverence for humankind. Because of the majesty of the Helioterran emperor, they temporarily managed to suppress that reverence. But in the end... the pressure from a truly powerful human expert was too much for them.

Xu Qing’s calm but forceful arrival, and the words he spoke that still echoed in their ears, caused all of them to once again recall their reverence for humankind.

Some of them instinctively bowed their heads. Deep in their blood, they were servants. Forcing nonhumans into servitude was an important tool used by humans in the Fifth Star Ring.

The Helioterran emperor knew that with absolute clarity. He said nothing. He looked at Xu Qing. And then... his forehead glittered as a command medallion flew out of it.

The medallion shone with gentle white light. Carved on its surface was the word ‘exemption,’ while the other side was inscribed with ‘Spiritlight.’

“Years ago,” the emperor said, “our species was viewed with favor by the Spiritlight heaven beyond heaven when we recognized one of their great leaders as our lord. Thus, we were given this medallion that provides exemption from any type of order or tax.”

The white light from the exemption medallion spread out over the imperial palace, which served as the entrance to the Helioterrans’ ancestral lands! The white light covered that entrance and cut everything off from it!

The Benefits of Iodine: Here’s Why You Should Keep It at Home Open

Xu Qing had heard about the exemption medallion from Sir Star Ring, but didn’t know much about it. But the fact that it was a gift, and that the Helioterran emperor had used it in the way he did, indicated that the medallion was very meaningful.

Along the way, he had asked Zhou Zhengli about it. Zhou Zhengli had already researched the matter deeply, and had been happy to offer Xu Qing a full explanation. There were some species in the Fifth Star Ring who, for various reasons, were awarded with exemption medallions. Normally speaking, when Acquisitioners encountered such species, they had no choice but to leave them alone.

However... Xu Qing’s eyes glittered as he looked at the exemption medallion, then pulled out the special mission jade slip that Lord Poison had given him.

“I’m here on orders from Immortal Lord Nineshores. My mission is to find a mysterious nine-colored ice that can extinguish the flame of a God Lord.” Looking coldly at the Helioterran emperor, Xu Qing continued, “This is a very important matter, and I suspect that your species has information. I’m going to perform an inspection immediately.”

The special mission jade slip glittered with pulses of light that swept out. When it contacted the white light from the exemption medallion, that light rippled. Then the white glow from the exemption medallion vanished. It no longer covered the imperial palace.

The surrounding Helioterrans were so taken aback that they couldn’t react. The emperor’s face fell; this completely surpassed anything he could have guessed would happen.

Normally speaking, all a species had to do was produce their exemption medallion, and the Acquisitioners would have to back down. How could he ever have predicted that this human would be on a mission like this? It seemed outright absurd to him! How could Immortal Lord Nineshores task someone with mere Quasi-Immortal battle prowess with collecting a type of ice that could extinguish the flame of a God Lord...?

In fact, he refused to believe it! And yet, the mission jade slip’s unique mark was truly one-of-a-kind! Most importantly, the reaction of the exemption medallion was clearly true and real....

The Helioterran emperor’s heart was pounding. That was because, even though his species had an exemption medallion, it obviously couldn’t defy someone on a mission directly from Immortal Lord Nineshores!

It wasn't just the emperor and the rest of the Helioterrans who were visibly taken aback. Sir Star Ring's gaze hardened as he looked at the mission jade slip Xu Qing was holding. Even he was caught by surprise by this turn of events.

Xu Qing stepped off the kelp leaf and strode toward the imperial palace. His every footfall caused the starry sky to tremble.

As he neared, the emperor's face twitched. By the time Xu Qing had taken about seven or eight steps, the enormous projected face of the emperor had vanished, and he had emerged from the palace in his true form. He was 300 meters tall, crimson, with two gruish faces. And he pulsed with terrifying cultivation base fluctuations that formed an obstacle in front of Xu Qing.

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Xu Qing stopped in place and looked at the Helioterran emperor. "You're preventing my inspection?"

Eying Xu Qing, the emperor grimly said, "My species has no nine-colored ice."

"The inspection will prove that either true or false!" The person to speak those words wasn't Xu Qing. It was Sir Star Ring.

The emperor only sighed. He knew that he had miscalculated. With the wave of his hand, he caused Fourth True Monarch's inheritance to fly out of the palace and land on his hand. His hope was to patch things up. If these people wanted this item, then... he might as well just give it to them. It was a precious treasure, but compared to what his species was really up to... it was better to just relinquish it. He was about to open his mouth to speak, when all of a sudden his face twitched.

Xu Qing's gaze turned sharp as he looked in the direction of the imperial palace. At almost the exact same instant, the kelp sensed the same thing, and began to sway and emanate a threatening aura.

Teleportation fluctuations had suddenly begun to roll out from inside the palace. Someone was teleporting in!

The Helioterran emperor's eyes narrowed and he waved his hand. The clay with heaven's principle that he had been about to hand over returned to him, and he suddenly decided not to say the words he had been about to say.

"An emissary from our species' patron is arriving. We'll have to wait and see what the Helioterran patron says about all this."

With that, the emperor turned and bowed in the direction of the palace. All of the other Helioterrans did the same.

The teleportation fluctuations grew stronger. Rumbling sounds echoed out as a huge pillar of light shot down from the starry sky and into the palace, sending out numerous shockwaves.

Xu Qing wasn't unfamiliar with this type of teleportation. It was the same variety that had brought him from his own universe.

As the light descended, an aura very close to that of a Lower Immortal spread from the palace. The terrifying aura caused the starry sky to fold over itself as immortal energy took hold everywhere.

Anything related to gods would be rejected by this immortal energy. It was the result of an immortal embryo. This newcomer... was on the very cusp of transforming their immortal embryo and turning it into a mature immortal!

Sir Star Ring's expression became very serious. Xu Qing frowned.

Everyone watched as the main door of the imperial palace swung open. Mountain-toppling, sea-draining force rippled out. It was like a volcano erupting with lava.

A middle-aged cultivator appeared, clad in a crimson robe, with a cold expression on his face. His every step caused the starry sky to tremble.

As he strode out into the open, the Helioterran emperor bowed deeply, and all of the other Helioterrans prostrated with deep respect.

"Our respects, Emissary!"

The terrifying aura of the emissary, plus the worshipful attitude of the Helioterrans, made for a very majestic scene.

The swaying kelp plant instantly sent a message to Xu Qing via divine will. *"That guy has the same aura as the warden that sealed the True God's wound!"*

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed.

The man in the crimson robe looked around with an indescribably majestic gaze. When he noticed the kelp, his eyes glittered. Then he shifted his attention to Xu Qing.

"So, it was you that colluded with this traitorous plant to steal my Master's god fodder?"

The Helioterran emperor blinked a few times.

Sir Star Ring's expression turned grim, and the chains of order began to swirl around him.

Chapter 1215: Different Routes to the Same Destination

Chapter 1215: Different Routes to the Same Destination

Even as the canon of order stirred around Sir Star Ring, and the chains of order filled the void around him, Xu Qing's gaze turned hard.

"Watch out," he said, pointing in Sir Star Ring's direction.

Sir Star Ring reacted with matchless speed, sending his chains of order out in front of him in a defensive array.

Unfortunately, he wasn't quite fast enough. An astonishing force arrived before the chains. It was like planets shattering or universes quaking.

A deafening boom rang out as Sir Star Ring's face went pale. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he was sent spinning back like a kite with its string cut, his chains of order snapping and crumbling.

Astonishingly, in the spot where the chains had been shattered stood a figure. It was a blurry figure who was poised to pursue Sir Star Ring, only for Xu Qing's finger to wave, causing space-time canon to form a sealing power. The figure was blocked.

However, that was only temporary. Xu Qing's space-time sealing wasn't strong enough to block the figure for more than a moment. Thankfully, that, coupled with the blockage of the chains of order, was enough to give Sir Star Ring a bit of breathing room.

As Sir Star Ring tumbled back coughing up blood, he unleashed his canon of balance, which gave him enough speed to temporarily avoid deadly danger.

The figure lurched to a halt in the starry sky. He was now fully visible. He was none other than the middle-aged cultivator with the crimson robe who had just stepped out of the imperial palace. Left standing behind in the palace was a blurry afterimage.

His true form had achieved incredible speed, appearing right in front of Sir Star Ring. If it hadn't been for Xu Qing's warning and assistance, Sir Star Ring would have been killed or, at the very least, sustained a grievous injury.

The cultivator turned to look at Xu Qing and coolly said, "You could see me moving? No wonder you have the gall to steal my Master's god fodder."

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed coldly. This was definitely the strongest Quasi-Immortal he had ever faced. As for his canon... it wasn't very strange. In fact, it was downright simple.

Speed! He was capable of moving so quickly that he surpassed time itself! Canon wasn't classified by strength or weakness. It was more about who could push it farther, and who could understand it more deeply.

"I originally wanted to kill this other guy so you would realize you can't run, and should just return the stolen property. But since you blocked my path... then I guess I will kill you after all."

Even as the middle-aged cultivator's voice continued to drift out, he appeared only nine meters in front of Xu Qing!

That was a level of speed that surpassed the senses. He reached out with the intention of shoving his hand toward Xu Qing. As a result, he seized control of the space around Xu Qing, which became a vortex that erupted with a ripping force.

And yet, only an instant later, the middle-aged cultivator's eyebrows shot up, and he made an exclamation of surprise. But he didn't fall back.

Killing intent flared in Xu Qing's eyes. He had long since been prepared to act. While his opponent was speaking moments ago, his canon of space had begun building up, and his canon of time had sowed chaos. Together, they formed space-time, and led to Infinite Timelessness.

When his opponent closed in and created that vortex, the ripping force encountered Xu Qing's space-time. Without any fanfare at all, it was destroyed.

Xu Qing shivered, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. But he still lifted both hands and went into an incantation gesture.

“Suppress. Freeze. Seal!”

Space was suppressed. Time was frozen. Space-time was sealed!

The starry sky around the middle-aged cultivator seemed to go rigid. All of the timelines solidified. The space-time they formed together was sealed, and everything around him seemed to become like amber.

At the same time, Xu Qing shone with silver light as he was made manifest as his nearly completed immortal embryo. He was massive, like the true body of a god towering within the starry sky. He lifted his right hand and spread his five fingers wide to represent the five elements. Metal. Wood. Water. Fire. Earth. The five extremes became ringsource, like five planets. It was as if his hand was an entire star system. They also resembled five gods! The power of the extremes then bore down on the immobilized middle-aged cultivator!

Without the slightest hesitation, Sir Star Ring tapped into his canon of balance, using all of his remaining strength to turn the starry sky into a set of scales. He was not doing it to bolster himself, but rather... to bolster Xu Qing. He paid the price to strengthen Xu Qing. As a result, Xu Qing's battle prowess swelled, putting him extremely close to the peak of Quasi-Immortal.

Next, the kelp emitted dazzling rumbling sounds as its leaves unleashed its innate ability. Its innate ability was that of sealing. And it didn't seal space, but rather... ringsource! It was going all out, both to bolster Xu Qing and to bolster the sealing.

As they weakened and he got stronger, Xu Qing spread his five fingers, causing something like the might of heaven to descend.

The immobilized cultivator slowly looked up at Xu Qing. Eyes shining with a strange, meaningful light, he said, “I think I know who you are. You're that... Xu Qing!”

The middle-aged cultivator licked his lips, then lifted his own right hand, put it in front of himself, and pinched his fingers together. That action caused cracking sounds to ring out.

Space shattered. Time cracked. Space-time crumbled.

Then he relaxed his fingers, only to pinch them together even harder.

Sir Star Ring trembled from head to toe and coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. His balance, in the shape of scales, started crumbling. However, Sir Star Ring was an extraordinary individual, and thus, streams of starlight appeared around him. And every single stream was connected to a Star

Ring Pagoda! By fully catalyzing their strength, he sent starlight streaming forth to sustain himself and slow down the crumbling of the scales.

That ensured that Xu Qing would be bolstered by balance for a bit longer.

The kelp's leaves were shattering, and it was shaking violently. But the rips and tears in the leaves immediately sprouted little vines that snaked out and wrapped around the middle-aged cultivator. The sealing was being changed into a binding!

And yet, there was more. Starfire suddenly appeared in the starry sky, and hēr god altar became golden light. A divine likeness appeared, which unleashed full power. The middle-aged cultivator suddenly started transforming into clay. At the same time, the light of innumerable stars shone above and crushed down onto him.

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They were all trying to create an opportunity for Xu Qing!

This cultivator was truly astonishing in terms of speed and battle prowess. He was at the peak of Quasi-Immortal, just a step away from being a Lower Immortal! Although that one step would be incredibly difficult to complete, it was no exaggeration to say that when a cultivator reached this level, they were extraordinarily powerful. Strong enough to destroy all obstacles in their way.

And this cultivator's canon was the simple yet terrifying canon of speed. The reason that canon was considered to be simple was that it was actually connected to many other types of canon. And it had many applications. What this cultivator was revealing now was only a small portion of what it was capable of.

Therefore, though everyone else was participating in this fight, Xu Qing was the one with the greatest battle prowess, and thus, he was the best weapon. And the best tactic at the moment was to create an opportunity for that weapon.

All of this takes quite a bit of time to explain, but in reality, everything happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off a piece of flint. An instant later, the efforts of Sir Star Ring, Starfire, and the kelp bought enough time for Xu Qing's five fingers to fall all the way down. The starry sky shook.

Those five fingers were like gods or planets. They unleashed a galactic power that was all focused on the middle-aged cultivator. And yet, no deafening sound resulted. The fingers and the palm fell, brimming with the power of the five elements.

It looked like a killing move, but in actuality, it wasn't! This was also a sealing!

This was Xu Qing's tactic. By using the five extremes of the five elements, he created the foundation of a lower star ring. Then, he combined time, space, order, and balance, as well as fetters of ringsource. This was an extreme sealing!

For the first time, the middle-aged cultivator's pupils constricted. He instinctively felt great danger, and thus he blurred as he tapped into his canon of speed. He wasn't hesitating at all. He was immediately trying to take his canon to a higher level of use.

It was... something that surpassed space, time, space-time... and walked a path that wasn't aligned with parallelism! In certain respects, his canon and Xu Qing's canon were different routes to the same destination!

The difference was that he was not choosing the complicated route of parallelism. He was doing something far more direct.

It was something that Lower Immortals would comprehend, but not beings under that level, with the exception of people like Xu Qing, whose enlightenment had led him in that same direction. And as a result, Xu Qing was shaken by what he saw.

His path. His path....

Xu Qing had long been searching for a tenth extreme. He had worked hard, but hadn't made any progress. But now he felt like he was in a dark world in which light had just appeared! Sadly, given the current circumstances, there was no time for thinking or planning. He had to put that inspiration aside for later.

Next came his true killing move!

A bell tolled. It was the toll of a bell that contained a scrap of God Lord power, something that could devastate all magics.

The starry sky went blank. The Quasi-Immortal cultivator shivered.

What appeared next contained heaven's principle, parallelism, and the canons of Xu Qing's immortal body. It corresponded perfectly to his immortal embryo. It was... an iron skewer! And it wasn't just one.

One after another, iron skewers emerged in parallel space-times. In total, there were 479 of them! Like shooting stars, they began shifting from being illusory to corporeal! Ultimately, all 479 combined into a single iron skewer at Xu Qing's command.

He sent it out in a lethal attack! It shot right toward the middle-aged cultivator.

The cultivator fell back. He fled at top speed. He fled through time. He fled through space. He fled through the past, present, future, through fate and karma, through lineaments and memories.... He fled through everything!

But the iron skewer made from 479 skewers was guided by the tolling of the bell. Nothing could stop it.

It pierced space! It shattered time! It crushed past, present, and future! It penetrated fate and passed through karma! It devastated lineaments and memories! It passed through everything as it honed in on its target.

It caught up and stabbed him through the forehead. The moment it hit him, ripples spread out from his forehead, which turned into a surface of water. A blurry reflection became visible. Put precisely, it was a figure with its back turned away, a figure whose aura surpassed that of a Quasi-Immortal, and whose presence caused the entire surrounding universe to tremble.

It was an immortal! It was the middle-aged cultivator's Master. This was a life-saving projection that had been implanted in him.

The figure looked over its shoulder. It cast a single glance at the iron skewer. That single glance caused the skewer to tumble off to the side, completely out of control.

Blood sprayed out of Sir Star Ring's mouth. Starfire's god altar destabilized. The kelp started crumbling. Xu Qing's mind filled with rumbling sounds.

Taking advantage of the moment, the middle-aged cultivator finally managed to evade death. Retreating at top speed, he put distance between himself and his opponent. Though he was glaring at Xu Qing, his heart still pounded with lingering fear.

Then he said, "Emperor Helioterra. I command you and your species to help me. Attack!"

The emperor's expression flickered, and inside he hesitated. If this were a simple matter of attacking a human, he wouldn't think twice. But this emissary's demand went beyond that. He wanted the Helioterrans to kill this human!

As the Helioterran emperor tried to decide what to do, Xu Qing managed to clear his head.

Looking at the middle-aged cultivator coldly, he said, "You're out of chances."

Xu Qing looked up into the starry sky. At that exact moment, the starry sky trembled, and a huge rift was sliced open. People emerged.

In the lead was Zhou Zhengli! Following him were Yuanshan Su, Li Mengtu, Sir Vilespirit, and more. All of the ascendees, Acquisitioners all, had come!

Another thing Xu Qing had done on the way was have Zhou Zhengli go out with orders for these people, just in case. If nothing else, Xu Qing would need them afterward to deal with the True God. Under Zhou Zhengli's leadership, they had ripped open the starry sky to arrive here!

Chapter 1216: Are You Serious?

Chapter 1216: Are You Serious?

A tempest wind blasted out of the massive rift that had been torn open in the starry sky. It was as if a huge hand had ripped it open.

The entire void around the Helioterran imperial palace was shaking.

Cultivator after cultivator arrived, all of them pulsing with baleful auras. All of them had benefited to varying degrees thanks to ringsource. Clearly, Xu Qing wasn't the only one to have made progress recently. The other cultivators had clearly done well. All of them had improved their cultivation bases since arriving. As a group, their battle prowess was far beyond anything from before.

That was especially true of Sir Vilespirit and Zhou Zhengli, both of whom had previously been at the peak of Imperial Sovereign, and were now just a breath away from a breakthrough. Li Mengtu wasn't quite on that level, but he had still advanced significantly compared to before. Hordeslayer and Rampart were both in high spirits.

However, the person whose cultivation base had improved the most was Yuanshan Su. It was hard to say where she had gone to do it, but her immortal embryo was far stronger than before.

Because of all that, this group of cultivators was definitely capable of shifting the tide of this battle. Considering that all of them were ascendees, they had all survived countless deadly fights to get to this point. Even when acting as lone wolves, they were still dangerous. Now that they were here, their auras surged, and they were clearly ready for ruthless combat. They were a force no one would dare to take lightly.

Their gazes flitted to take in the Helioterran emperor... and the Quasi-Immortal cultivator!

All of the other Helioterrans were shaken, and suddenly got very uneasy feelings. The emperor scowled. This was the exact worst-case scenario he had wanted to avoid. Normally speaking, the chances of something like this were slim to none. Considering the emperor had an exemption medallion, he wasn't worried about Acquisitioners showing up. At the very worst, he might have to pay them off to avoid trouble. That was why he had initially acted so fearlessly.

Yet none of his countless calculations could have prompted him to predict that Xu Qing would be on a mission for the Immortal Lord. That was the key to everything. Furthermore... his battle prowess was shocking, and he didn't even seem scared of this emissary! In fact, he had seemed just on the verge of killing him!

What's more, every single one of the people who just showed up, whether in terms of aura or just the sense I get from them, are obviously chosen.... This squadron of Acquisitioners is full of extraordinary individuals!

That thought struck fear into the heart of the Helioterran emperor.

Meanwhile, the Quasi-Immortal cultivator was sighing in his heart. He knew all about Xu Qing's background. He had a very different identity than the Helioterran emperor, so he knew much more about what was happening in various heavens beyond heaven.

He had already heard that all of the new ascendees had become Acquisitioners. After all, the population of the heavens beyond heaven also included native cultivators who were born and raised there. In fact, they formed the majority of the population. Normally speaking, only ten percent of a squadron like this would be made of ascendees, as the ascendees would just replace people who were eliminated for one reason or another.

But this group of ascendees was different. On previous occasions, ascendees were usually sent out to different departments on different assignments. It was very rare for an entire group of them to be assigned to do the same thing. In fact, this was the first time in history that a group of ascendees had all been assigned to form a squadron in the Department of Acquisitions.

And thus, the arriving Acquisitioners caused the middle-aged cultivator to sigh. This was one reason why he had acted so decisively, and even gone so far as to demand assistance from the Helioterrans.

He knew that he couldn't afford any delays. He needed to act quickly. It was true that he had an impressive background, and had even been on the path to becoming an Ascendee himself. But who here didn't have an impressive background? And even those who didn't, but still managed to get to the heavens beyond heaven, obviously had access to destined opportunities.

Thus, it didn't matter that he was a Quasi-Immortal with a Lower Immortal Master. He knew full well that when dealing with a group like this... he might be able to provoke one or two of them individually, and could possibly even kill them. But if he had to deal with the whole group....

Not even his Master would dare to do that! So he quickly retreated to the imperial palace, where he would use the teleportation portal to go back home. He wasn't going to worry any further about what was happening here. A fight like this... was not something he could win in a short time.

Another reason he chose to leave was that the situation was simply too unfavorable, and he was not confident he could solve it with force. And any slip-up could lead to his own death! So he decided to retreat.

Xu Qing was not surprised by his decision. Only a complete fool would fail to retreat in the face of so many opponents. That was especially true considering how close he had come to dying moments ago.

"But do you really think you can leave, just like that?" Eyes flashing coldly, he pointed out with his finger. "Send him on his way!"

Zhou Zhengli's aura surged, and he replied, "Follow orders!"

Li Mengtu didn't hesitate to attack. Sir Vilespirit blinked a few times, but he was familiar with how Xu Qing operated. Considering he wasn't in danger of losing his life, he joined in the attack. Yuanshan Su didn't hesitate to unleash her full battle prowess.

All of this had started because of Sir Star Ring, so he naturally went all out.

Hordeslayer and Rampart saw Sir Star Ring taking action. They were grateful to him, and they were in awe of Xu Qing, so they attacked with full force. Although they all had their own thoughts and considerations, they were united in the moment, so they all unleashed their cultivation bases and used their trump cards.

Nearly a hundred ascendees launched killing moves, which became like asteroids, combining into a shining force that shook the universe. It raged toward the Helioterran imperial palace with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force. Nothing could stop it. Even if the imperial palace had been made with more impressive materials, it couldn't stand up to that force. In the blink of an eye, it shattered into dust.

It revealed the entrance to the Helioterran ancestral land, as well as the middle-aged cultivator, who had just been starting to blur away on the teleportation portal. His face fell, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. And as the teleportation was interrupted, his entire body distorted.

All he could do was willingly sustain injuries to use his Master's mark to forcefully complete the teleportation. An instant later, he vanished.

Xu Qing looked at the spot coldly. He felt no regret. If the man was gone, he was gone. He was, after all, a peak Quasi-Immortal.

I'll just kill him next time I see him.

Xu Qing looked over at the Helioterran emperor. So did the other Acquisitioners.

The emperor shivered deep inside. And then, without a bit of hesitation, he dropped to his knees and bowed to Xu Qing. Lifting up both hands, he held out the inheritance of Fourth True Monarch.

"Our humble species has erred," he said loudly. "Please take this item to assuage your anger!"

The emperor was truly nervous, and was really out of options. He was about to continue speaking when Xu Qing waved his hand.

The clump of yellow clay flew into Xu Qing's hand. After fiddling with it for a moment, he split it in half, keeping some for himself and giving the rest to Sir Star Ring.

"Many thanks for your help, all of you," he said calmly. "I was given a mission by the Immortal Lord to look for a nine-colored piece of ice that can extinguish the flame of a God Lord. I noticed something suspicious about this species. I hope I can trouble you to inspect their ancestral land for me."

The ascendees' eyes lit up. They understood what was at stake, so it was with great enthusiasm that they shot into the ancestral land of the Helioterrans.

Xu Qing waited outside and continued to fiddle with the heaven's principle clay.

The Helioterran emperor's complexion shifted as his anxiety built. Unfortunately, he was in a completely powerless position right now. And then his face flickered even more dramatically.

Sir Star Ring had just emerged from the entrance to the Helioterran ancestral land, a quizzical expression on his face.

"We found something unusual. Something with nine colors. Do you want to take a look for yourself?"

Xu Qing actually looked surprised. "Are you serious?"

Sir Star Ring hesitated. "I'm not totally sure what it is. But I can tell it's connected to the Aurora Immortal Palace."

Chapter 1217: Nine-Colored Ice Coffin

Chapter 1217: Nine-Colored Ice Coffin

Xu Qing had a hard time believing that the pretext he had thrown out was actually true, and that the Helioterra Universe actually had the nine-colored ice that Immortal Lord Nineshores sought! If things turned out to be that simple, then the mission from Immortal Lord Nineshores was going to turn out to be little more than child's play. What was more, he would need to completely rethink his judgment of Poison Monarch.

But no matter how he considered the situation, it seemed extremely unlikely that the nine-colored ice he sought was really here. With such thoughts on his mind, he put away the heaven's principle clay he had been toying with. However, he didn't immediately enter the Helioterran ancestral land. Instead, he turned to look at the Helioterran emperor prostrating to him.

The emperor's eyes were wide with disbelief, and he was trembling. He was fully aware that if he didn't provide a very clear explanation, then his entire species would likely be damned by myriad tribulations. This was something related to an Immortal Lord.... Not even his patron would utter a peep considering these circumstances.

Noticing Xu Qing looking at him, he immediately called, "Exalted one, this is a misunderstanding!! I know what this fellow daoist is talking about, and it's definitely not the nine-colored ice referred to by Immortal Lord Nineshores. It's a remnant of the Aurora Immortal Palace. In our species' efforts to memorialize the Aurora Immortal Palace, we paid a huge price to fish a coffin out of the void!!

"It's true that the coffin is made of ice, and it also has nine colors. But it's not the thing you're looking for!"

In his anxiety, the emperor wasn't hiding anything. He explained everything openly.

Xu Qing's face remained expressionless as he said, "I'll find out one way or another by checking in person. Right now, all members of the Helioterran species, from the emperor on high to the lowliest member, will produce a drop of soul blood! Any who resist will be killed on the spot!"

Sir Star Ring bristled aggressively, as did the kelp plant and Starfire.

The Helioterran emperor hesitated only briefly. He was a decisive individual, and he knew that he couldn't afford any more misunderstandings. It didn't seem like this request was an attempt to wipe out his species more easily. It was more like... collateral. This person was worried about unexpected things happening in the ancestral land.

The emperor gritted his teeth, then reached up to his forehead and extracted some soul blood. He then indicated orders to be sent to the rest of his species. His heart was full of bitterness. The other Helioterrans quietly extracted their own soul blood.

The soul blood converged in front of Xu Qing. Waving his hand, he sent it to Starfire.

"You stay out here," he said. "If anything happens to us inside, wipe out all of the Helioterrans."

Starfire nodded gravely, collected up the soul blood, and then sent godly might out to cover the Helioterrans.

Xu Qing still didn't feel completely confident that he had enough collateral, so he looked at the kelp plant.... He still didn't completely trust the kelp. Eyes narrowing, he sent it a message via divine will, telling it to seal the Helioterran emperor and then go with him into the ancestral land.

The kelp seemed to be muttering to itself, but it did choose to send out a leaf, which became a sealing mark on the emperor. The emperor didn't dare to resist.

Having done all that, Xu Qing took the kelp plant and the sealed emperor with him as he followed Sir Star Ring into the entrance.

The Helioterrans' ancestral land was in a hidden galaxy. A bird's eye view of the place revealed countless heavenly bodies and flickering natural laws.

One point of light stuck out to Xu Qing. He sent out his divine will, which caused the galaxy to expand rapidly in front of him. Larger and larger it grew from his perspective, and the process didn't slow down. It grew immense, until ultimately, his view passed numerous planets and heavenly bodies. Then his gaze hardened.

In the very middle of the galaxy, in the spot he had noticed earlier, there were five enormous figures seated cross-legged. They were all Helioterrans. They were enormous and multicolored, with many faces, but they were all withered up. They were corpses. And they were the corpses of gods! Put precisely, these were god corpses belonging to the Helioterran species.

In the middle of the five corpses was a planet. It was completely frozen in ice. There was no life on the planet, only a coffin! And that coffin was made of ice that radiated a nine-colored glow.

A number of ascendees had gathered in that area, and their eyes gleamed as they observed the situation. None were making any moves.

"That setup is unusual," Sir Star Ring said.

Xu Qing looked at it thoughtfully.

The Helioterran emperor quickly offered an explanation. "Exalted one, those corpses are gods that were members of our species long ago. After we surrendered to the immortals, we were assigned the mission of keeping their bloodline suppressed. Countless years have passed since then, and we've stuck to the mission the entire time. We've never wavered.

"The coffin is there to keep them more firmly suppressed. After all... if they were somehow resurrected, they obviously wouldn't approve of our species. In fact, the first thing they would do would be to devour all of us."

Sir Star Ring eyed the emperor of the Helioterrans. He had heard of similar situations before. The Fifth Star Ring was full of many species who were tasked with suppressing their ancestral gods.

"Interesting," Xu Qing said calmly. "And you say you've never wavered?"

The emperor's heart thumped in his chest. "Exalted one," he said carefully, "what exactly do you mean by that...?"

Sir Star Ring looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he realized what was going on.

To the cultivators of the Fifth Star Ring, the suppression of gods was important. That was why the star ring lacked mutagen and abounded with immortal energy. That was also why the species here couldn't cultivate the path of gods. Because of that, old-timers would probably understand what they were looking at here. But more modern generations of cultivators would never have seen anything like it, and would have no idea what they were looking at.

But Xu Qing was not ordinary. He came from the Ninth Star Ring. In the Revered Ancient mainland, the gods wreaked havoc, and there were many species who outright worshiped gods. What was more, Xu Qing had personally witnessed multiple instances of godly ascension.

Whether it was the godchild of Crimson Mother, Empress Summer Departure, or that situation in the ghost hollow.... They all gave him similar sensations. And that was why he instantly realized what he was looking at....

This was obviously a godly ascension ceremony! However, based on what he could tell, this ceremony was incomplete. It wasn't very impressive.

It's been hidden.

Eyes narrowing, he waved his hand, and a band of silver light emerged from his immortal embryo.

Silver was the color of immortals. Gods absorbed ringsource and emitted holy golden light. That was why Xu Qing always saw gods covered with golden light. But when cultivators absorbed ringsource, they emitted silver light.

A stream of silver immortal light swirled in Xu Qing's palm, and then he flicked his hand. The light shot into the galaxy, where it merged with some starlight, turning it silver.

The silver spread. It didn't fill the entire galaxy. It just filled the galaxy's starlight. Gradually, one stream of starlight after another turned silver. From Xu Qing's high vantage point, it looked like a silver web spreading throughout the galaxy.

Then Xu Qing waved his hand to adjust it, and the different bright and dark spots in the web shifted, until it revealed an astonishing spell formation. The spell formation was just as large as the galaxy itself, and it connected all of the planets. In the middle of all that were the five corpses and the ice coffin. They formed two forces, one on the inside and one on the outside. In that manner, a huge convergence of ringsource was created.

When the Helioterran emperor saw what was happening, his face went pale. Sir Star Ring also reacted with visible surprise.

Then Xu Qing spoke. "Originally, this was all designed for the suppression effort you mentioned. But you used that as the foundation to build something much bigger. You created a godly ascension ceremony. Unfortunately, it's not complete. Because of that, the godly ascension won't work. Do you have an explanation for this, emperor?"

Xu Qing turned to look at the ashen-faced emperor.

Trembling from head to toe, the emperor dropped to his knees. “Exalted one, I would never dare to allow my species to attempt godly ascension. All of this was set up... to purify the blood of our species.”

The emperor didn’t dare to hide anything further. How could he ever have guessed that this secret attempt at godly ascension in the Fifth Star Ring would be identified so easily?

“That’s not important,” Xu Qing said. He reached out and clenched his hand into a fist.

A cracking sound rang out through the starry sky. Silver light flared from the spell formation as several key sections were broken. The ceremony was thus crippled.

“Sir Star Ring,” said Xu Qing, “you can lead people onto the planet now. Take that coffin. And have everyone prepare to absorb the ringsource that will come as a result.”

Sir Star Ring nodded and flew toward the planet.

Xu Qing waited quietly. Before long, he watched as the planet of ice trembled. Then a huge eruption of ringsource swept through the galaxy. The ceremony had been destroyed.

Afterwards, Sir Star Ring and Zhou Zhengli returned, dragging with them the nine-colored ice coffin.

Xu Qing knew what it was as soon as he laid eyes on it. No one else would have any idea what it was, because it hadn’t been in the reflected history of the Aurora Immortal Palace. But Xu Qing had possessed Young Lord Aurora, so his memories contained information about it.

“After Young Lord Aurora was born, his parents put him to sleep until after the gods had been subjugated. And to do that, they created a coffin. It does look like it’s made from nine-colored ice, but this is probably not the item Immortal Lord Nineshores is looking for.”

Xu Qing put the coffin away and turned to leave. He didn’t care if the emperor’s explanation was the truth or not. Nor did he have any need to collect any of the ringsource from this place. With Zhou Zhengli around, Xu Qing was confident that the other ascendees would be able to collect it, all while keeping an appropriate amount for themselves. They would definitely benefit a lot.

This matter is concluded. We also have enough ringsource for our mission. So next... we’re going to the real feast that occurs after the banquet is over. The True God!

With that, he turned to leave the Helioterran ancestral land.

Chapter 1218: Ambition and Position

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A day later, outside the crumbled Helioterran imperial palace, the emperor prostrated with a bitter expression on his face.

The other Helioterrans flanking him were ashen and visibly weak. The three who had previously blocked the path of Sir Star Ring had blood oozing out of the corners of their mouths, and seemed incredibly dispirited. Their cultivation bases had declined! They were no longer Quasi-Immortals, but rather, had fallen down to the Imperial Sovereign level.

Close examination would reveal that they weren't the only ones who had been affected like that. The other Helioterrans had all experienced a decline in cultivation base to varying degrees. And based on their soul fluctuations, the decline... was permanent. It came from their souls and their blood! Their bloodline had been pared down and their souls had been restricted!

Even the emperor himself had been affected. Although he was still a Quasi-Immortal, it was a constant struggle for him to stay in that level. Unfortunately, this situation wasn't likely to change. That was because his extra face had withered up. His ancestral awakening had been interrupted!

And yet, the other Helioterrans still chose to defer to him, despite the resentment they felt in their hearts. A group of people was flying past them in the starry sky.

They were the ascendees. In the lead was Xu Qing. They were leaving.

The Helioterrans' ceremony was about purifying blood and stockpiling ringsource. But the ascendees had taken the stockpile and split it up according to the quota established by Xu Qing.

Zhou Zhengli took the lead in handing over twenty percent of what he had collected. Li Mengtu and the others quickly followed suit.

As for the Helioterran imperial clan... Sir Star Ring used his powers of order and his canon of balance on them. In doing so, he ensured that the bloodline would remain impure.

Given the Helioterrans' errant behavior, if events here had affected other heavens beyond heaven, it would have been necessary to report the matter, and the species would likely have been wiped out. Instead, their bloodline had been pared down. As a result, it didn't matter what got reported at this point, the actions of Xu Qing and the other ascendees conformed perfectly with big human organizations in the Fifth Star Ring.

No one could blame them for doing anything wrong. Besides, their actions fell in line with what everyone expected from the Department of Acquisitions.... In fact, this entire thing seemed to be something of an assessment.

Even the Helioterrans realized that. They knew that in terms of a squadron of ascendees like this... their species didn't measure up in battle prowess, background, or anything else for that matter. Their species was simply unlucky to have clashed with people like that. If the squadron had felt like simply exterminating them as a species, they would have had nowhere to run to.

Humankind was paramount in the Fifth Star Ring. So when all was said and done, they were actually a bit relieved at how things had ended. The fact that their species could continue living was a blessing on its own. Things had been wrapped up.

Now Xu Qing led everyone back to Prison A29. Along the way, he explained to the rest of the squadron what he had learned about the True God sun, and also what he planned to do.

When everyone realized that the kelp plant was actually the jailer in charge of A29, and that there was a chance they could extract ringsource from a True God, they started to get excited. They had already collected enough ringsource to meet the qualifications for the mission. And all of them had managed to build up significant personal stockpiles. But... they all still needed a lot of ringsource.

As a result, their eyes began to shine brightly. The recent experience of working together to invade another species and split the loot had caused all of them to warm up to each other significantly.

And they all approved of having Xu Qing as their leader. Considering that Xu Qing had a peak level of battle prowess, and was leading them to get more ringsource, their approval grew even stronger.

They soon arrived at Prison A29. The True God sun was still in the same spot. The kelp had come with Xu Qing as its true form, but hadn't dared to be derelict in duty, so it had left behind a clone to keep an eye over things in the prison.

Upon returning, Xu Qing suppressed his anticipation, quickly scanned the area to make sure nothing unexpected had happened while he was away, then turned to the ascendees.

"Now we go forward with the plan to collect the ringsource!" Xu Qing said.

Sir Star Ring and all the others had been informed of the plan on the way. Now that they were present to see and sense everything personally, their eyes were shining with anticipation and determination.

Without another word, Xu Qing shot toward the sun. The kelp clone's roots wriggled aside to make an opening, all while the true form provided a boost to everyone as they followed Xu Qing.

Zhou Zhengli, Sir Vilespirit, Yuanshan Su, and Li Mengtu were among them. Before long, the Acquisitioner squadron had entered the sun like a pack of hungry wolves.

Time passed. Three days later, the sun started trembling, and the kelp plant outside swayed back and forth violently.

It lasted for seven days. Rumbling echoed out into the starry sky, thanks to the violet ringsource fluctuations from the sun. Apparently, the sealing mark had been broken. A few more days passed. The sun was starting to get less fiery and hot. It was even shrinking. Apparently, there was going to be another eruption of ringsource.

However, that was when an intense stream of divine will swept through the interior of the sun. It turned into a voice.

“All of you... that’s enough!! This fodder is mine to take away. You have ten breaths of time to get the hell out of here. Any who remain after that will die here, and neither your Masters nor your backing organizations will have any cause to blame me!”

The thunderous voice shook the entire Helioterra Universe. Countless galaxies and planets shook, and all living beings trembled.

Even Xu Qing and the other ascendees were stricken with fear. After all, they had invaded this True God sun. Coughing up blood and facial expressions flickering, they fell into retreat.

By the time the ten breaths of time had passed, they were outside of the sun. The moment they appeared out in the starry sky, a huge vortex opened up beneath the True God sun. It looked like a gigantic mouth. Then a gargantuan hand stretched out, grabbed the sun, and dragged it into the vortex.

The kelp had no choice but to loosen its grip via the roots, otherwise it would have been dragged inside as well.

All of this takes some time to describe, but from the moment the ascendees appeared out in the open to when the vortex and hand appeared, only an instant passed. Then the hand dragged the sun into the vortex, and they all disappeared.

It was as if nothing had ever been in that spot. The only thing left behind was the quivering kelp, as well as Xu Qing and the ascendees, all of them scowling. Everyone seemed to be at a loss for words.

After going inside, they had encountered some difficulties breaking through the two sealing marks from before. But things had generally gone smoothly, and they had managed to absorb quite a bit of ringsource from the True God. Unfortunately... when they opened the third sealing mark, something unexpected happened.

There was an eye in the third sealing mark! It was the eye of an immortal, and it was the true form of the sealing mark restraining the True God sun.

The moment they spotted the eye, it opened and unleashed a terrifying tempest-like will. None of them had been able to stand up to it. There was no doubt as to its identity. It belonged to the Lower Immortal who was responsible for the entire situation.

Clearly, he had once been a minor government official in the Aurora heaven beyond heaven, and upon learning from his apprentice that something was going on, he erupted into a fury.

And he had given them ten breaths of time to leave. Not being willing to leave the True God sun behind, he had paid a heavy price to take it away. Apparently, the Lower Immortal hadn’t been able to do anything else but that.

And there wasn’t anything Xu Qing and the others could have done either. They weren’t strong enough to challenge a Lower Immortal. All they could do was sigh and leave.

The kelp plant looked confused. The prison it had been guarding... was gone. The gods in its leaves had been taken away by the warden. Now it had no mission left in this world....

In response to Xu Qing's suggestion, it left with them.

Eventually, they ran into an asteroid field. There, they all selected asteroids where they settled cross-legged to work on digesting the ringsource they had taken. They would leave the universe in a month. Though they had only taken the ringsource from behind two sealing marks, that was still a significant amount.

Half a month went by quickly. The asteroid field drifted quietly through the starry sky.

During the time that passed, the ascendees all improved their cultivation bases and battle prowess thanks to the ringsource. Their auras were now much fiercer than before.

When the seventeenth day came... a magnificent aura suddenly spread through the floating asteroid field. The aura was so strong it threw the asteroids into chaos.

Space-time rippled. The five elements merged. The natural law of the universe stirred, converging into a dazzling, multicolored display. Deafening rumbling sounds echoed out, like the thump of a heartbeat or the crash of heavenly thunder.

Everyone was shaken deeply. Even as they sat there cross-legged, they opened their eyes and looked in the direction of the disturbance!

On an elliptical asteroid someone sat cross-legged in a black robe, with violet hair flying around him. He was shining with bright light and pulsing with explosive immortal energy. He was none other than Xu Qing!

Sir Star Ring's eyes shone brightly. *He's breaking through to Quasi-Immortal! That energy. Those fluctuations....*

Sir Vilespirit's expression was grave. Yuanshan Su seemed stunned. Li Mengtu was already scanning the area for threats, as he took it upon himself to stand as dharma protector for Xu Qing.

Hordeslayer and Rampart seemed nervous and even scared. They had their own ideas about what this meant. If Xu Qing became a Quasi-Immortal, then all he had to do was lift his hand, and the two of them would become immortal swords that would excitedly rush to his call.... And thus, their anxiety was building.

That was when Zhou Zhengli's eyes narrowed with determination. Standing, he flew over to an asteroid near Xu Qing and sat down cross-legged. Looking stern, he said, "What are the lot of you doing? Stand as dharma protectors right now! And if any of you are thinking of trying to pull some sort of fast one, let me just remind you—" Zhou Zhengli's eyes shone with a mysterious light "—that this heaven beyond heaven has a name. Remember what it is? The leadership positions in the other heavens beyond heaven are filled.

"All of you understand what that means. So, regardless of what the lot of you are thinking, I can tell you that my goal is to seize a leadership spot in this heaven beyond heaven without a lord! Although the chances are small, they do exist. Considering the possible benefits... I'm willing to take a chance. And that's why anyone who poses a threat to my chances will be considered an enemy!"

This was the first time Zhou Zhengli had openly stated his ambitions. Although no one could be absolutely sure that he was telling the truth... there was no doubt that his words stirred the hearts of everyone present.

Hordeslayer and Rampart suddenly weren't feeling very scared. After initially looking stunned, their eyes shone. "Leadership spot?"

Chapter 1219: An Unheard-of Quasi-Immortal

Chapter 1219: An Unheard-of Quasi-Immortal

Hordeslayer and Rampart were moved. The brothers exchanged a glance, and then simultaneously looked over at Sir Star Ring.

Sir Star Ring's face was completely expressionless, but he had turned his back to Xu Qing's asteroid, indicating he was going to accept the role of dharma protector. The two brothers' spirits lifted. Sword energy soared up. Astonishingly, they chose to transform into two ancient immortal swords that glittered in the starry sky as their points shifted to face outward. They were also positioning themselves as loyal guards, watching over their master.

Zhou Zhengli smiled in response, all while his eyes glittered in a way that was both obsequious and amiable.

Sir Vilespirit snorted coldly in his heart, all while musing that these two swords had cultivated themselves into insanity. He also wondered why a Lower Immortal had taken people like that as apprentices, and how they had reached a similar level as himself. However, that was all inside. When he noted Zhou Zhengli's actions, his eyes narrowed. Then, after some consideration, he closed his eyes.

Zhou Zhengli smiled again and then turned to look at Yuanshan Su. As far as he was concerned, Yuanshan Su was very important. Although it seemed on the surface that she wasn't very strong—a far cry from Sir Vilespirit and Sir Star Ring—the reality was that she had exceptional battle prowess. And whether it was things he had learned about her in the past, or her behavior in the Aurora Immortal Palace, he knew that there was more to her than met the eye.

In fact, upon analyzing everything that happened in the Aurora Immortal Palace, there was no doubt that if Xu Qing hadn't been there, she would have been the one to survive the longest. That was especially considering that she was... a female cultivator. And she was a very pretty female cultivator. As far as Zhou Zhengli was concerned, there was every reason to believe she would eventually become an astounding phoenix among women. Therefore, his gaze was filled with respect.

Yuanshan Su said nothing. She just settled into her role as dharma protector.

Zhou Zhengli looked away. As for the rest of the Acquisitioners, considering that the strongest among them were clearly siding with Xu Qing, it only lent further weight to their approval of him.

Soon, the people who had harbored ill intentions quashed them. Everyone acted as dharma protectors.

In that manner, time passed.

The immortal energy fluctuations coming off Xu Qing grew stronger. The immortal energy spread out into the starry sky, eventually provoking a reaction from the universe's magical laws.

At the same time, his immortal embryo began to manifest outside of him in the manner of a divine statue. It was fully 300 meters tall and looked like a god.

Xu Qing looked very dramatic as he sat on the asteroid. A terrifying aura spread off him, becoming a tempest in the starry sky. The surrounding cultivators backed away to avoid the tempest, but at the same time, they were paying close attention to the situation.

Woman Put Iodine on Her Heels. You Wouldn't Believe What Happened Open

From ancient times until now, whenever an Imperial Sovereign became a Quasi-Immortal, it was a very grand occasion. After all, Quasi-Immortals... were still immortals! And the term 'immortal' was inherently marvelous.

Although most of the people present understood what would happen when an Imperial Sovereign rose to a higher level, they were still riveted on what was happening. That was because... watching this process would give them deep insights into what was to come for them in the future. Although things wouldn't be exactly the same, at least they would get a general idea.

Sir Star Ring was paying very close attention. After all, this was the person who had served him up his first defeat. And Xu Qing had also killed him. He was very curious to see how his Quasi-Immortal upgrade went. *The most important parts of a Quasi-Immortal upgrade are the nine bursts and the immortal foundation! Nine is the limit for the bursts. How many will he get?*

There were others wondering the same thing, especially Zhou Zhengli. In fact, among this group, no one was paying closer attention than him.

As everyone pondered the situation, Sir Vilespirit suddenly said, "Ladies and gentlemen, who of you is willing to make a little wager? How many bursts do you think Xu Qing will get? Zhou Zhengli, I know you're fond of him. Are you willing to put your money where your mouth is?"

Everyone looked at him with curious expressions. After blinking a few times, Sir Vilespirit continued, "I haven't achieved my own breakthrough, but I do know that when an Imperial Sovereign becomes a Quasi-Immortal, they have to place their immortal embryo outside of their body and grow it in bursts. Ordinary Quasi-Immortals can only achieve three external bursts. Those who reach five are rarer, and any who achieve seven are considered chosen.

"As for eight bursts, well, people like that are as hard to find as phoenix feathers or qilin horns. And nine bursts... would make you a Lower Immortal! What about you, Fellow Daoist Yuanshan? How many bursts will you bet on?" He looked at her.

"Eight!" she replied coolly.

Sir Vilespirit smiled and looked at Sir Star Ring. Sir Star Ring ignored him. Unconcerned by that, Sir Vilespirit turned to look at Zhou Zhengli.

“Nine, of course,” Zhou Zhengli said with a faint smile.

“Now we wait and see what happens,” Sir Vilespirit said with a smile.

Li Mengtu frowned and was about to say something, when all of a sudden, he looked thoughtful. Then he looked at Zhou Zhengli and said, “The number of bursts isn’t as important as the immortal foundation!

“The bursts determine the strength of the immortal embryo. But the immortal foundation determines how far you can walk on the path of immortals! Every new Quasi-Immortal has to have that immortal foundation. It’s the foundation for their later immortal ascension!

“The foundation cannot be illusory. It must be corporeal. And it can’t be modeled on one’s canon. Some people prepare it in advance, but some people have more complicated plans.... I wonder what Xu Qing’s immortal foundation will be like.”

Li Mengtu’s words echoed through the starry sky for all to hear. Everyone responded with thoughtful looks. They all knew that the immortal foundation really was very important for one’s future.

Even Sir Star Ring, who had not participated in the talk of making a wager, was looking at Xu Qing in the tempest, and was thinking back to his own breakthrough. Originally speaking, he should have achieved nine bursts. But thanks to his conflict with Xu Qing, he had been unable to complete the breakthrough in the fifth world. After going through a lot of setbacks, he ultimately decided to go through with the breakthrough on the outside. And he had achieved eight bursts. In the end, he had died and been born again. That was when he finally achieved the last burst, and perfected his status as an immortal. But thinking back to everything that happened, he was still shaken.

Of course, the whole reason I picked the fifth world to begin with wasn’t just because the surroundings would help me achieve nine bursts. My real goal was related to what came after that, the immortal foundation.

I wanted to follow the path of Fourth True Monarch. I hoped to find his remains in the fifth world, and then incorporate them into my immortal foundation. So what is Xu Qing’s immortal foundation going to be like?

When he thought back to his fight with Xu Qing, he remembered the bell he had used. There was also that extremely sharp iron skewer....

Hordeslayer and Rampart shivered in sword form, then backed up. However, not feeling very confident in their position, they backed up again. All of a sudden, they were feeling a bit afraid.

Just as they did that, and as the tempest raged, Xu Qing on the asteroid emitted loud rumbling sounds. As the deafening sound spread out, the 300-meter immortal embryo that he had placed outside of himself, which resembled him in all respects, suddenly glittered with bright light.

5 h 12 min [Hurry Up and Get Those Flowers Out of the House... More](#) 463158242

“It’s starting!’ Li Mengtu murmured, his heart filling with anticipation.

The light became blinding as the 300-meter immortal embryo erupted with terrifying power. The rumbling grew louder. Then the 300-meter immortal embryo grew by tenfold. Astonishingly, it reached 3,000 meters in height, and the aura it emitted struck everyone with fear. This was the first burst!

But things weren’t over yet. The 3,000-meter immortal embryo let loose terrifying fluctuations again as it again grew by tenfold. It was now at 30,000 meters! Next came the third burst. 300,000 meters! After that was the fourth burst. 3,000,000 meters!

The process continued and showed no signs of weakening. In fact, it grew stronger. Soon, a 30,000,000-meter figure struck fear into the hearts of everyone.

“Xu Qing’s bursts are all tenfold increases!”

“Tenfold.... Normally speaking, they’re usually twofold or threefold!”

“We’re only up to the fifth burst!”

“It’s only the fifth burst, and yet... he’s already surpassed the vast majority of Quasi-Immortals!”

As everyone reeled... the bursts continued! In the blink of an eye, the sixth burst occurred. 300,000,000 meters! That alone went to show what kind of reserve powers Xu Qing had built up.

Everyone backed away further. Xu Qing’s immortal embryo really looked like a god. As it sat cross-legged in the starry sky, it seemed holy, and caused the hearts of all observers to pound.

Rumbling echoed out along with the seventh burst. The eighth burst followed instantly.

30,000,000,000 meters!

Although it wasn’t as big as an entire galaxy... compared to it, the planets in the area were like grains of rice.

The other ascendees had backed away a great distance. As they looked at Xu Qing’s immortal embryo, they were shaken to the core. Sir Vilespirit was dumbstruck. Zhou Zhengli’s eyes were shining with excitement. Sir Star Ring’s expression had not changed, but his pupils had constricted. Yuanshan Su remained silent. Everyone else felt tempests raging in their hearts.

As everyone reacted with different degrees and types of shock, Xu Qing’s external bursts seemed to stop. But that only lasted a moment. Finally... a heaven-rending, earth-crushing boom ripped through the starry sky as Xu Qing’s terrifying immortal embryo experienced another burst!

The ninth burst!

The starry sky went dark. A figure comparable to a galaxy towered in the starry sky. The surrounding planets were no longer like grains of rice. They were like dust.

Everyone was struck senseless.

Then the galaxy-sized immortal embryo shrank down rapidly, causing a host of afterimages to linger in the starry sky. Soon, it was back to normal size, and it fused with Xu Qing's true body until they were one.

This was what he really looked like. The external bursts... portrayed the immortal embryo's sphere of power. What that meant was that Xu Qing's divine will... had a range as large as a galaxy.

"Unheard-of..." Sir Star Ring murmured, his scalp tingling.

Everyone else was flabbergasted.

"This can't be! Normally speaking, this should be completely and utterly impossible. Tenfold bursts... all the way to the limit. The ancient records don't even talk about this kind of thing happening!"

"Xu Qing's reserve powers were obviously deep, but they couldn't make this happen!"

"This surpasses any normal categorization!"

"There must be other karma at play!"

Sir Star Ring had previously been the number one Shining Star. He came from the Star Ring Pagoda, and was unusually knowledgeable. But after being temporarily stunned, he realized that something was off. He could admit that there was a disparity between himself and Xu Qing. But the disparity shouldn't be this big! All of a sudden, he trembled inwardly as something occurred to him. It was a speculation that caused him to turn and look at Zhou Zhengli.

Sir Vilespirit soon came to his senses. So did Yuanshan Su and the others. And they all looked over at Zhou Zhengli. They were all thinking back to what Zhou Zhengli had just said.

As for Zhou Zhengli, he looked very excited. "It's because... we're in the Aurora heaven beyond heaven! It's because... he sowed immense karma with this place. Someone actually gave him this heaven beyond heaven! That's why... this heaven beyond heaven without a lord welcomed him with open arms!"

Somewhere in the Fourth Star Ring, in lands where gods proliferated, an old boat was soaring through the starry sky. It was a marvelous boat that the will of gods couldn't detect. There were two people in it, both of whom had astonishing cultivation bases. As long as they were careful, they could safely traverse the Fourth Star Ring.

"He has it now," a gentle voice said in the boat. The person who had just spoken was none other than Young Lord Aurora.

Next to him was a young woman who was his wife. Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix. Upon hearing her husband's words, she laughed softly. "I knew it. I could tell that you gave him more than just the immortal palace."

Young Lord Aurora looked affectionately at his wife. “He did us such a favor that an immortal palace wasn’t enough. I gave him the entire heaven beyond heaven.”

Chapter 1220: Green Heaven!

Chapter 1220: Green Heaven!

What had once been the Aurora heaven beyond heaven was trembling. The events that had just played out had attracted the attention of high-level entities. Streams of divine will that low-level cultivators couldn’t even detect emerged from other heavens beyond heaven, and focused on the heaven that had been without a lord for many years.

At the source of the disturbance, Zhou Zhengli’s words shook everyone, including Sir Star Ring, Yuanshan Su, Sir Vilespirit, and all the other ascendees. All of these people were chosen, especially Sir Star Ring. Whether in terms of battle prowess or knowledge, they were at the peak in their generation. And therefore, all of them were instantly able to recognize the logic and accuracy of what Zhou Zhengli had just said.

There was only one way to explain... how Xu Qing’s breakthrough had given rise to such a monumental tempest. It was a welcoming cry from this heaven beyond heaven. It was a blessing from it! That was the only way something like this could happen when an Imperial Sovereign became a Quasi-Immortal!

With nine bursts, an immortal embryo became like a galaxy! With nine bursts like that, one had to wonder what the coming immortal foundation would be like....

With such thoughts on his mind, Sir Star Ring’s eyes glittered. It seemed that everyone else was thinking the same thing.

That was especially true of Zhou Zhengli, whose expression was one of pure anticipation. Few people understood his canon. And those who did know about it only knew what he wanted them to know. Sir Vilespirit was the only one who understood it more deeply.

The reason for that had to do with the substructure of Zhou Zhengli’s canon. His canon... was actually quite similar to that of Immortal Lord Nineshores. It had to do with secrets!

That said, his canon explored a different direction. It was about foresight!

In the reflected history of the Aurora Immortal Palace, I had premonitions about everyone. There was one exception... I couldn’t foresee anything about Xu Qing. It was as if he didn’t even exist within the range of my foresight.

Because of the unique nature of my canon... if I worked hard enough, I could even make it work on an immortal. Though I couldn’t make any changes, I could at least struggle to see some traces. I wouldn’t dare touch them, of course.

Get Rid of It! Urgent! Dangerous Plants at Home Open

But Xu Qing... is even more unique! There weren't even any traces of him within my foresight. In the end, I left the Aurora Immortal Palace and waited outside in the hopes of catching a glimpse of him....

Zhou Zhengli thought back to the moment when Xu Qing had stepped back out into the Fallen Immortal Moors. Upon emerging, he had looked at Zhou Zhengli. When that happened, Zhou Zhengli didn't betray any reaction on his face, but his insides were thrown into chaos.[1]

Even then, there had been something *empty* about Xu Qing that had struck fear into his heart. And then... just when he was about to look away, his foresight caused him to hear a faint voice.

"He has it now. He did us such a favor that an immortal palace wasn't enough. I gave him the entire heaven beyond heaven."

Those words struck him like lightning. He had been able to tell that the person speaking those words had intentionally let him hear. They had been very thought-provoking to Zhou Zhengli. And as he analyzed them... he realized that he needed to seize this opportunity that no one else had any clue about!

That was why he had chosen to continue to address Xu Qing as Young Lord. That was why he had delivered 1st place to Xu Qing on a platter. That was why he had been obsequious from the moment they reached the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven, all the way to now.

"And now... it's time to bear witness!" Zhou Zhengli murmured in anticipation.

Everyone was waiting!

As they looked on, Xu Qing's eyes opened as he sat cross-legged on the meteor. They were clear and full of enlightenment. *So... that's how it is....*

During the bursts, he had come to realize that Young Lord Aurora had given him, not just the immortal palace, but the entire heaven beyond heaven. At the moment, he could clearly sense that the fluctuations of this heaven beyond heaven had formed a resonance with him. It was waiting for him.

He looked up at the surrounding starry sky. Xu Qing had originally been planning to use his space-time hourglass as his immortal foundation. After acquiring the nine-colored ice coffin, he had considered using that instead, as it was both mysterious and extraordinary. But in the end, he had decided that the space-time hourglass was more fitting. It was a space-time treasure, after all.

He hadn't even considered using the violet crystal. After all of his experiences through the years, he had come to know more about the violet crystal, but also knew... that it was not something he could alter.

At the very least, I need to become an immortal before I try altering it in any way.

But now... Xu Qing knew that nothing else could be as suitable as the starry sky he was looking at. Therefore, his eyes shone with determination.

Slowly rising to his feet, he looked out at this heaven beyond heaven, and then threw his hands wide as if to embrace it. His divine will rumbled out, filling the galaxy he was in. And from that point... he started calling out to the starry sky with the goal of... taking this heaven beyond heaven!

The entire heaven beyond heaven, including all of the universes, galaxies, and planets all began to tremble. There were innumerable species, including the Helioterrans, who suddenly felt an indescribable pressure weighing down on them. And to their astonishment, they felt fear coming out of nowhere.

It was as if heaven had been lost... but was now coming back! The lord had gone, but a succession was taking place!

A tide began to flow in the starry sky, starting from the edges of the Aurora heaven beyond heaven, and moving toward Xu Qing. As it converged, great rumbling sounds echoed out everywhere. As deafening sounds rang out, as countless species trembled, and as Sir Star Ring and the others reeled....

The starry sky over Xu Qing was covered up! Dazzling and pulsing with immense pressure, a spectacular immortal palace... descended, replacing the starry sky overhead.

The immortal palace was pure jade, with ornate decorations. It had countless structures conforming to an ancient architectural style, and though it looked rather old and dilapidated, ravaged by time, there was nothing else that existed in this heaven beyond heaven that was more paramount than it!

This was... the true form of the original Aurora Immortal Palace! It represented the will of this heaven beyond heaven! It was glorious, majestic, and astonishing!

The moment it appeared, the hearts of the onlookers raced, and their minds felt blank.

Zhou Zhengli looked elated. He knew he had gambled correctly! Quickly ducking his head down, he dropped to his knees and prostrated to Xu Qing!

As the Aurora heaven beyond heaven joyfully welcomed the Aurora Immortal Palace, the starry sky trembled. And then the palace turned into a spectacular beam of immortal light.

It shot toward Xu Qing. It poured into his head, into his body, and into his immortal embryo! Dazzling, prismatic light glittered in the starry sky.

And then a deep, rumbling sound echoed into the hearts and minds of all the living beings in the sea of stars.

The immortal palace had a lord! It was Xu Qing's immortal foundation! With that immortal foundation, he could control... this entire heaven beyond heaven! He had become an unheard-of Quasi-Immortal!

Opening his eyes, Xu Qing spoke in a voice that sounded like heaven itself. "Hear my decree!"

From this moment on, this heaven had a new name.

Green Heaven! [2]

1. Xu Qing came out of the immortal palace in [chapter 1184](#). ❸

2. The name of his heaven takes the Qing character from Xu Qing's name and adds it to the word for sky or heaven. This has a number of implications. Normally speaking, this set of characters means "clear skies" or "blue skies." At the same time, those two characters are part of a longer idiom that means something like Great Lord Clear Sky, and colloquially refers to "a just and incorruptible official." Many readers made jokes/comments in Chinese like "oh, it turns out Xu Qing is the origin of the idiom" or something like, "Xu Qing turns out to be Great Lord Clear Sky." But there are obviously multiple layers of wordplay in the name of this heaven that can't all be conveyed in English. I originally wanted to translate it as Clear Heaven, because it made me think of the 'clear skies' meaning. However, later wordplay makes it clear that the meaning is 'green' (while also referring to Xu Qing's name). ❹

Chapter 1221: Seal the Heavens

Chapter 1221: Seal the Heavens

In the many heavens, there was a voice of admiration that said, "It is good." [1]

There was a profound gaze full of something very wondrous. There was a paramount will, tranquil and calm. Thoughts converged peacefully, ultimately revealing a secret known only to the speaker.

"It is time for the Aurora Heaven to turn the next page of history, and let the next generation begin a new epoch. Aurora, you were exceptionally talented to be willing to give up everything. Your son was exceptionally broad-minded to be willing to abandon all.... Considering that father and son were both like that, I... simply cannot measure up."

The will of the many heavens was not perceived by the masses. As of this moment in the Green Heaven, as the Aurora Immortal Palace became an immortal foundation and fused with Xu Qing's immortal embryo, his aura skyrocketed. It became stronger and stronger, until it was so stunning it left its mark in the entire heaven beyond heaven.

Eventually, as everyone looked on in astonishment, an indescribable pressure emanated from Xu Qing, something that caused everyone to instinctively feel the urge to bow to him. It was a sensation similar to what gods gave off. After ringsource reached a certain level of density, it would provide a natural majesty to the lord of a heaven beyond heaven.

The majesty caused Sir Star Ring to bow his head without even thinking about it. He, who had the legacy of Fourth True Monarch, also had karma tied to the Aurora heaven beyond heaven. And now that karma was converging on Xu Qing.

Yuanshan Su trembled and tried to exercise self-restraint, but failed. The scenes from mirrored history flashed in her mind, and all of a sudden, Xu Qing became... Young Lord Aurora. Li Mengtu

looked somewhat dazed as he thought back to his identity in the reflection of the Aurora Immortal Palace. Sir Vilespirit instinctively took a few steps back and put aside all thoughts of disloyalty.

If they reacted in that way, there was little need to mention the other ascendees. All were shaken to the core.

But the largest tempest was in the heart of Zhou Zhengli. His eyes shone as he produced a piece of metal that he squeezed his hand down onto. The metal pierced his palm, causing blood to flow out. He also bit the tip of his tongue.

Then he activated his canon. After sending the blood from his tongue into his eyes, turning them bright red, he sent the blood from his palm into the piece of iron. And then he activated a secret magic.

Using that secret magic, he looked at Xu Qing! Everything he had said before was true. He really did want to assist Xu Qing. He really did want to make a bet. And he really did know secrets. At the same time, he really did want to follow Xu Qing into the future, where he would make even more immense gains.

That said, although all those things were true, he had another objective. And that was... to get a clear view of Xu Qing! He wanted to see Xu Qing in his foresight.

Even if it was an abstract image. Even if it was blurry. Even if he just saw a bit.... He wanted to do everything he could possibly think of to catch that glimpse! That was his dao.

As soon as he looked at Xu Qing, a premonition of foresight filled him, deep and intense, until it formed an obsession.

I have seen. Seen the dao. My canon can break through. And my cultivation base can break through!

Zhou Zhengli knew that, ordinarily speaking, his powers of foresight couldn't do anything like that. And thus, he had waited. He had been waiting until this moment, when Xu Qing was breaking through. At that moment, a tempest raged, heaven and earth sang, the starry sky shook, and the Green Heaven was radiant!

The moment an Imperial Sovereign became a Quasi-Immortal was like the opening of a closed door. Even if it was only a small opening, it was possible to get a clear view of the world beyond.

And so, Zhou Zhengli took advantage of this moment to open that door. And... he saw through the crack! When he did, he shook from head to toe, and his mind filled with a sound like heavenly thunder. His eyes, nose, mouth, and ears... gushed with blood.

Yet he was laughing. It was an excited laughter. Within that excitement was an extreme level of fear.

An unfamiliar star ring.... An indescribably terrifying broken face.... And on top of that face is a throne... Sitting on the throne is a person.... He's looking at me. He's....[2]

Zhou Zhengli shook as his aura skyrocketed. Because of what he was seeing, his canon was also rising to great heights. His cultivation base had previously been just on the verge of reaching Quasi-Immortal.

What he had lacked wasn't ringsource, but canon. But right now, his canon was improving, and his immortal embryo was erupting. He was now rising to the level of Quasi-Immortal.

A thick fog was building up around him, which was a manifestation of his canon, and contained the same secrets as his dao. Because of it... no one could see his breakthrough. However, the other ascendees could sense what was happening, leading to even further astonishment.

Xu Qing didn't care. He opened his eyes. They seemed to contain rivers of stars. Universes. His eyes held whirlpools of stars. It was extremely majestic.

The entire heaven beyond heaven was full of rumbling sounds. Countless species dropped to their knees in their ancestral lands. Everyone was shaking.

And that was because... when Xu Qing opened his eyes, a pair of eyes appeared within the heaven beyond heaven, above the heads of all living beings and all inanimate objects. They looked down on the Green Heaven! They were Xu Qing's eyes. By means of his authority over the immortal palace, he was looking at all things. It was a gaze of omniscience.

Xu Qing saw countless things. He saw all the universes in the heaven beyond heaven, as well as all the species, the god prisons, and the resources. After a moment, he sighed in his heart.

He retracted his gaze.

The Aurora heaven beyond heaven had been without a lord for years, and thus, the local species had descended into chaos and disorder. Weak species had long since been wiped out, while the strong species eventually developed karma with other heavens beyond heaven.

As for the god prisons... there were varying circumstances with the wardens and jailers. For the most part... most were unsupervised. There were no longer any god prisons with True Gods in them. After all, ringsource was the first thing people would want to seize. And of course, it would be taken away to other heavens beyond heaven.

In some ways, the Helioterra Universe was like a microcosm of the entire heaven beyond heaven.

It seems that the Helioterra Universe had a True God imprisoned because of that Lower Immortal. For whatever reason, he didn't feel like expending the effort to take it away, so he left it here.

Xu Qing didn't say anything. All the things that had been taken away... weren't necessarily lost forever. He could theoretically take them back. Unfortunately, he would need to be a lot stronger to deal with such situations. And he needed time. Right now, he didn't have either of those things.

After some thought, his eyes glittered. Then he spoke coolly, in a voice that filled the Green Heaven.

“In one hour, these heavens will be sealed. During that time, any species that wishes to leave may do so. I won’t force you to stay. However, though you may leave, you may not take any resources with you!”

It seemed meaningless to Xu Qing to force species to stay behind if they had backers in other heavens beyond heaven. The past was the past, and it had nothing to do with him.

What he wanted was a heaven beyond heaven that was devoid of chaos. If a lot of species left, this place would also be empty of life. But... at least it would be pure. It made a lot more sense to just let the species leave than try to force them to stay.

He then opened up the right to leave. Before long, many species had contacted their backers and were starting to leave.

Time passed by.

Although an hour wasn’t much time, it was enough for them to teleport out. The time limit arrived. The immortal palace within Xu Qing trembled. His voice echoed out.

“Heavens, be sealed.”

Light flowed through the heavens, spreading out from Xu Qing, moving at incredible speed through all of the universes. After the entire heaven beyond heaven was covered, the right to leave was closed. The starry sky was sealed. From then on, unless someone was given the right by Xu Qing, they couldn’t leave this heaven beyond heaven!

Around this time, the fog around Zhou Zhengli began to dissipate, and a figure emerged, step by step. He was no longer an Imperial Sovereign. He was a Quasi-Immortal.

And yet, he still had the same obsequious smile on his face as he bowed deeply to Xu Qing.

“Congratulations, Lord of Green Heaven!”

Everyone present, regardless of what faction they sided with, or what their background was, rose and bowed. It was a way of showing respect and approval of the entire heaven beyond heaven.

Xu Qing looked at Zhou Zhengli. A moment later, he coolly said, “We can leave now.”

Though he had the immortal palace as a foundation, and owned this entire heaven beyond heaven, they were reserve powers for Xu Qing. He still had an official assignment as an Acquisitioner.

Xu Qing waved his hand toward the starry sky. Ripples flowed out as a path emerged. He stepped onto it. Everyone else cleared their minds and followed.

That included Zhou Zhengli, although he followed closely behind Xu Qing. As he looked at Xu Qing in front of him, a tempest continued to rage in his heart. He just couldn’t stop thinking about what he had seen.

The person seated on that throne, the one looking at me... was him!

Ducking his head, he hurried forward resolutely.

And thus, they walked along the path through the starry sky. The path bolstered them so that every step they took spanned universes. Eventually, they reached the far end of the heaven beyond heaven. They left. When they emerged, an unfamiliar starry sky met their eyes.

This was the space between heavens beyond heaven, and it was known as the Heavenless Zone. Normally speaking, the Heavenless Zone was a barren waste. But perhaps because of the Aurora heaven beyond heaven being without a lord for so long, powers from other heavens had spread to here.

The result was that it was a bustling place, with galaxies full of life and civilization.

All of a sudden, the kelp plant sent out some divine will. *“There’s a god prison here with a lot of ringsource!”*

Xu Qing turned to look in that direction. Sir Star Ring and everyone else did the same, their eyes shining. They had not yet eaten their fill. They were still inclined to continue their travels.

Now that they could sense the god prison, their hearts stirred with anticipation, and some of them turned to look at Xu Qing. This went beyond their mission description.

Xu Qing pondered the situation.

“There’s a lot of ringsource there,” Sir Star Ring said. “And maybe even nine-colored ice.”

No one said anything, but their anticipation built.

Xu Qing thought about it. “It’s not a good idea to use the same excuse too many times.”

Everyone stood there silently.

Then Zhou Zhengli’s eyes glittered, and he quietly said, “Well... what if there was a prison break to deal with?”

1. I’m putting his footnote here to explain the chapter title. Yes, the characters are the same as from the novel *I Shall Seal the Heavens*. So there were all sorts of ISSTH-related comments throughout this chapter from the Chinese readers. ٩٥

2. I’m sure some of you will want to check back to chapters 965 and 465 to the ‘chair’ reference. I’m not saying it’s the same thing, but I’m sure some of you will want to check the wording. Note that in those chapters, I used the word ‘chair.’ I was very tempted to use ‘throne’ in those chapters, but did not, because ‘throne’ is a different set of characters. In this chapter (1221) the specific word for throne is used. So... take all of this for what you will. ٩٦

Chapter 1222: The Strongest Squadron

Chapter 1222: The Strongest Squadron

The Calm Holiness God Prison was in the Heavenless Zone in between the Aurora and Spiritlight heavens beyond heaven.

It looked like a statue of an enormous spider. The prison was inside the statue, while the outside had numerous palace structures. From afar, the palaces looked almost like nails, and they seemed to serve a sealing function.

The statue itself was pitch-black and as large as a planet. It was located inside of a dusty whirlpool of stars, and by means of its eight long, furry legs, it would slowly absorb the scattered ringsource that floated in the Heavenless Zone.

The prison had been located there for thousands of years at this point. It was originally constructed when seventeen imperial clans from different universes in the Spiritlight heaven beyond heaven pooled their resources. All seventeen of those clans still had controlling interests in the prison.

The gods inside had been collected by various means, from theft to purchase. In fact, many of the imprisoned gods were originally from the Aurora heaven beyond heaven. They were almost like trade goods that the Spiritlight clans had managed to get their hands on one way or another.

It had been constructed in the Heavenless Zone because of the unique characteristics of the prison. The gods inside of it had to be kept conscious to a certain degree. They couldn't be put into deep states of sleep. As such, it was not possible to build the prison in one of the heavens beyond heaven, where there was strong immortal energy everywhere. Were the prison in an environment like that, the gods would have slipped into deep slumber.

The purpose of it all was to study the undying qualities of the gods. The results were then sent to the Spiritlight heaven beyond heaven, and were also recorded in reports in the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven.

This also meant that the two heavens beyond heaven had joint jurisdiction over the place. That was why construction had been authorized to begin with. Because two heavens beyond heaven had jurisdiction over it, and because of the special research going on there, the Department of Acquisitions had no authority there. In recent years, no Acquisitors had been sent there on a mission. That resulted in the place being very peaceful and quiet.

The place was staffed by two wardens, as well as thousands of cultivators from the seventeen clans that had built the place.

At the moment, the sound of music and revelry drifted out of the biggest palace on the surface of the spider statue. Nonhuman servants were dancing and singing. There were even godslaves who had the blood of gods running in them, who were currently performing on very ancient musical instruments. There were also servants in chains serving fine, ringsource-infused alcohol.

There were a few dozen cultivators present, two of whom were human, and the rest of whom were nonhumans. All of them were having a wonderful time.

As for the two humans, one was an old man, the other was middle-aged. The former was from the Spiritlight heaven beyond heaven, while the latter was from the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven.

They were the wardens of the prison, and they were currently toasting each other and chatting merrily.

“Day after day, year after year, the two of us really do have carefree lives, Daoist Brother.”

“There’s no end to the ringsource, we have servants attending to our every need, and we’re far, far away from the war. This place is like a paradise.”

“Hahaha! Living the quiet life. That’s really the way to live.”

They had been on duty here for about three hundred years, and things had been quiet and peaceful the entire time. They had benefited a lot, allowing them to reach the mid Quasi-Immortal level. In fact, they were very close to the late level.

“Unfortunately, all good things come to an end eventually. We only have one sixty-year-cycle left, and then our term in office will end. We’ll have to part then, and who knows when we’ll run into each other again.”

“Let’s not worry too much about the future. We might as well just enjoy ourselves in the moment.”

Laughing, they raised their drinking vessels in another toast. The surrounding nonhuman prison guards smiled and joined in on the toast. Everyone was about to drink when, all of a sudden, a wind swept in from outside, filling the hall. It instantly cooled the bustling atmosphere inside.

An ethereal nonhuman came in with the wind, eventually converging on a spot inside and transforming into a graceful female cultivator. Bowing, she said, “Exalted Wardens, we’ve detected the auras of roughly a hundred humans outside the prison. They’re getting closer as we speak. The guards on duty outside told them to stop, and even activated the prison’s defenses. But—”

All of a sudden, a deafening boom interrupted her. The defenses had been shattered. Next, a powerful aura swept in from the outside. The cultivators in the hall reacted with surprise. The two human Quasi-Immortals frowned, then suddenly blurred and disappeared. They reappeared a moment later outside. When they saw the clothing worn by the intruders, their expressions turned grim.

Numerous streaks of prismatic light were shooting toward the prison, pulsing with extraordinary auras. They moved with seemingly unstoppable momentum.

Eight individuals arrived with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force. They slammed down right in front of the two wardens, causing the statue to tremble. A blast of wind spread out in all directions, all while more streams of light arrived.

The nonhuman prison guards were arriving now as well, and they looked like they were ready to repel an invasion of enemies. Whether in terms of the number of people arriving or the level of their cultivation base, this was a shocking development. What was most noteworthy was that the arriving cultivators’ expressions were unperturbed and even cruel.

The one in the middle pulsed with a vile energy; he was the most terrifying of the group. The group immediately spread out into formation. It seemed clear that this group of cruel cultivators was a

team of some sort, and they were waiting for something. It was the same with the fellow with the vile energy.

More beams of light were falling onto the statue, all in formation. When they had all arrived, one final stream of glittering light appeared, pulsing with an aura that seemed to be that of a Lower Immortal.

The nonhuman cultivators seemed astonished, and the two wardens were visibly taken aback. In the face of the mountain-toppling, sea-draining aura, they instinctively fell back a few paces.

“Lower Immortal?”

“No, it’s not.... But this aura....”

They struggled to control their breathing as the terrifying beam of light slammed into the ground.

It resolved into the form of a young man. He wore black clothes and had long, violet hair. As for his aura, it was terrifying and soul-shaking.

The entire prison was trembling. As the prison guards and the wardens trembled in fear, the cultivator who had arrived first, the one with the vile energy, stepped forward.

“I’m Sir Vilespirit,” he said in a raspy voice. “My exalted lord received a secret message indicating that a prison break is underway here. We came to get the situation under control.”

The prison guards grimaced. The two wardens looked fearfully at the cruel cultivators and the young man in black. However, they were still hesitating.

“As the Department of Acquisitions knows,” one of the wardens said, “this prison is under the joint jurisdiction of Nineshores and Spiritlight. There is no uprising at the moment.”

Standing next to Xu Qing was Zhou Zhengli, who smiled warmly. “I take it you’re one of the wardens, sir? Be at ease. We’re only here to inspect things. If there’s no uprising, we’ll just leave.”

The two wardens were about to start yelling angrily, but then they looked at Xu Qing and hesitated.

That was when Sir Star Ring stepped forward, bristling with a baleful aura. “We have a duty to perform. There’s no need to waste words. Everyone, follow me inside. Inspect everything thoroughly!”

Ignoring the prison guards, he led the way into the statue. A nod from Xu Qing was all it took to ensure that dozens of ascendees followed him.

The prison guards’ auras were in chaos. As for the wardens, they gritted their teeth and prepared to take action.

That was when Zhou Zhengli cleared his throat softly. Just as had been planned, the ascendees either unleashed unique energy fluctuations, took out identity medallions, or made loud exclamations.

“Our Master is the Lower Immortal known as Blue Mallard!”

“The director of the Department of Acquisitions is our teacher! Some people call him Poison Monarch!”

“Our bloodline goes right back to Old Man Talisman Sage!”

“I have an agreement with the Chen Clan to serve as a dao seed!”

“I was made a disciple of the Human Immortal Sect!”

“I’m in a dao contract with the Divergent Mountain Heaven!”

Many voices and numerous beams of light from identity medallions shook the starry sky. The warden’s faces fell.

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1223: Unexpected

In any system that exists over many years, a framework will come to exist that contains multiple branches of support. Unless someone in that system has heaven-defying strength, they would have no choice but to obey the rules of the framework. And it would be almost impossible for them to affect the branches. After all, the branches of the framework would be outstanding and powerful. What was more, after the passage of dozens or even hundreds of generations, those branches would become inherent parts of the system and its rules.

In the Fifth Star Ring, the eleven heavens beyond heaven were the eleven strongest branches. Within those heavens beyond heaven were numerous powerful organizations that both protected their own home and benefited from it. They could also be considered branches. And they were like gigantic vortexes that exerted powerful gravitational forces that affected all of the living beings in the Fifth Star Ring.

Given that, why would any cultivator want to trifle with them?

After Zhou Zhengli cleared his throat and the ascendees spoke, their words became like incisive divine abilities and daoist magics that struck the prison guards deep in their hearts. They were like boulders tossed into the sea! Every word left the listeners shaken to the core. Combined with the light of the identity medallions, it caused the nonhuman guards to feel like they were being struck with repeated tidal waves of shock.

Such backgrounds. Such affiliations.... Even the two wardens started to feel completely powerless.

This group was made of a host of silkpants! And in terms of cultivation base and talent, they obviously surpassed ordinary silkpants.

People like this had to be ascendees from the Immortal Capital! Although there were only a few orthodox sects in the Immortal Capital, the reality was that the entire place was like a tangle of

dragons and snakes, in other words, a hodgepodge of good people and scumbags. It was essentially a breeding ground for all the heavens beyond heaven, a place that was a mix of darkness and light.

Someone might go unnoticed there for a long time, but after they reached their potential and left the Immortal Capital, they would quickly attract attention and be recruited.

The two wardens were fully aware of how that worked. Yet they were still puzzled by something.... Ascendees were normally split up. They were never grouped together into one squadron. Yet right now... the two wardens felt completely powerless in the face of these people. The wardens couldn't compare to them in battle prowess. And these people had backgrounds that weren't even necessary to mention.

And they're actually Acquisitioners....

Both wardens felt deep bitterness.

Sir Star Ring was leading a few dozen ascendees right into the prison inside the statue. The mission was already underway. Sir Vilespirit, Yuanshan Su, Hordeslayer, and Rampart split up. Some went in on their own, others led some ascendees with them. Li Mengtu went inside as well. They went to different areas to divide up the work.

Soon, only a dozen or so people were left outside. Xu Qing didn't need to do anything. After some thought, Zhou Zhengli decided to stay with him.

The kelp plant... did not go into the prison. It circled around the statue and took over the defenses. It also unleashed its majesty and used its divine will to help the ascendees with their search.

As the prison guards and the wardens watched the buzz of activity, they got the feeling this wasn't the first time this squadron had done something like this. And that was true. After working together in the Helioterra Universe, they had learned to work in smooth coordination.

As everyone entered the prison, Xu Qing sat down cross-legged to work on his cultivation base and think about what to do next. He knew that their actions were going to cause some sort of backlash, and that he would be held accountable. He could think of different ways to deal with that, but the simplest was to find the nine-colored ice.

That said, considering everyone called on their backgrounds, I won't be held solely accountable. Everyone made the decision together.

Time passed, slowly but surely.

Zhou Zhengli also sat down to meditate. As for the ascendees who had remained outside, they settled down cross-legged, but didn't close their eyes. Instead, they kept watch over the prison entrance. They obviously wanted to go inside as well. However, according to the plan, there needed to be a watch outside at all times. Thus, duties had been split between everyone.

As the wardens and guards looked on grimly, someone suddenly flew out of the entrance. It wasn't one of Xu Qing's squadron. It was a nonhuman guard.

Kneeling in front of the two wardens, he said, “Exalted ones, they... they went inside and actually did start searching for something. But after noticing the imprisoned gods... they started interrogating them! And in the course of the interrogations, they started extracting ringsource. There are already a few dozen gods who have been completely drained of ringsource! If this continues....”

The guard hesitated.

Meanwhile, the two wardens scowled and looked over at Xu Qing.

One of them said, “Fellow Daoist, this is a private prison run by seventeen clans from the Spiritlight heaven beyond heaven. Given that we fall under the jurisdiction of two heavens beyond heaven, any theft here will be thoroughly investigated!

“We have been on duty here for years now, and we know the place like the backs of our hands. There’s definitely no uprising going on. You’re just using that as an excuse to take ringsource! This is both outrageous and amateurish!”

Xu Qing said nothing. Zhou Zhengli was the one who had come up with this idea. The ascendees who had remained on the outside weren’t thin-skinned. They had come here for ringsource, and thus, their expressions didn’t waver.

Zhou Zhengli, meanwhile, looked very solemn as he nodded and said, “That makes a lot of sense, exalted ones. My fellow squadron members are acting a bit boorishly. I’ll see what I can do. Fellow Daoists, can you please head inside to oversee things?”

The ascendees who had been waiting outside got to their feet with somber expressions on their faces.

“I was just going to suggest that!”

“They’re acting completely out of line!”

“We’ll go in and get things under control!”

The ascendees flew at top speed into the entrance.

The two wardens could see that something fishy was going on. Inside, they were more furious than ever, but they knew their battle prowess was insufficient to do anything. Then they exchanged a glance, and each could see the determination in the eyes of the other. They quickly had a conversation via divine will.

“These people are far too presumptuous! This matter must be reported up the chain of command!”

“The Department of Acquisitions offends people all the time. But this is pushing things too far!”

“You and the seventeen monarchs should report this to the Spiritlight Immortal Palace. I’ll gather everyone else and report it to the Nineshores Immortal Palace. These people might have impressive backing, but actions like these will definitely be punished!”

The two wardens immediately took out jade slips and started filling them with information.

Meanwhile, the Acquisitioners continued their work. Inside the prison, more and more ringsource was being gathered, and the prison guards couldn't do anything to stop it from happening. After all, the spell formations in the prison were designed to work against gods. They didn't work against cultivators, and especially not against human cultivators.

At the moment, in an area in the depths of the prison that hadn't been discovered by Sir Star Ring and the others, there was dense mutagen isolated in an area surrounded by glittering god talismans. If one looked at that area, they would see only a sea of fog.

Astonishingly, there was an altar in the depths of the fog. It was constructed from the bones of gods, and there were four figures seated cross-legged around it. They had gruish bodies, undulating tentacles, and emitted the fluctuations of gods. The four gods were using godly authority to communicate with godly voices.

"Our secret plan has been kept under wraps by those inferior species for a long time now...."

"His Majesty even implanted the two human Quasi-Immortals with his will, ensuring that they have no idea what's going on."

"In that case... how did anyone find out the truth??"

"It doesn't seem like the intruding humans have sensed us. Nor do they seem suspicious."

"They haven't found us, but at the same time, they're coming deeper and deeper."

"That's true. My divine will indicates that they've already started interrogating many of my people, and have drained them of their essence."

"If things continue like this, they'll inevitably find us!"

"Therefore, instead of sitting around waiting to be discovered... why don't we beat them to the punch?"

The four gods sat there silently for a short time.

"His Majesty hasn't returned. All we've done is issue the call. We're not ready yet either. If we take action now, before His Majesty is back, then we'll be in a position of weakness."

"But if we don't act soon, then any chance for return will be lost."

"We've been preparing for years now.... Where did things go wrong? How could we have been noticed?"

The four gods again fell into silence. This sudden inspection had caught them completely by surprise. What was more, they could hear the increasingly chaotic sound of the humans interrogating the prisoners, and it caused their hearts to pound.

If thēy just had a bit more time to carry out thēir plan, thēy would succeed without a doubt. Not only would thēir lord and master return, but also thēy could use that momentum as a way to get out of the Fifth Star Ring. But now....

“There’s no point in sitting around thinking. I agree that we should take action now!”

“I second the motion!”

Golden light flared off the four gods as thēy joined thēir godly voices together in agreement. And then thēy reached out toward the altar. The altar rumbled loudly and let off a terrifying pressure. A golden tempest then swept from the altar up into the prison above.

Somewhere in the middle section of the prison, Sir Star Ring and the others were collecting ringsource from a god who was just on the verge of being squeezed dry.

That was when a deafening sound filled the prison, and then mutagen erupted everywhere. The entire prison suddenly went dark. Howls echoed out everywhere. The gods were rioting!

Sir Star Ring realized immediately what was happening. He was initially stunned, but then his expression turned grave as he cast his senses out. He immediately noticed the rising pillar of golden light. He also detected the aura of awakening!

They’re actually rioting? Sir Star Ring almost couldn’t believe it. But he knew it was a serious situation, so he immediately sent someone to report the matter to Xu Qing.

An incense stick of time passed.

Atop the statue, the two wardens were in the middle of preparing jade slips to send to their respective heavens beyond heaven, to request that Xu Qing and the others be punished.

Xu Qing sat there cross-legged with his eyes closed. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he looked down suspiciously.

At almost the exact same instant, two people flew out of the entrance. One was a prison guard, the other was an ascende. They both seemed similarly anxious as they flew to their respective camps and made reports.

“Exalted one, there actually is a prison break going on!”

Upon hearing that, Xu Qing turned to look at Zhou Zhengli. Zhou Zhengli was visibly surprised.

The furious guards who were waiting outside were similarly stunned. As for the wardens, their minds were reeling as if they had been struck by lightning. Instead of preparing jade slips, they just stood there, sweat dripping down their faces and their hearts full of incredulity.

There really was a prison break! Before anyone could react, the ground trembled as golden pillars of light shot up. Mutagen began to build up everywhere.

The two wardens instinctively looked toward Xu Qing, and by now, the dissatisfaction and anger in their hearts was almost completely gone. They knew full well how serious a prison break was.

“Exalted one!” they said urgently. They were still suspicious of why Xu Qing had shown up, but given the gravity of the situation, that didn’t matter. What mattered was stopping the prison break!

Xu Qing slowly rose to his feet. His cultivation base erupted, causing terrifying pressure to weigh down on the statue and dispel the light and mutagen. The statue rumbled. Then Xu Qing spoke in a grim voice.

“We’re taking control of this prison. Zhou Zhengli, send orders down the chain of command. Tell everyone... to immediately crush this god riot!”

Chapter 1224: True God Awakens

Chapter 1224: True God Awakens

The spider statue that held the god prison was shaking violently. A total of thirty-three golden pillars of light had shot up from within it, bringing with them intense mutagen and the pressure of the gods. This was the Heavenless Zone, where there was no immortal energy. As such, there was nothing to stop the mutagen from spreading rapidly. At the same time, godly fluctuations began to spread from inside the statue. Everything was devolving into chaos.

Xu Qing’s expression was calm, and his voice was as cold as a winter wind blowing from the Nine Serenities underworld. It filled the god prison and echoed in the starry sky, instantly calming the hearts of the prison guards and the wardens.

The wardens didn’t care what Xu Qing had been up to. Right now, his calm demeanor filled them with hope. Without any hesitation, they strode forth, bowed to Xu Qing, and handed over their jade slips, which gave them authority over the prison. They were obviously fine with him taking over.

Xu Qing wasn’t one to waste words. He took the jade slips, then took control of the prison, activating all of the spell formations and sealing marks inside. Then he looked at the wardens.

“Is there a True God imprisoned here?” he asked them.

Before the sudden development, they wouldn’t have given him an answer. But now they didn’t hesitate to offer a full explanation.

“There’s a desiccated corpse that’s being purified....”

“It’s the statue’s true form....”

Xu Qing’s gaze sharpened as he looked at the statue. The statue had attracted his attention when they arrived, and having heard what the wardens just said, he changed his mind about going inside. He immediately issued new orders.

“The two of you go report this matter to the heavens beyond heaven. Position guards at all the exits. Don’t let any gods out!

“Kelp plant, you suppress that god light. Send your roots into the prison to help them keep the gods under control. And have your true form contain the statue. You’re our second line of defense.

“Zhou Zhengli, you go into the prison. Have all the fellow daoists in there get the gods under control and also find out what started the rebellion. You should all be fine as long as you don’t run into a True God.

“Now, as for this True God statue....” Xu Qing’s eyes glittered with cold light. “I’ll deal with it!”

“Yes, sir,” Zhou Zhengli said, and he flew into the prison to relay the orders and get to work. He had his ways of dealing with gods.

Xu Qing paid him no further heed. Given what Zhou Zhengli was capable of, he was confident that he would do a good job.

The two wardens were also following through with Xu Qing’s orders. One of them was reporting the matter, while the other was sending the guards to positions by the exits.

The kelp plant appeared in the air, and its twelve leaves grew huge as it covered over the prison and blocked the golden light, sealing it. Its massive true form appeared in the starry sky, and it wrapped around the statue, all while sending roots down, some to block the golden light, and some into the interior of the prison.

Everyone had their assignments, and they were following through in an orderly fashion. And thus, time passed.

The surface levels of the prison were being methodically put under control by Zhou Zhengli.

That said, things didn’t go perfectly smoothly. For instance, right now, the howling of the gods rippled through the previously quiet prison. The howling came over and over again, and it stirred the ringsource and caused godly authority to converge. The riot in the prison had reached a critical point.

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered as he rose up into the dome of heaven, settled cross-legged, and then looked down at the statue of the god. Circulating his cultivation base, he unleashed his Quasi-Immortal power.

Terrifying might spread out. The void rippled, everything blurred, natural laws transformed, and space-time was affected. Then, in response to his thoughts, his immortal embryo appeared externally.

It started out only a few meters tall, but it rapidly grew larger, until it seemed to fill heaven and earth. It was just as large as the statue, and it emanated a holy sensation. In its core, dazzling light stirred, bolstering the immortal embryo, and making its immortal might even more weighty.

Within that dazzling light at its core was an immortal palace! It seemed extremely ancient, but boundlessly paramount. And it was connected... to a heaven beyond heaven! It was the Aurora Immortal Palace!

The arrival of the immortal palace made Xu Qing's immortal embryo even more majestic. It was no longer illusory, but almost completely true and real. And the aura it emitted could topple mountains and drain seas. It descended toward the prison statue.

Cracking sounds rang out from the prison as the mutagen it was emitting was suppressed. It couldn't spread out at all. The howling of the gods was wiped away.

At the same time, Xu Qing's might filled the statue, spreading through the entire prison, going from the top to the bottom, level by level.

However, Xu Qing had only just taken action when his eyes started shining. His immortal embryo's hand lifted and went into an incantation gesture. Powerful streams of ringsource converged as the immortal embryo rapidly grew stronger. An iron skewer appeared next to Xu Qing, thrumming as it powered up. It emanated a sense of sharpness that seemed capable of piercing anything and everything. The canon of parallelism erupted, causing innumerable space-times to overlap around Xu Qing. All of it could be referred to as supernatural phenomena.

And anyone who looked up at the scene would feel like they were observing the many heavens. In fact, the space-times all had enormous versions of Xu Qing's immortal embryo in them, so that it looked like innumerable immortal spirits descending from the many heavens. It was only natural that there was also terrifying pressure weighing down.

The guards posted at the exits, and the two wardens, were shaken to the core. The former were trembling from head to toe. They were nonhumans who had been conquered by humankind, and the aura Xu Qing was emitting right now made them feel like they were looking at an immortal.

The two wardens struggled to control their breathing, as the sensation they were experiencing was far more profound. It felt to them exactly like being in the presence of a Lower Immortal.

He's not a Lower Immortal, but that majesty is so close to that level....

Both of them were sighing inwardly with reverence. From what they could see, Xu Qing and his squadron would have no trouble suppressing this rebellion by acting both inside and from without.

They were right. The gods in the prisons had all been locked up, and despite their attempt to rebel, they hadn't really been prepared. Their haphazard attempt had fallen short in many respects. Before long, the godly aura shrank down, and things started to get quiet.

However, Xu Qing did not relax. In contrast, his gaze grew sharper, and he continued to gather energy. The reason was that he could sense there was a deeply hidden aura of awakening in the statue. It was not his first time sensing something like this.

Back in the outer sea of the Revered Ancient mainland, Eldest Brother and I worked with Yu Liuchen as bait, all to help hīm on a fishing expedition.... Specifically, hē was fishing for a returning True God! What I'm sensing now feels just like that! [1]

Even as that thought occurred to Xu Qing, the statue that made up the god prison started trembling, and a seemingly unstoppable force erupted from inside. Beams of golden light shot out of the statue, and the kelp's leaves couldn't contain them all. The aura of a god began to rise high. They became like pillars of mutagen.

Chanting sounds drifted out of the statue, and they could distort the mind. Everyone who heard them reacted with shock. The ground started shaking, and then figures began shooting out of the various exits. They were the ascendees, including Sir Star Ring, Sir Vilespirit, Li Mengtu, Yuanshan Su, Hordeslayer, and Rampart. All had serious expressions on their faces, and all were wounded to varying degrees.

Zhou Zhengli was in the lead. "Milord! We got most of the rioting gods under control. But thēy had started a ceremony that can't be reversed. Thēy're trying to wake up a True God!"

Even as Zhou Zhengli's words rang out, the spider statue shivered and then released a deafening rumbling sound. Deep cracks spread out over its surface, and then the previously closed spider eyes seemed like they would open. A tugging force appeared out of nowhere, which turned into a true name. That true name became part of the chant, and soon it became obvious that a specific name was being called out!

"Bimo Si!"[2]

"Bimo Si!!"

"Bimo Si!!!"

True Gods were undying. As long as the name of a True God existed and was remembered, then even if that god perished, thēy could return. And right now, a True God that the cultivators of the Fifth Star Ring had suppressed... was returning!

As the spider statue continued to crack, the cultivators flew off it, their expressions flickering dramatically.

Xu Qing looked very serious. He was thinking back to what happened with Yu Liuchen....

Meanwhile, outside of the prison, in the dusty void of the whirlpool of stars that surrounded it, everything was rumbling. The Heavenless Zone rippled and distorted as mutagen sizzled. And then a cold voice rang out that all of the cultivators present could hear.

"I am Bimo Si...."

The minds and hearts of the cultivators were thrown into chaos by the polluting sound of the voice. Many began to bleed from their eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Their flesh seemed like it wanted to peel off their bodies, and countless random thoughts in their minds began to converge into one singular thought. That was the might of a True God!

Yet before the True God could finish speaking, Xu Qing's eyes filled with battle spirit.

Years ago, Yu Liuchen, who was a mere Altar God, conspired against a True God.... If hē could do that, then considering my current battle prowess... then maybe I can deal with an extremely weak True God who's in the middle of returning!

Killing intent grew strong in his eyes. He shoved his hand out! His immortal embryo glittered. The iron skewer shone brightly. Overlapping space-time went wild. He had powered up and was now going all out!

1. Xu Qing and Erniu went with Yu Liuchen to the outer sea starting in [chapter 998](#). ㊦

2. Bimo Si: This is a strange name invented by the author. It's possible the author intended for it to be something akin to a daoist name or martial nickname, but on a gut level, it seems to me to be a proper name. Normally speaking, Bi is a surname, so the name could be Bi Mosi. However, the combination of the first two characters Bimo has a meaning in Chinese culture. It's the name of a shamanistic folk religion and also the name of the shamans who perform the rituals and rites of that religion. Because of that, I'm going to isolate Bimo as the surname. I don't think it's supposed to have any connection to the actual religion. It seems to me sort of like using "Voodoo" in the name of some fantasy character simply because it sounds cool. Si has many meanings, none of which seem important here, so I'm not even going to list them. ㊦

Chapter 1225: Bimo Si, God of Pain

Chapter 1225: Bimo Si, God of Pain

Meanwhile, inside the Heavenless Zone, as the god prison trembled, and the aura of a god proliferated... numerous streams of immortal will were converging in the starry sky from all directions, and none but immortals could sense them. They were patrolling immortals from the Nineshores and Spiritlight heavens beyond heaven! They had sensed the disturbance, and had come to reestablish order.

However, the moment their immortal wills took shape... a calm voice spoke to them.

"Let him try. And let those of this generation experience what a True God is like."

The streams of immortal will replied in a shaky voice.

"We shall follow the Nineshores Immortal Decree."

Thanks to the godly aura, the Heavenless Zone was shaking violently.

Everyone was backing away from the prison and putting up their defenses, including the two wardens, Sir Star Ring, and everyone else. It was the same with the kelp plant. They knew full well that they weren't facing an ordinary god right now. This was... a returning True God!

True Gods were equivalent to Lower Immortals! In fact, in their gruish nature, they were more astonishing than Lower Immortals! After all, the gods were the former rulers of this higher star

ring, and as a result, they could naturally absorb ringsource. That meant that they were much better adapted to exist in higher star rings than cultivators! Furthermore, they were eternally indestructible. Thus, when cultivators faced a True God, it was only natural that they would experience incredible pressure weighing down on them.

Everyone present knew that, taking in the Fifth Star Ring as a whole, the return of one True God wasn't very consequential. It wouldn't take much effort in the grand scheme of things to deal with such a True God. In fact, the Immortal Lords wouldn't even need to take action. They could just issue a decree to have Lower Immortals deal with the situation.

But... to personally witness the awakening of such a god, and directly feel the terrifying aura that came along with it, was still a monumental thing.

The terrifying fluctuations distorted the soul, and caused everyone present to tremble to the core of their being. Everyone was backing away as quickly as possible.

With the exception of Xu Qing! In fact, he wasn't just refusing to back down. Instead, his battle prowess was raging, and his cold eyes were fixed directly on the statue of the spider....

He lifted his hand, and his energy erupted. The iron skewer had been powering up, and now it glittered brightly. At the same time, all of the layers of space-time around him thrummed, and the immortal embryo behind him shone dazzlingly. He was going to try to slaughter a god!

Even as he took action, the huge spider statue shook violently! The will of awakening was exploding! Golden light shone off the eight limbs as the spider statue started moving.

Golden light was the hallmark of the gods, and as it shone, the spider placed its legs in front of it like a shield. It was a shimmering screen of gold! Behind that shield, and behind the spider legs, the statue's eyes opened. They emanated cold apathy, and even stronger golden light, which spread through the starry sky like a sea.

The godly aura grew stronger. The chanting grew louder.

The name Bimo Si became deafening. Hē was quickly returning!

At the same time, Xu Qing dropped his hand down.

The iron skewer shot forth, piercing through the starry sky, its immortal light shimmering, all while unleashing terrifying fluctuations. This was a weapon that had been created by a Lower Immortal, and it brimmed with Xu Qing's Quasi-Immortal power! The attack also included his canon! And it was backed by the might of the Aurora Immortal Palace and the associated heaven beyond heaven! Furthermore, it contained heaven's principle!

Whether in terms of the materials it was constructed with or the power that filled it, the iron skewer was a superior product. Where it passed, the void shattered, and the starry sky filled with a succession of black holes. It was so sharp that it could conquer every obstacle!

In short order, it appeared right in front of the golden screen protecting the spider. It stabbed into it! An intense rumbling sound spread out!

But... it wasn't able to pierce all the way through. It was blocked by the golden light. The statue was the desiccated corpse of a True God, and was essentially a carrier. This True God was not asleep any longer, but was in the process of returning. As such, it was no surprise that the golden shield hē generated was terrifying. In fact, not only did the iron skewer fail to pierce through the golden light, but actually, the golden light seemed like it wanted to devour it.

However, that was when a bell tolled.

As Xu Qing began moving forward, he took out a bell that contained a scrap of will from a God Lord. Its tolling caused the starry sky to shake. Cultivators and gods could both be affected by the sound of that bell. To varying degrees, their internal functions all slowed down.

It also affected the golden light! It suddenly seemed to stagnate.

The might of the iron skewer intensified, and it pushed forward with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force, and a will of destruction. Pushing all the way through the golden light, it shot toward the forehead of the statue.

It moved with incredibly explosive speed and stabbed into the forehead! The spider statue trembled....

The cultivators off in the distance watched, their minds and hearts trembling, as cracks appeared on the spider statue.

And then... it exploded violently.

That said, nobody relaxed. After the statue exploded, the aura of a god didn't disappear. The sensation of a return was still present, and the chanting still echoed in the area. It was as if what had exploded was only the surface-level veneer of the returning True God.

A terrifying power suddenly arrived from the void. As it passed, the starry sky trembled, and all living beings writhed. It was the power of a god! It was pure power, like a starry sea, something that surpassed heavenly might. As it swept along, the godly chanting grew louder, and then... the entire region began to fold like a piece of paper.

However, the senses of the cultivators told them that the folding wasn't taking place in this starry sky. It was as if space in this area had two different levels.

The first level was where all the living beings existed, while the second level contained only the crumbled statue. What was folding was in that separate, higher level! In other words, it didn't affect any of the living beings present, only the rubble of the statue. It didn't involve a single fold. In the shortest of moments, there were innumerable folds.

Then the rubble of the statue disappeared. The godly aura from moments ago, along with the power of return and the chanting, all disappeared. The folds went away.

It was as if nothing had just happened. The starry sky went calm. Everyone looked around in shock. It was too grisly, to the point where everyone had to wonder whether or not a Lower Immortal had suddenly arrived and put an end to the return of the True God.

But it didn't take long before people realized that something else was happening.

No, that's not it. The god. Its fleeing!

Considering that Xu Qing was in the thick of things, he realized it before everyone else. Almost as soon as the folding began, the layers of space from his canon of parallelism began to descend. Using space-time canon and the power of overlapping universes, he suppressed everything in the area.

As a result, time went backward in this part of the starry sky, and then... all of the Xu Qings in the various space-times performed incantation gestures and tapped into their canon.

Things were... reversing! The folds were unfolding! However many folds had occurred, that many unfoldings were occurring!

To the sense of the onlookers, it was as if everything was flowing backward. The godly aura that had disappeared came back. It was once again possible to hear the godly chanting.

The power of return came back! The rubble of the statue... was visible again!

However, its appearance had changed. It was no longer the same substance the statue had been made of. Instead, the rubble took the shape of numerous white balls. They looked like flesh with white fur on it. However, the fur was so long that it was more like white hair, and as the hair swayed, it almost looked like tentacles spreading out.

All pieces of the rubble were like that. Each ball of hair emanated a soul-piercing sensation that inflicted bitter pain onto all non-gods.

Xu Qing's face was pale as even his soul was affected. But then his immortal embryo stepped forward, enveloping him. And it grew even larger as it reached out with its hand. That hand was like an entire starry sky!

An immense buildup of power existed in that hand as it slammed down! It was a vicious slap!

Inside the immortal embryo, the foundational Aurora Immortal Palace glittered brightly. The light it emanated filled the entire immortal embryo, making it incomparably holy. The immortal embryo's hand was similarly majestic.

As the hand slapped down, it filled the void and blocked everything. All of the remnants of the statue with the floating white hair suddenly stopped in place.

This was not just the hand of an immortal embryo, this was the crushing power of the Aurora Immortal Palace!

The hand fell.

That was when strange things happened. The various streams of hair swaying around the statue rubble suddenly stretched out and connected to each other.

A huge spider web formed in the middle of the starry sky, right beneath the hand of Xu Qing's immortal embryo. The spider web was astonishing. It filled the starry sky, and was made of white hair!

Every point of intersection was a piece of rubble from the statue. Except, the rubble had changed. Now, each piece was a severed head with an anguished expression on it! They were the heads of men and women, old and young, cultivators and gods. They were all of the victims slaughtered by this True God. All living beings hē had cut down had been unable to flee in soul form. Hē had come to control them for all eternity, as they had become part of hīm!

And now they had emerged to block the hand of Xu Qing's immortal embryo.

When the two made contact, there was no rumbling boom. Instead, there was a sensation of resonance that swept through the starry sky like a tempest. Where the tempest passed, planets crumbled, and asteroids were rendered into dust.

There was also a powerful backlash. As a result, the hand of Xu Qing's immortal embryo was pushed back, and it even looked like it might collapse.

All of the onlookers seemed astonished.

Blood sprayed out of Xu Qing's mouth, and his gaze became razor-sharp. In his view, the gruish and majestic spider web was almost completely golden! And he could tell that when it was indeed completely golden, the return would be complete.

I've already unleashed my strongest level of power, but I still can't stop this thing from returning. And this is a weakened True God....

Xu Qing looked on silently. He was aware that Yu Liuchen had been dealing with a True God that hadn't actually returned. Clearly, this situation right now was very different. He knew full well that even if he gave up right now, it wouldn't change anything.

Even if this True God really did come back, it wouldn't be some major event in the Fifth Star Ring. It seemed entirely likely that Lower Immortals had already been dispatched to deal with the situation. In fact, he got the feeling there were already Lower Immortals in the vicinity!

However, the fact that they hadn't taken action yet.... Well, it meant he might be able to get some more ringsource! If he could suppress this True God in the process of returning, then he could continue to extract ringsource. Maybe he could even build up a big stockpile for future use.

Having reached the conclusion that this was definitely the best idea, Xu Qing's eyes glittered.

I still have something to try!

He released the full power of his ringsource. Immortal energy surged, bolstering his immortal embryo, and causing the rebuffed hand to grow stronger and bigger. Tapping into the power of his authority, he catalyzed the Aurora Immortal Palace. It filled the immortal embryo, causing the hand in the starry sky to reach ten times its previous size. It was astonishingly majestic. Once again, it descended!

This time, it was not a slap. The five fingers were splayed, like columns in the starry sky. And the hand reached out to grab the spider web!

The moment the hand touched the spider web, blood sprayed out of Xu Qing's mouth from the backlash. The hand seemed like it might collapse at any moment, and the effect actually spread to the entire immortal embryo.

Yet there was a crazy look in Xu Qing's eyes. His immortal embryo was in chaos, but it was still being powered by the Aurora Immortal Palace. Immortal light shone dazzlingly from the palace, becoming a sea of brightness that stabilized all the weakened parts and cast brilliance into the surrounding starry sky.

Xu Qing was fully tapping into the power of the Aurora heaven beyond heaven. It turned into... an unprecedented long-range teleportation! And the range encompassed the entire surrounding galaxy!

Astonishingly, he was turning this place into a battlefield on which to battle the True God! He was taking the carrier body of the True God and teleporting it into his own heaven beyond heaven. Once there, he could use the entire might of the heaven beyond heaven to suppress the returning True God!

The power of teleportation surged. Deafening rumbling sounds echoed out, covering everything. And then Xu Qing, the immortal embryo, the hand, and the spider web all disappeared!

Meanwhile, in the Heavenless Zone, the immortal wills that could be detected by only immortals, were all shaken. Then they shifted their focus to look at... what had once been the Aurora heaven beyond heaven!

In the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven, in the very middle of the Nineshores Immortal Palace, amidst countless structures, was the Nineshores Immortal Tower, which rose high above all else. Standing there was an incredibly majestic figure. He wore a robe of blue and had his hands clasped behind his back as he looked off into the distance.

“Bimo Si was known far and wide in the Fifth Star Ring as the god of pain, with godly authority that could inflict extreme pain on all souls and convert it into personal power. The Immortal Paragon once said that this god's illusion was only partly false. Some of it contained truth! Well, Xu Qing. I've given you an opportunity. Will you seize it and turn it into good fortune?”

Chapter 1226: Missing Out on a Thousand Years

Chapter 1226: Missing Out on a Thousand Years

In the past, it was the Aurora heaven beyond heaven. Now it was the Green Heaven!

Within it were numerous majestic universes, one starry sky after another, and countless planets. They had originally emanated bright, dazzling starlight. But then, in an instant, the entire heaven beyond heaven, including innumerable planets, all went dark. It was as if the light had been sucked away.

In the middle of the seemingly never-ending heaven beyond heaven, in a location that most low-level cultivators could never reach in a lifetime, was a massive black hole. That black hole had come into being out of nowhere!

Above the black hole was a vast, ever-expanding spider web! It was made of white spider silk, and the nodes where the silk connected continued to expand outward, along with the roiling aura of a True God.

At the same time, as that godly aura spread, all the heads in the spider web were calling out the same thing.

“Bimo Si!”

“Bimo Si!”

“Bimo Si!”

Sound was inherently shapeless. But the spider web had bestowed it with the will of a god, causing it to become strands of godly authority that converged in the middle of the web.

A figure was being revealed there! It was half person, half spider! At the moment, about seventy percent of the body of the figure was the color gold!

The chanting grew increasingly intense, causing the returning aura to strengthen. The might of a True God was flooding this starry sky.

Xu Qing’s immortal embryo towered over the spider web, its face awe-inspiring and its eyes glinting coldly. Astonishingly, its right hand contained a massive immortal palace that shone with dazzling immortal light. In the form of the immortal embryo, Xu Qing’s gaze focused on the figure forming in the middle of the spider web.

His hand fell. The immortal palace rumbled.

The black hole was beneath the spider web, and the hand was above it. The attack came from above and below, and the entire heaven beyond heaven stirred. The web would be crushed!

The half-person half-spider figure suddenly looked up, and the gaze of the spider met Xu Qing’s gaze. It was a connection of gazes but also a clash of souls and a convergence of ringsource.

The moment the connection occurred... Xu Qing’s vision flashed with light.

Things went back to normal an instant later. Nothing had changed. The immortal palace was still there, descending to crush the spider web.

The half-person half-spider figure struggled, but hē had not yet fully returned, and was not strong enough to fight back against the weight of an entire heaven beyond heaven. But in his defiance, hē fought back with godly authority and godly might.

Xu Qing trembled. Blood sprayed out of his mouth. His fleshly body and soul began to rip apart. But ultimately... he was unleashing what his foundation was capable of, by using the power of a heaven beyond heaven.

He was paying a huge price, but the result was success. Deafening rumbling sounds echoed out as the half-person half-spider figure was shoved down into the black hole.

It was over. That was when exhaustion flooded into Xu Qing. He quickly sat down cross-legged atop the black hole that contained the suppressed god, and absorbed the ringsource flowing out. It nourished him, and at the same time enabled his immortal embryo to grow further.

He forgot about the passage of time. He forgot about his Acquisitioner mission. He focused fully on cultivation.

The benefits were astounding. His cultivation base rose from early Quasi-Immortal, higher and higher. In almost an instant... ten years passed.

When Xu Qing opened his eyes, his cultivation base had reached the great circle of Quasi-Immortal. He felt like he was at the peak. It was like omnipotence. And as a result, when he opened his eyes, they were initially blank.

He quickly recovered. Upon realizing that ten years had passed, he remembered about his Acquisitioner duties. After all, to cultivators like Xu Qing, ten years of cultivation didn't count for much.

I still have time. Next up, I need to arrange to get back to Revered Ancient!

Having reached this point in his train of thought, Xu Qing's eyes glittered with determination. He stepped out of the heaven beyond heaven, and when he appeared outside, he was in the Heavenless Zone where the spider statue had been.

The statue had disappeared. The prison was no longer there. The wardens and prison guards were long gone.

However, Sir Star Ring and the others had not left. They were waiting there. Upon seeing Xu Qing, their expressions flickered.

They left together. Upon returning to the Department of Acquisitions, they handed in their mission. After that, they were given a host of additional missions. As a result, their squadron became well-known throughout the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven.

Before long, they were transferred to the front lines of the war. Their squadron quickly began to perform meritorious services on the battlefield between the Fourth and Fifth Star Rings. They even captured a goddess. That goddess was the daughter and only child of a God Lord![1]

Because of all the services rendered, Xu Qing's prestige skyrocketed. What was more, word spread that the Aurora heaven beyond heaven now belonged to him. It took no time at all for Xu Qing's name to ring in the ears of countless cultivators.

Although it seemed like time was passing slowly, to Xu Qing, it was speeding by. Eventually, he got a mission that led to an encounter with a God Lord from the Fourth Star Ring! Although he was capable of fighting Lower Immortals, he couldn't possibly win a fight like that. The other cultivators in his squadron all died. He was seriously injured to the point where he nearly died. He fled into space-time, but was chased. Eventually, he chose to enter the chaotic sea of space-time. Within that boundless chaos, he disappeared.[2]

Although he managed to escape death, he suffered grievous injuries in the chaotic sea of space-time. He lost consciousness and then drifted through the chaos into the depths of space-time. He had no idea how much time passed before he woke up.

It took a lot of struggle, and some luck as well, but after experiencing countless setbacks, he managed to free himself. He eventually got back to the point where he had left. He emerged into the world.

Upon returning, he found that the war still raged. But then... a terrifying truth became evident when he returned to the camp. It was a truth that caused him to tremble with disbelief.

He found that from the time he had gone missing until now... a thousand years had passed! That truth filled him with extreme anxiety, perhaps even dread. He immediately left the battlefield and used the means he had at hand to leave the Fifth Star Ring and return to Revered Ancient. He didn't dare to wonder what Revered Ancient would look like. A thousand years had passed.... He had missed out on a thousand years.

Soon, he hovered in the dome of heaven above Revered Ancient.

His face fell.

Revered Ancient looked very different compared to how he had left it. Gods were everywhere. Humans were extinct. Empress Summer Departure was nowhere to be seen.

He went to his former haunts in the lands of humans. He went to the entrance to Brilliant Heaven, only to find... that the entrance had collapsed. He went to the continent of South Phoenix. He went to the Sea of Endlessness. Huang Yan had perished.

Xu Qing took it all in silently. Then a sigh echoed in his ears. It was a familiar sigh. He turned and saw an old woman standing next to him.

She looked vaguely familiar. Floating next to her was a frail butterfly.

“Before Master withered into death,” the old woman said in a hoarse voice, “she said that you promised to come back in time. A thousand years have passed. You’re far too late. So... what exactly is the point of coming back now?”

She had once been the apprentice of the palace lord of the Summer Immortal Palace. She had been... a little butterfly.[3]

1. The term “goddess” being used here combines the character for god and female. In the context of this novel, it more specifically means ‘daughter of a god.’ I’m using the common rendering “goddess” for a few reasons. First of all, using ‘daughter of a god’ or ‘god daughter’ becomes very clunky. Second, I have not used ‘goddess’ for any of the female god characters in the novel. All such female gods are simply just called gods. When this term comes up in future chapters, it will always retain the meaning ‘daughter of a god.’ ❸

2. The chaotic sea of space-time was previously mentioned in [chapter 1170](#). ❹

3. There’s an additional relevant line of text regarding the little butterfly in the next chapter, so I’ll save my customary links to past chapters for then. ❺

Chapter 1227: Xu Qing’s Fury!

Chapter 1227: Xu Qing’s Fury!

The wind in the Revered Ancient mainland carried a familiar humidity. It came from the depths of the Sea of Endlessness, and from the mutagen that filled heaven and earth. It was very different from the Fifth Star Ring.

Upon sensing it, Xu Qing opened his mouth to speak. And yet, even though his lips quivered, no words came out. Everything around him seemed somewhat blurry. Perhaps it was the distortions caused by mutagen, or maybe just the general influence of the gods.

The only thing that seemed clear... was the decrepit old woman in black clothing standing next to him. The wrinkles on her face seemed like ravines etched by time, hewn out by wind and rain and fate.

Of course, he remembered that little butterfly. Back then, she had been a young woman. There had been tension between the two of them, until... she took him to the Summer Immortal Palace for the first time. That was when he had met the old palace lord, who was, of course, human.[1]

Despite all those memories existing in his head, Xu Qing felt like they weren’t completely real.

“Master once said,” the old woman continued, “that people who have not experienced excruciating pain can never understand such a feeling. It’s like... they can’t even believe it. They will even go so far as to trick themselves into believing that nothing ever happened. And that’s because after excruciating pain is absolute nothingness.”

She smiled bitterly. “I watched the catastrophe strike. I saw everything go away.... That’s when I understood what Master meant. After experiencing all of that, a thousand years passed, and I still haven’t left this place. And now, today, I’ve run into you.... I just hope that one day, you can leave.”

The old woman turned bitterly and made her way off into the distance. She looked bleak, desolate, and infinitely lonely.

Looking at her retreating figure, Xu Qing suddenly said, “What happened to my Master...? My Eldest Brother...? Plumdark and Ling’er, and... what about all my other friends? My fellow apprentices and... everybody. What happened to them?”

People who knew Xu Qing would hardly recognize his voice at that moment. It was as hoarse as the grating of infinite grains of sand. He hardly dared to ask the questions he had just asked. But he did ask them, his voice hoarse and trembling.

The old woman stopped in place, her back to Xu Qing. She was quiet for a long moment. When she spoke, her voice seemed to contain the flow of history, like a reed flute echoing in time.

“A thousand years ago, that ancient immortal came looking for something. He started with humankind. When he saw the statue of Grand Emperor Swordsage, he waved his hand, and most of humanity was wiped out. Empress Summer Departure was strong, but to him, she was like a child. He erased her mind and turned her into a godslave.

“Your Master didn’t do anything at first. To him, humankind wasn’t very important. He only cared about those people close to him.

“That ancient immortal left South Phoenix alone. There was karma between him and your Master, so he carefully avoided it. But eventually, your Master came out of seclusion. He stood up to the ancient immortal, and tried to stop him. And that was because... the thing sought by the ancient immortal was that Eldest Brother of yours!

“Your Master fought for him. Your Eldest Brother eventually returned from Brilliant Heaven with a peak Quasi-Immortal cultivation base. But that wasn’t enough to change anything. Your Master died in the fight, and your Eldest Brother went mad. He became the sacrificial object the ancient immortal sought.

“In the end, your sect was wiped out. Your other Elder Brothers and your Elder Sister were not spared. South Phoenix sank into the Sea of Endlessness, and they all... became corpses.

“After that, the ancient immortal left and Brilliant Heaven stirred. The gods therein awoke. Emperor Ancient Spirit took advantage of the opportunity to rise to prominence, and Revered Ancient descended into chaos.[2]

“I vaguely remember that Plumdark you mentioned. She ended up homeless and miserable, and eventually perished as fodder for the new gods. I also remember Ling’er. She was devoured by Emperor Ancient Spirit to get at the destiny aura she had. As for everyone else you knew, they died over the thousand years that have passed.”

Xu Qing bowed his head.

The old woman didn't say anything further. That was how things ended for everyone Xu Qing knew.

The wind blew from off in the distance, harsh and desolate. It kicked up the dust and lifted Xu Qing's hair, but it couldn't take away the infinite heaviness in his heart. That was how things ended for everyone he knew.

The old woman sighed. As she disappeared into the wind, she said one more thing. "If it weren't for that thing you left underneath Revered Ancient, I would have assumed you died out there."

She quietly shook her head, and then, in all her lonely bleakness, she disappeared over the horizon. From the look of it, now that her Master was gone, she had the responsibility of carrying on the mission of the Summer Immortal Palace. Unfortunately... she wasn't sure if there was any point to it anymore. But that was the dying wish of her Master. And so, she disappeared into the blurry world.

Time passed.

Xu Qing just stood there for a long time. He wasn't really sure how he felt. It was as if his thoughts had gone still. Everything had paused. Even his soul. He listened to the sound of the wind. To him, it sounded like sobbing. Even whimpering.

Endless pain filled him, like the rushing of the tide, overwhelming. Everything started to turn as red, as tears of blood filled his eyes. He opened his mouth to murmur something, but only blood spilled out. He staggered backward.

So, when pain becomes excruciating enough, it turns into nothingness....

He couldn't even weep. He had lost everything. His heart was a black hole that could devour all. Within that black hole was endless emptiness. Xu Qing felt like it should be familiar to him. It was similar to being in the chaotic sea of space-time. But he didn't want to think about that.

Within his heart and mind, the old woman's parting words echoed over and over again. Her words became like sparks that started gathering in his eyes.

"Your Eldest Brother went mad. He became the sacrificial object the ancient immortal sought."

"I also remember Ling'er. She was devoured by Emperor Ancient Spirit to get at the destiny aura she had."

"Empress Summer Departure.... He erased her mind and turned her into a godslave."

"If it weren't for that thing you left underneath Revered Ancient...."

The sparks raged. Xu Qing suddenly looked up.

Maybe Eldest Brother didn't actually die. Maybe Ling'er made a clone of herself. There's also hope for Empress Summer Departure. Plumdark might have reincarnated.... There are still paths to choose from.... What's more, everything she told me was hearsay! It might not even be true!

Xu Qing's eyes blazed as if with fire. *And I did leave something behind.*

Xu Qing looked up, and his eyes seemed capable of piercing the deepest depths. His divine will spread out. He looked at all the ruins. He looked at the familiar yet unfamiliar world. He looked at the gods everywhere.... And his heart cried out. His soul trembled. Eventually, he got a response, although it was so weak it seemed just on the verge of being extinguished. It was coming from the Sea of Endlessness.

Xu Qing suddenly vanished.

In the silt deep beneath the surface of the Sea of Endlessness, a host of sea snakes wriggled along. They pulsed with fluctuations of intense godliness, and if one examined the sea snakes closely, it was obvious that each one had a gruish ghost face on it.

Deep within the silt was a dead body. Rather, it was half a body, as everything beneath the waist was gone. The upper half of the body was riddled with wounds. There wasn't much flesh left on it, and it really looked no different from a decaying corpse.

Apparently, hē had been sealed here, and despite being nothing more than a desiccated corpse, it was still possible to detect the fluctuations of god magic coming off of it. Because of that god magic, his body was slowly reverting from a god state into that of a mortal. The process wasn't far from being completed. The sea snakes would occasionally come here to devour some of the flesh off the corpse.

If things continued on like this, then it wouldn't be long before the dead body disappeared completely.

But then, in the calm, dark depths of the seafloor, things stirred. It was as if space were being broken open. The mutagen in the area, and the pressure of the sea depths, were instantly wiped away.

A figure stepped out of nowhere. It was none other than Xu Qing.

As he walked along, all things on the seafloor trembled. Even gods went still. He reached the silt and the sea snakes. His gaze caused the sea snakes to shake violently. The silt seethed, and the buried body was revealed.

Upon laying eyes on the corpse, Xu Qing's chest quivered. This corpse was his god clone. However, the soul inside of it was like a candle flickering in the wind, just on the verge of being extinguished. Xu Qing could see from the horrific injuries on the clone's body that... the god clone had fought in the catastrophe.

If I absorb this god body into myself, the fact that we're of the same origin means that I'll be able to experience what the clone experienced! I can verify everything!

Heart pounding, Xu Qing neared the corpse and lifted his right hand to absorb it. However, just before he took action, he shivered. He looked more closely at the mangled body, a strange look in his eyes.

This god body actually comes from the broken face.... Its soul could be destroyed, but the flesh could not. Also, how could it be sealed here so easily with a god magic?

Pupils constricting, Xu Qing suddenly looked up, out of the Sea of Endlessness and into the canopy of heaven. Up above... there was no broken face!

Earlier, this hadn't seemed strange at all to Xu Qing. But then he thought back to everything he had experienced, including the encounter with the God Lord, and he realized he could only remember certain key details. He didn't remember everything that happened. Even right now, the Revered Ancient mainland was a blur. All those things were like reflections in a mirror.

As Xu Qing came to that realization, he suddenly spoke.

"Aurora Immortal Palace. Heaven beyond heaven! Crush!"

Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. The Sea of Endlessness filled with rumbling sounds. In the Revered Ancient mainland, lands shook and mountains were rocked. The entire world was quaking. Massive cracking sounds rang out. It was as if a heavenly palace were crushing down onto it from outside!

Everything Xu Qing could see suddenly popped like a bubble! It became dust, roiling out in all directions. A starry sky replaced it. Starlight shone as the might of an immortal palace erupted.

The illusion was erased, and the truth was revealed! The world changed dramatically!

Xu Qing could see everything clearly. He wasn't in the Revered Ancient mainland! He was clearly in a heaven beyond heaven! There was a corpse in front of him, but it wasn't his god body. It was clearly... a True God that was half-person half-spider!

The True God wanted Xu Qing to willingly fuse with him! In that manner, the True God could switch bodies and return by means of Xu Qing's husk!

But Xu Qing had woken up. It resulted in an instant backlash for the True God, especially considering the immortal palace was crushing down and the heaven beyond heaven was bolstering Xu Qing. The True God's face distorted. Golden blood leaked out, and a cry of anguish echoed in all directions.

"How did you wake up??"

Xu Qing looked at him, flames of fury raging in his eyes as he looked at him. He had never been more furious in his entire life!

1. The butterfly started out as a young woman. She changed from a young woman into a butterfly when she and Xu Qing fought in [chapter 805](#). That was also when she took him to the Summer Immortal Palace. ٩١

2. Emperor Ancient Spirit was first mentioned in [chapter 430](#) and most recently in [1015](#). ٩١

Chapter 1228: Space-Time Amber

Chapter 1228: Space-Time Amber

Xu Qing had spent his youth wandering in misery. He had experienced the suffering of the human world. And he had survived it all thanks to his tenacious desire to keep on living.

Those experiences had made him cautious by nature. He would seek revenge over the smallest grievance, and had learned how to coldly slaughter his enemies. It had also fueled his thirst for knowledge, and had caused him to endlessly yearn for light and beauty. He was not the type of person who would casually open his heart to others.

His life had experienced twists and turns. But overall, things had been better than they had been in his youth. Slowly but surely, he had opened up his heart.

Unfortunately, though his path was like a blooming flower, it also came to be like a wilting flower. As he grew up, and as his heart opened, his world became filled with people.... He was moved in the depths of his being.

Also within him was a storm that could be called nothing other than fury! The first time he raged with fury was when Sergeant Thunder died. The next time was when Grandmaster Bai was murdered. It happened again when his own older brother had killed Master Sixth, and he had learned the truth about Peerless City. The fourth time was when Grand Emperor Swordsage perished.

Today was the fifth time.

Now that he was awake, he could see the many flaws in the illusion he had just experienced. But his feelings had been real. Now he knew what it was like to lose everyone he cared about. He had felt the pain, and he had felt the emptiness which followed. Now that he was awake, the intensity of his anger was equivalent to the intensity of the pain he had experienced. And now, he felt no need to respond to the words spoken by this True God who was still in the process of returning.

His aura, his bloodshot eyes, and the intense fluctuations rolling off him, became a pure killing intent that filled him, filled his immortal embryo, and filled the Aura Immortal Palace. It erupted!

The starry sky trembled. Ripples flowed through the heaven beyond heaven. In this starry sky, Xu Qing's immortal embryo was boundless. The Aurora Immortal Palace was clear within it, and all of that heaven-shaking, earth-shattering power was unleashed onto the half-person half-spider god!

Rumbling sounds echoed out that surpassed everything from before. Boundless immortal light shone from the immortal palace. As it fell, the returning True God tried to dodge. Unfortunately... hē had not yet returned, and was very weak.

At the same time, the backlash from his arts of godhood brought pain to his soul. Hē could not hold back from screaming in anguish. The full weight of a heaven beyond heaven was not something that hē, a weakened True God, could stand up to.

Because of all those various factors, there was no possible way hē could escape. The majestic immortal palace crushed down. The True God trembled under the force of the blow. Hē shrank down, golden blood spraying out. Cracks spread out across hīs body, and pain swept through hīm like storm winds.

Hē wanted to fight back. But Xu Qing's fury could not have been greater, and he would not give this god the chance to fight back.

The light of the Aurora Immortal Palace flared again, shining into the starry sky, and drawing even more power... to launch another crushing blow!

Rumbling sounds mixed with the scream of the True God. The True God's fleshly body was crumbling even more. The spider half of the body was almost completely pulverized, and was leaking large amounts of ringsource. Hē continued to struggle, trying to use the escaping ringsource to fuel a god magic.

But Xu Qing had very nearly died just now, so there was no way he would let his guard down. He took a step forward, entering the Aurora Immortal Palace, where he sat down cross-legged in the main hall. In the outside world, the Aurora Immortal Palace was an illusion, but in this heaven beyond heaven, it was true and real.

Once seated inside, Xu Qing commanded full authority as the lord of this heaven beyond heaven. His cultivation base was insufficient, and he was not skilled enough to truly restrain a True God. But... the immortal palace itself was the most deadly weapon he could wield! He needed no divine abilities. No daoist magic could match the fury that raged in his heart right now. It was... pure violence!

In response to his very thoughts, the Aurora Immortal Palace once again smashed down onto the returning True God.

Once. Twice. Three times....

Xu Qing was venting his rage!

Ear-shattering rumbling sounds echoed out that drowned out the shrill screams of the True God. The god's body was full of cracks. And then, another anguished scream echoed out as the spider half of the body collapsed into fragments.

Left behind was the person half of the body, whose gaze was extremely weak. However, pain in the fleshly body or the soul was not what this True God feared the most.

What hē feared... was the black hole below! It was a prison formed by the power of this heaven beyond heaven. If hē fell into that prison, then coming back again would be nearly impossible!

As the immortal palace smashed down on hīm again and again, hē got closer and closer to the black hole. At that critical juncture, hīs eyes suddenly lit up. Golden fire erupted from within them, incinerating everything around hīm as it flowed over his body.

Astonishingly, hē was choosing to burn up his own body! Hē was self-destructing! Erasing the carrier would indicate that hē had failed to return. But at the same time, it would wipe out all

traces of hīm! And that meant that hē might be able to return sometime in the future. But if the carrier body remained, and was stuffed into the black hole, then hē would have no such chance.

Therefore, hē didn't hesitate for a moment to try to incinerate his carrier. Hē even ignited the large portion of godhood that had returned. It didn't matter how heavy a price hē paid if hē could eventually return in the future. If there was one thing the gods didn't lack, it was time. Hē could keep waiting!

Hē carried out the incineration with incredible decisiveness. It was so quick and violent that it seemed impossible to stop. In the blink of an eye, the flames raged to the extreme, and hīs body became incredibly weak.

Unfortunately, hē had underestimated Xu Qing!

As Xu Qing sat cross-legged in the immortal palace, glaring at the burning True God, the coldness in his eyes grew incredibly intense. He knew that True Gods were undying. As such, he had not attacked with the goal of killing this god. Instead, he wanted the god to experience excruciating pain!

And thus, it went without saying that he wasn't going to let the god escape.... That was not the ending he wanted!

Xu Qing lifted his hand and said, "Be sealed!"

The Green Heaven trembled. Countless stars, galaxies, and universes all responded to his control by means of the immortal palace. The entire heaven beyond heaven... enacted a sealing! The heaven beyond heaven was completely cut off from the outside! He was making this heaven beyond heaven a gigantic prison!

Of course, it was part of a higher star ring, and True Gods were undying. The fact that as long as the true name existed, a True God could leave and come back was an expression of the love toward them shown by the higher star rings. They were like fish swimming in the sea. So this isolation wasn't complete. It was like a fish net that, though spread wide, still had holes in it.

However, Xu Qing was not limited to this one method. All of a sudden, something flew out of the immortal palace and hovered in the starry sky outside!

It was an hourglass! In the reflected history of the Aurora Immortal Palace, Xu Qing had acquired... a space-time precious treasure! Contained within it was a two-hour time period that transcended this space-time! It could add an additional two hours to any point in time. And whatever happened inside could not be erased. It would exist beyond space-time and beyond the timescape! It could not be limited by any other space-time!

If someone who controlled space-time canon used it, then they could make that time flow normally, or more quickly or slowly. The limit was two hours.

After the hourglass appeared, a cracking sound rang out. The hourglass broke open, and the sand inside shone with a five-colored glow. As it spread, the burning True God, along with hīs body and godhood... was covered by the sand!

It added an additional two hours to hīn! It was a two-hour period that did not have any karma. Nor was it part of this space-time! Because Xu Qing controlled space-time canon, he could slow down the departure and the incineration by a significant amount. In that instant, the world suddenly had an additional two hours!

If the closing of the heaven beyond heaven was like the casting of a fish net, then the space-time sand was a way to slow down the fleeing fish! It ensured that the god could not escape quickly! And it drew out the period in which hē was weak!

This development caused the starry sky to tremble as the will of a true name echoed out with incredulity.

Xu Qing stood up in the immortal palace. His eyes were extremely cold as he stepped out into the starry sky, where he appeared in front of the weak god, who was now experiencing one breath of time that lasted for two hours.

“You like inflicting pain on others?” Xu Qing asked. It was the first time he had spoken during the fight, and his voice was as cold as ice. “Well, then you can enjoy it for a bit.”

Xu Qing waved his hand, and a coffin of ice appeared. It was a nine-colored coffin that pulsed with frigid energy. It was Young Lord Aurora’s ice coffin, which Xu Qing had taken from the Helioterran imperial clan! Immortal Lord Aurora and his wife had prepared the coffin for their son, and had sealed him inside as an infant. The coffin would freeze the fleshly body and the soul. And also time. It was only natural that objects made by Immortal Lords were astounding.

Xu Qing tossed the coffin toward the burning True God. Once the god was inside, he sealed the lid, which became solid ice! The True God, who was burning and not fully returned, was trapped inside. Time was also sealed inside!

To a certain extent, it meant that the True God was stuck in a state of partial return. The god could not leave, nor could hē return. It was like... being stuck in space-time amber!

From now on, the god would be stuck in burning pain that had no end. The undying nature of this True God was no longer a blessing to hīn from a higher star ring. It was a curse! At the same time, hē would provide a constant flow of ringsource. It was almost like hē had become a spirit stone!

Chapter 1229: The Illusion Contained Reality

Chapter 1229: The Illusion Contained Reality

There was no door to life. There was no path to death. There was no way to depart. There was no means to return.

Thus was the pain of this True God. Hē was frozen in an ice coffin, sealed in time by the space-time hourglass, hīs karma ensnared by the heaven beyond heaven. Stuck halfway between returning and departing, hē was like a special spirit stone that emanated ringsource. All hē could do was descend

into the burning pain, his soul torn apart as his godhood and ringsource was slowly sucked away in what amounted to pure torment.

Out in the starry sky, Xu Qing looked coldly at the ice coffin. His fury was finally subsiding. The end this True God had experienced was the best kind of torment to inflict on him. Since he enjoyed pain, he would personally feel a lot of it.

It's too bad I don't have Yu Liuchen's godly authority of telling stories....

If he had that godly authority, then he could draw out time even further. He could tell a story of pain upon pain for this True God, and ensure that his time spent sealed in ice was one of even greater mental torment. At the same time, he would be able to extract even stronger ringsource.

There's no rush.

Xu Qing retracted his vision, then went over and sat down cross-legged on the ice coffin. Closing his eyes, he began doing some breathing exercises. All of his pores opened, and ringsource from the coffin poured into him.

The ringsource was strong and pure, and as he did breathing exercises, it flowed into him. Once inside, it reached his immortal embryo and provided profound nourishment. The immortal embryo began to emit a soft glow that illuminated the surrounding darkness, and caused the innumerable universes, galaxies, and planets in the heaven beyond heaven to be a bit brighter. They were still recovering.

As light pulsed off Xu Qing's immortal embryo, the immortal palace that served as his immortal foundation reacted similarly.

In that manner, time passed. A month went by.

Xu Qing opened his eyes. A mysterious light shone therein as he looked down at the coffin floating in the starry sky. The coffin had originally emitted strong ringsource. But it had diminished quite a bit, and had gone from a raging river to a trickling stream.

That was no surprise. The special spirit stone made of a god would last for a long time and would provide a lot of ringsource. But it wasn't going to all come out at once. Absorbing it slowly but surely would be the most beneficial thing for Xu Qing.

During his month of breathing exercises, he had made some significant cultivation progress. His immortal embryo had become more stable, and its aura and pressure had increased. The immortal palace that served as his immortal foundation, plus his status as the lord of this heaven beyond heaven, ensured that his aura was far closer to that of an immortal. He was now very close to the peak of early Quasi-Immortal.

On the outside, cultivation speed like that would provoke instant jealousy among others. It was incredibly fast. After all, the Quasi-Immortal level was about the process of going from an immortal embryo to a mature immortal. And it required terrifying amounts of ringsource. Becoming a mature immortal... was the sign of the Lower Immortal level!

Unfortunately, it was too slow for Xu Qing. *I need more of these True God spirit stones....*

Licking his lips, he stood and looked off into the distance. He was thinking about what he had seen in that illusion.

Now that I think about it, there were some very strange aspects to that illusion.... His eyes glittered mysteriously.

In the illusion, it had taken him ten years of secluded cultivation to reach the peak of Quasi-Immortal. Although his memories didn't contain all the details of how that happened, he could clearly remember what it felt like to reach that level. There was something especially noteworthy....

If I really did spend ten years of secluded cultivation here, it's hard to say if the ringsource coming from the ice coffin would be enough to reach the peak of Quasi-Immortal. But it would definitely be enough for late Quasi-Immortal. It seems safe to say... that the illusion was at least logical on a theoretical level....

Even as the thought occurred to him, his mind filled with a haze.

On an instinctual level, he wasn't willing to take that route. He was not going to stick around here in seclusion. For one thing, he didn't want things to end up like they had in the illusion. What was more, sitting around in seclusion was the slow path to making progress.

There was another reason. Xu Qing knew full well that if he wanted to break out of the Quasi-Immortal level and step into Lower Immortal, he needed more than just ringsource to transform his immortal embryo. He needed to push his canon to a higher level!

And I need my tenth extreme!

He currently had no direction to pursue when it came to his tenth extreme. He hadn't even done that in the illusion.... After some thought, he put the ice coffin into the black hole. The black hole would absorb the ringsource and keep it stored for later use.

Looking thoughtful, he turned to leave. But then he stopped in place all of a sudden. His eyes glittered.

"Wait. No!"

I must have made some progress with the tenth extreme in the illusion. After all, by the time I got back to Revered Ancient, my cultivation base was... not Quasi-Immortal. But I can't remember the details.

He frowned. Now he was more doubtful than ever about the illusion. Unfortunately, without more detailed information to go on, he had no choice but to suppress his doubt and leave the Green Heaven.

Meanwhile, outside of the Green Heaven, the streams of immortal will began to disperse. Before leaving, they couldn't help but glance back incredulously at Xu Qing emerging from the Green Heaven.

They would remember Xu Qing. It would be impossible to forget what they had just seen. The lord of the Aurora heaven beyond heaven, with a Quasi-Immortal cultivation base and battle prowess close to that of an immortal, had crushed a returning True God. A stunning achievement like that was enough to raise the eyebrows of them all.

One by one, they left.

The figure standing in the highest tower in the Nineshores Immortal Palace nodded. *Since he seized the destined opportunity... and accomplished his Acquisitioner's mission, then... there's not much point in him staying in this star ring.*

"Send orders to the Department of Acquisitions," he said. "The squadron of new ascendees will be converted to a Transporter squadron. Just like all the other squadrons, they'll take what they collected as Acquisitioners and transport it to the battlefield. They don't need to come back. They'll move in directly to the star ring's god barrier formation."

In response to Immortal Lord Nineshores' words, the tower trembled, and then an official decree was sent from the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven.

Poison Monarch was in the Department of Acquisitions. As he sat there cross-legged, his eyes opened. New orders had come in from Immortal Lord Nineshores. He checked the orders, whereupon his expression flickered. After looking off into the distance, he sighed.

Is the kid lucky? Or is he unlucky...?

Poison Monarch didn't want to simply give in like this, but the orders were from Immortal Lord Nineshores, and he didn't dare to work against them. Sighing, he made the arrangements.

Xu Qing left the Green Heaven and returned to the same spot in the Heavenless Zone.

The prison was gone. However, the guards, the wardens, and Sir Star Ring and the ascendees were all waiting to see how things ended. A month had passed, and they were all feeling uneasy. After all, it shouldn't have taken an entire month for a True God to return after the process had been started in the way it had.

Therefore, when they saw Xu Qing, they relaxed a bit. That was especially true when they realized that he was obviously stronger than in the past. Zhou Zhengli was the first to step forward and bow.

"Congratulations, Your Majesty. You have crushed a True God! There is truly no end to your virtuous achievements!"

Everyone else rushed to pay respects. All of them were shaken to varying degrees. The ascendees had personally witnessed Xu Qing becoming a Quasi-Immortal. They had sensed the majesty of his

immortal embryo, and the fact that he was lord of a heaven beyond heaven. Now he was very nearly as strong as an immortal. They had also watched him teleport a True God away, and then calmly return.

Even top chosen couldn't avoid being astonished to see him make such rapid progress and reach such great heights.

Sir Star Ring looked quietly at Xu Qing and sighed in his heart. The difference between them was only growing larger. However, that feeling didn't last for long before it turned into a motivating force.

Xu Qing looked around at everyone. Upon seeing that the wardens and guards were still present, he relaxed a bit.

Things were already different from the illusion. After all, in the illusion, he had come out to find the warden and guards gone. But then, even as such thoughts entered his mind, and as everyone was bowing to him, something happened. Before he could say a word...

The ascendees' identity medallions all vibrated. New orders came from the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven, conveyed through the Department of Acquisitions.

"There are new developments in the war outside the star ring. There is a huge demand for ringsource. All Acquisitioner squadrons are to personally transport the ringsource they have collected to the front lines as Transporter squadrons. There shall be no delays!"

All of the ascendees reacted with visible surprise.

Transport it ourselves to the front lines?

Hordeslayer and Rampart were trembling with astonishment. Yuanshan Su frowned. Li Mengtu's expression flickered. Sir Vilespirit's pupils constricted. The ascendees all reacted in different ways.

The war had always been something far, far removed from them. None of them had ever imagined... that they would see it so soon! That was especially true considering that their cultivation bases would make them like drops of water in the ocean. They could die at any moment.

Maybe they would run into Godfire gods, or Altar Gods. They might even encounter True Gods! Based on their previous understanding, the war with the Fourth Star Ring was being waged between God Lords and Immortal Lords. It was a war between gods and immortals. It was a war between opposing sides. It was a war of complete extermination of species!

Zhou Zhengli looked gravely at Xu Qing. Sir Star Ring's heart sank as he did the same. All of the cultivators did the same.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, felt somewhat dazed. He was yet again thinking about the illusion he had experienced thanks to that True God. In the illusion, he had gone to the front lines! The difference was that, in the illusion, it had happened ten years later. In reality, it was happening a lot sooner. Ten years sooner.

Why did it happen that way in the True God's illusion? Was it a coincidence?

A dour look filled Xu Qing's eyes.

Chapter 1230: Mutagen Infects All; Gods Hate Immortals

Chapter 1230: Mutagen Infects All; Gods Hate Immortals

Each of the thirty-six higher star rings were like massive, independent star charts. The interior of every star ring was boundless. But viewed as a whole, the higher star rings were actually connected, and they made an even larger, irregularly shaped ring that would astonish anyone who could see it.

In the middle of the gargantuan ring formed by the thirty-six higher star rings, there was a vast, black sea of mutagen! The enormity of it surpassed all other things.

Its name was the Primeval Sea. It was a mysterious, unimaginable place. In the middle of it was a place that only God Paragons could enter, and even then, they would do so with great caution. It had thirty-six main streams which led to the thirty-six star rings. And within each star ring, there were even more tributaries, and they formed that which the cultivators and the gods called... the outer seas!

The war between the Fourth and Fifth Star Rings was being fought on the border between those two locations. It was a place that was part of the Fifth Star Ring, but at the same time, part of the Fourth Star Ring.

Neither the gods nor the immortals were willing to back down, so the war had dragged on for years in a deadlock. Neither side could do much to the other, and for the most part they had held back from taking the fighting to the level of the God Lords.

But then a new God Lord appeared in the Fourth Star Ring! That God Lord was deployed to the front lines, and the tide of battle instantly shifted. Immortal Lord Deepgloom had met his match for the first time in his life!

The fighting reached a point where it surpassed the level of mere daoist magics and god magics. The fight between the God Lord and the Immortal Lord was something that ordinary gods and immortals couldn't even see clearly.

Even True Gods and Lower Immortals couldn't fully comprehend a fight between a God Lord and an Immortal Lord. They could only vaguely sense what was happening. That was because the core of a battle on the level of God Lords and Immortal Lords came down to momentum!

To the cultivators in the war, Immortal Lord Deepgloom provided the momentum. He surpassed the heavenly daos, and was part of the determination of the Fifth Star Ring itself. His will was paramount on the battlefield. As he stood there, he represented the unique energy of immortal cultivators, which could drive away mutagen! If all of that mutagen were to be driven away, and replaced by immortal energy, then the situation with the war would completely change.

In fact, if the day came when the mutagen of the Fourth Star Ring were to be driven out, and replaced by immortal energy, then.... Without mutagen, without the aura of the gods, well, the gods... would be like fish out of water. No matter how they struggled, they would basically end up the same as the gods in the Fifth Star Ring. That was the line of research the Fifth Star Ring had been pursuing in their hopes of subduing the gods.

The aura of the gods was mutagen. It was poison to cultivators, and could infect all things. Immortal energy was the aura of immortals. It was anathema to gods, and could harm them without even touching them. That was the source of a powerful momentum.

Of course, the God Lord was aware of that. So when the new God Lord arrived at the front lines, the result was boundless mutagen spreading everywhere. It overwhelmed everything, including the immortal energy.

And thus, the war between the Fourth and Fifth Star Rings, viewed from the highest of levels, was a conflict between a God Lord and an Immortal Lord. It was a clash between mutagen and immortal energy. And both sides were trying to build up their own momentum!

Even if the gods didn't follow the conventions of war and went on the offensive, it wouldn't change anything. In order to fundamentally do anything, they needed to affect the clash between mutagen and immortal energy. The mutagen in the Fourth Star Ring was very strong, but so was the immortal energy in the Fifth Star Ring. If either side tried to invade the other, they would become much weaker. And thus, they nibbled away at each other, each side trying to build up momentum to create a critical moment.

Therefore, both gods and immortals in the Lord level were extremely important in the war. As Lords, they could both consolidate and fight over momentum. Because no one else could understand a fight between a God Lord and an Immortal Lord, all they saw was a swirling mass of immortal energy and mutagen.

As for the cultivators, they were watching to see their Immortal Lord gain the upper hand. When that happened, the immortal energy would spread and drive away the mutagen. The moment that happened, they would rush out to plant special dao flags from the Fifth Star Ring. The dao flags would mark an area as being occupied with immortal energy, and it would signify an expansion of Fifth Star Ring territory. Then, orders would be given to advance into the territory of the gods to destroy their foundation. It was a snowball effect, as the more territory fell, the more momentum they built up. That, in turn, supported the Immortal Lord, and shifted the tide of battle in his favor.

However, the same thing happened on the side of the gods. When the God Lord gained the upper hand, the cultivators were prevented from planting dao flags. In fact, dao flags could be destroyed, and mutagen would spread far and wide.

The end result was that, viewed from high above, the field of battle was an interchange between black and white. The black was the mutagen. The white was the immortal energy. It was like a black and white ink painting that was constantly shifting and flowing back and forth. That was how war was waged between the gods and immortals.

The war was about momentum. Every attack influenced the field of battle, and the two armies' actions influenced the battle between the Lords.

It was very intense. Deaths occurred constantly. That was just what happened when the strong clashed with the strong.

In the rear echelon of a battlefield that was as wide as countless universes, over a hundred squadrons from the Department of Acquisitions were arriving at a teleportation portal.

One of them was the same squadron that had caused some trouble for Xu Qing and the other ascendees back to the planet that was the home base of the Department of Acquisitions. Upon materializing, they looked around with very serious expressions. Then, under the cold gazes of the warriors guarding the teleportation portals, they hurried off into the distance.

The Acquisitioners were now Transporters, and their mission was to disperse through the battlefield and deliver ringsource to the eastern theater of the war. There was a desperate need for ringsource there!

The light of teleportation faded away, and Xu Qing appeared with his squadron. An unfamiliar starry sky stretched out overhead, and the atmosphere was somber. The immortal energy was scarce, and it was even possible to see wisps of mutagen floating here and there.

Many of the ascendees felt out of sorts. To most of them, war had been some distant thing. Though most of them had experienced a lot of fighting in their lives, virtually none of them had experience in war. They could even hear occasional booms coming from the front lines, or indescribable roars coming from other universes. Chaotic fluctuations rolled through space, and there was a unique and sinister coldness that only death could bring....

Most of the ascendees were in a daze. Instinctively, they looked around to take in their surroundings.

However, before any of them could see much, a warrior cultivator on guard duty yelled at them.

“You lot, hurry up and get on with your delivery!”

The voice boomed louder than thunder into the hearts and minds of the squadron. It contained a mountain-toppling, sea-draining force, like a tempest that could crush anything in its path.

Everyone was visibly taken aback. It was the voice of a Lower Immortal!

Xu Qing’s pupils constricted. He was no stranger to war. Though he had never fought in a war this massive, he was naturally more prepared mentally for what war was like. He immediately flew off the teleportation portal. The other cultivators in the squadron followed.

The closer they got to the battlefield, the more dangerous things would get, and by extension, the more they felt the need to stick together as a team. That was just how human nature worked.

Xu Qing had the strongest battle prowess of them all, and his status was far above theirs. Sticking close to him was their greatest chance of surviving.

As for Xu Qing, his heart was sinking. As he sped along, he looked off into the distance, and took time to sense his surroundings. He was more sensitive to mutagen than the rest of them, and he could sense that the mutagen was getting stronger as they made their way forward.

If they need ringsource so badly... then why don't they send stronger people to deliver it? That would be much more efficient. Why send people as weak as us to the front lines?

The more he thought about the situation, the less it made sense. And as he felt the mutagen getting stronger, his speculations went wild. After a while, he had a theory.

Around the time that the theory coalesced in his mind, he heard a whistling sound behind him as Sir Star Ring, Zhou Zhengli, Sir Vilespirit, Yuanshan Su, and everyone else caught up to him. Eyes narrowing, he looked at them.

Sir Star Ring's expression was grim as he said, "Xu Qing, my canon senses are telling me that the order in this area is fractured. Everything is chaotic. Something isn't right!"

Sir Vilespirit licked his lips and added, "As all of you know, I'm different from the rest of you. My canon isn't the result of enlightenment. I have a special canon treasure. My broken sword. Well, whenever I'm about to run into a deadly crisis, it gets very excited. And right now, it's more excited than it's ever been!"

Zhou Zhengli looked extremely serious. After Sir Star Ring and Sir Vilespirit were done talking, he lowered his voice and said, "Your Majesty, it doesn't make sense for us to be sent here. I have a theory. Is it possible that we—" He glanced around at everyone "—are bait?? It's not that our squadron is being targeted specifically. Rather, the Acquisitioner squads are being sent here with ringsource... to turn them all into bait!"

Everyone scowled. Xu Qing's eyes glittered. That was the exact same theory he had come up with!

"Right now," he said, "we're in cultivator territory. If we're being thrown out as bait here, it implies...."

He trailed off, only to have his sentence finished by Yuanshan Su.

"It implies that something big is about to happen here!" she said. "They want to lure out any gods that are hidden in this area, all to make sure things here are more stable after that event occurs!"

Chapter 1231: Weak but Strong

Chapter 1231: Weak but Strong

In response to Yuanshan Su's words, they all exchanged glances. Everyone had different opinions on the matter.

But in the depths of his heart, Xu Qing knew one thing for certain. He had come here to the Fifth Star Ring to find resources to grow stronger. Therefore... he had to abide by the rules of the Fifth Star Ring. He had become an Acquisitioner and then a Transporter. And here he was on the front lines. He had to accomplish his mission.

Of course, the more he understood about the battlefield, the easier it would be to accomplish his mission. And also... the easier it would be to defend himself.

With that thought in mind, he said, “Everyone, keep your guard up. We’re going to split into smaller squads and advance in a staggered formation. Be ready to back up other squads at any moment. Zhou Zhengli, you handle the particulars.”

“Yes, sir,” Zhou Zhengli said. He knew the individual members of the squadron much better than Xu Qing, so it didn’t take him long to split up the more than eighty people into five smaller squads. Then they split up into a staggered formation. He also arranged for about a dozen of the fastest and stealthiest cultivators to spread out both ahead and behind to keep the main group informed of any sudden developments.

Sir Vilespirit and some of the others with canon treasures used those treasures to surround the group with a powerful concealing aura. At the same time, Xu Qing hoisted a banner that covered the group with an additional layer of concealment. In that way, they hoped to keep their passage as unnoticed as possible.

With those arrangements made, they started moving forward. Their caution was rewarded as their journey went on.

Half a month went by. During that period of travel, which included the use of teleportation portals, things went smoothly. Given the unknowns and the fact that they all felt something strange was going on, they took a more roundabout route toward their destination. Thanks to their efforts at staying concealed, they were able to travel smoothly and consistently.

At a certain point along the way, Xu Qing spotted a dao banner. They were behind the front lines of the eastern theater, which meant they were in cultivator territory. As a result, each universe had a dao flag planted in it.

In terms of appearance, they came in the form of a planet-sized altar, atop which was a silver war banner. The war banners were the dao flags of the Fifth Star Ring, and they emitted a constant stream of very pure immortal energy, as well as a mighty pressure that would cause all living beings to tremble.

With a dao flag in place, a given universe would have a constant supply of immortal energy. Mutagen wouldn’t be able to affect that area, and all things related to gods would be suppressed. It went without saying that large numbers of cultivators always gathered around the dao flags.

Xu Qing and his squadron passed through over a hundred universes, which meant that they saw the same number of dao flags. Some were large, some were small, depending on the size of the area they affected.

The dao flags served another function. They ensured that the forces of the cultivator army could communicate quickly and effectively. As they continued on their journey, Zhou Zhengli maintained communications, especially with other squadrons on missions similar to their own.

Time continued to pass. Another half a month went by.

As they advanced, Xu Qing and his squadron got passing glimpses of many universes. Eventually, they left the rear echelon of the eastern theater and entered the staging areas in the middle of cultivator territory. After they passed through the staging areas, which was made up of hundreds of universes, they would reach the front lines of the eastern theater.

Unfortunately, once they entered the staging areas, Sir Vilespirit's broken sword started getting even more excited. And Xu Qing could tell that the mutagen levels were much higher than previously.

As they proceeded along quietly, Zhou Zhengli's expression suddenly flickered. "Your Majesty, one of the Transporter squadrons I was in contact with disappeared.... Either they got cut off from communication, or... they ran into a deadly situation!"

The squadron members looked even more serious than before.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. "The bait is working. They hooked a fish."

He didn't need to issue any special orders. All members of the squadron were even more careful after that. They made sure to mask their spirit power fluctuations, they kept proper distance between each other, and they made sure to make the most effective use of their concealment techniques.

Every time they went through another teleportation, they made sure to exercise more caution. Occasionally, they would sense something strange, and would avoid a teleportation portal. They didn't hesitate to take the long way around if it seemed safer. Of course, they all kept their cultivation bases rotating at peak levels.

A month went by.

Either they had been lucky up to this point, or all of their caution had paid off, and their concealments had not been penetrated. Everything went smoothly. Unfortunately, Zhou Zhengli kept getting news about dangerous situations.

The majority of the Transporter squadrons had been ambushed by that point! Some squadrons never had a chance to send out distress messages, and were simply wiped out. Some held on for long enough to ask for help before communication was cut off, making it impossible to determine what happened to them in the end.

Regardless, it quickly became clear who was doing the ambushing. Naturally, it was gods!

However, these were not gods from the front lines. Instead, they were spies who had somehow hidden themselves in the eastern theater. They had been so deeply hidden that, normally speaking, they would never have revealed themselves. But now they were taking the initiative to target the various Transporter squadrons moving through the area. It was as if there was a huge spy network covering the entire eastern theater.

Despite how cautious Xu Qing and his squadron were, after months of safe travel, they eventually ran into some gods.

The first person to notice something unusual was Sir Vilespirit, who was scouting on the right flank. He was already a peak Imperial Sovereign, and was very close to being a Quasi-Immortal. By relying on his broken sword, he was confident that he could fight a Quasi-Immortal. What was more, he had puppet arts to rely on. As a result, he never scouted alone; he had two puppets with him at all times. That made him a particularly reliable scout.

As for his broken sword, it had a mysterious origin. Its karma was inextricably linked with Sir Vilespirit, so that when it suddenly got excited, and he felt himself shaking, he didn't hesitate to fall back.

The moment he did, the aura of a god ripped through the void. Gods appeared out of nowhere, unleashing a mountain-toppling, sea-draining tempest. Dense mutagen and godly might instantly raged forth.

Although Sir Vilespirit's two puppets fell back with him, they also unleashed attacks at full power. Unfortunately, they couldn't deal with this many gods. The puppets shivered as they withered up and were destroyed.

Sir Vilespirit coughed up seven or eight mouthfuls of blood. Relying on his broken sword, he managed to survive the initial attack by the gods. Pupils constricting, he continued to fall back, all while sending a message to Zhou Zhengli.

"I ran into some gods. Seven Altar Gods and twenty-three Flawless Gods!"

Mutagen roiled in his wake as he fled. Terrifying godly fluctuations swept toward him to overwhelm him. He was just on the verge of being overwhelmed. His eyes were bloodshot from the sensation of deadly crisis that filled him.

Then someone blurred into position next to him, grabbed his shoulder, and threw him back.

Just before the wave of mutagen and godly fluctuations were about to sweep over the newcomer, he threw his left hand out in front of him.

"Crush!"

That single word caused space-time to rumble. Overlapping universes appeared, turning into a crushing bout of space-time. It blocked the path of the mutagen. When the collision occurred, raging shock waves swept out in all directions. After, the new arrival stood there tall and straight, while the tempest of mutagen collapsed.

Revealed in the spot where the tempest had collapsed were thirty gods, all of whom looked different, but all of whom were terrifying. Their eyes were all locked onto the person in front of

He had long hair, a black robe, and exquisite facial features. As he hovered there, his aura was immeasurably close to that of a Lower Immortal.

That aura caused all of the Flawless Gods to shift nervously. The seven Altar God's eyes glittered with golden light.

At the same time, whistling sounds echoed out from behind Xu Qing. Chains of order swept out in all directions as Sir Star Ring arrived. Numerous huge trees soared through the starry sky, as if an endless forest had arrived. Atop the tallest tree in the forest stood Yuanshan Su, her eyes cold. There was also a gigantic eye hovering in the starry sky, within which, seated cross-legged, was Zhou Zhengli. At the same time, poison spread out, along with killing intent. The canon of other ascendees joined the mix, creating a massive pressure. There was also an enormous kelp plant, whose gargantuan body spread out to lock down the entire area.

It looked less like these gods carrying out an ambush and more like Xu Qing and his squadron hunting gods!

Moments later, the kelp began to shrink the perimeter. Inside, the ascendees unleashed trump cards. Sir Star Ring and the other top experts held back none of their power. As Hordeslayer and Rampart flew in as streams of sword energy, the gods were shaken to the core.

What was especially gruish was the manifestation of Zhou Zhengli's canon, the huge eye. It seemed to be predicting the gods' every move, as well as all the details of their godly authority. And he was informing everyone about how to deal with them. The gods were astonished.

But what shook them the most was Xu Qing. His bell was able to restrict all magics. His iron skewer killed any god it hit! The layers of space-time in the area seemed to contain the will of the many heavens.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the kelp plant removed the perimeter. Xu Qing and the squadron continued on their way. All the gods that had ambushed them... were nowhere to be seen. And close examination would reveal that the auras of the squadron members had all improved. They had powered up a bit.

"So," said Li Mengtu, licking his lips, "it turns out living and healthy gods provide the most delicious ringsource."

Sir Vilespirit had already recovered from his injuries. "There are a lot of unknowns, but if we stick out a bit, we could attract the attention of some more gods...."

Yuanshan Su looked thoughtful, while Hordeslayer and Rampart seemed itching to fight again. Sir Star Ring's face was completely expressionless.

As for Zhou Zhengli, he shook his head. "We did well just now, thanks to His Majesty. My foresight is telling me that a True God is behind all of this. There are also multiple Altar Gods in the same group. If we run into a force like that...."

Li Mengtu said nothing.

Xu Qing looked at them calmly. "We continue on as before. We stay cautious and keep under cover. Let's go."

Chapter 1232: Lighting a Blood-Colored Lantern

Chapter 1232: Lighting a Blood-Colored Lantern

Thanks to Zhou Zhengli, everyone gave up on the idea of turning the tables on the gods, and using their status as bait to create their own ambushes. Ringsource was good, but living was better.

If they ended up being targeted by a True God and a host of Altar Gods, then they would definitely be killed. They had been fortunate on their journey so far. The best thing to do going forward was to stay cautious and remain hidden.

And thus, Xu Qing and his squadron disappeared into the universe.

In the eastern theater, there were quite a few more god squadrons similar to the one Xu Qing had encountered. Apparently, thēy had been able to remain in hiding this long thanks to outside help. As a result, the cultivators had a very hard time identifying thēm. And if things had gone along as normal, there wouldn't have been any way to root thēm out easily.

What was more, these gods had godhood, which was a new development. They were not ordinary gods. Thēy had powerful godly authority, and that was evident from the results of their ambushes.

The staging areas of the eastern theater were already descending into disorder. The cultivator army stationed there had no choice but to split up to suppress and contain the incidents.

Before long, the staging areas in the eastern theater were in complete chaos. Within that chaos, and amidst the numerous universes in the eastern theater, there was one universe called the Gracesource Universe. It contained innumerable galaxies, and among those was an unremarkable little galaxy, within which was a very ordinary planet.

The planet was yellow. Looking down at the planet from the starry sky, it was possible to see the earth seething as a huge rift opened up on it. The rift grew wider and wider, and then it started to open up.

It was an eye! Put precisely, this was no planet. It was actually the eye of a god, disguised as a planet, and now it was opening up! Within the golden pupil, it was possible to see an army of gods that numbered no fewer than 10,000!

Perhaps thēy had been there all along, or perhaps thēy had used some special teleportation method to go there. Regardless of how, thēy were there now. Astonishingly, they included gods in the Godfire level, a large number of Altar Gods, many in the peak of that level, and serving as high commanders... there were three True Gods!

One of thēm had a fog obscuring hīs facial features, but hīs godly might caused the surrounding starry sky to ripple and distort. Another was covered from head to toe with fire, and pulsed with an incomparably holy aura. The last was about the same size as a human. Hē was clad in black armor that included a helmet covering hīs entire head. Hē seemed infinitely mysterious.

As soon as the god army thēy commanded arrived... the entire battlefield changed!

The war between the Fourth and Fifth Star Rings was a war of momentum. The scope of the war was like a black and white ink painting, and right now, the black was flowing and the white was seething. They were devouring each other while simultaneously pushing each other away.

Previously, if one could look down on the eastern theater from above, it was full of the white that represented immortal energy. But right now, the conflict between the God Lord and the Immortal Lord, which no one could directly perceive, was changing.

In one small area of the battlefield, the black god energy suddenly became very weak. The mutagen vanished, and the white immortal energy rushed into the area. Meanwhile, an area filled with the white immortal energy was suddenly driven away, to be replaced by the pitch-black of mutagen.

That area was... in the staging areas of the eastern theater! It was a dramatic change!

Because of it, all of the staging areas in the eastern theater suddenly filled with mutagen. Countless cultivator armies were suddenly struck with mutagen, weakening their cultivation bases and infecting them severely.

Godly energy surged, and mutagen went wild. All of the dao flags planted in the universes of the staging areas began to rock back and forth wildly. Cracking sounds rang out. It seemed like the dao flags would start crumbling at any moment. If they did, then it would mean that the cultivators had lost control of the area. And if the eastern theater suffered such a grievous loss, the armies on the front lines would be isolated.

But the cultivator forces rallied. They went all out to protect the dao flags, all in the hopes of buying time.

The gods attacking the Transporter squadrons no longer remained in hiding. They emerged into the open, taking advantage of the mutagen to release an intense tempest of godly might. And they all shot directly toward the nearest dao flags.

At the same time, in many universes, other entities similar to the yellow planet from earlier all opened their eyes to reveal armies of gods. Battle raged.

It was impossible to say if the god armies had been lying in wait, or if they had taken advantage of the chaos to slip behind enemy lines unnoticed. From the large number of troops involved, the latter seemed like the most likely possibility. Regardless, from the way they were taking advantage of the situation, it seemed clear that the gods were the ones taking the initiative to attack. There was no way they could have attacked with such precision at the exact moment that there was a change in momentum between the God Lord and the Immortal Lord.

The goal of the attack was obvious: to destroy the dao flags in the universes of the eastern theater's staging areas, and to turn the entire region into god territory!

As the gods appeared everywhere in the staging areas of the eastern theater, there was a spot in the very middle, in a place called the Cloudwatching Universe... where cultivator armies were arrayed in formation.

Every single galaxy there contained a huge army. Every single planet had an army banner on it. The somber and desolate atmosphere grew stronger. This was the location in staging areas of the eastern theater where the high commander banner flew!

All military orders in the eastern theater came from this location. In the middle of that starry sky was an enormous immortal altar that shone with boundless immortal light. And at that spot... an enormous figure sat cross-legged.

He was the highest-ranking high commander, and he was none other than the Fifth Star Ring's extremely famous Immortal Monarch Silent Dao! He was the second-in-command to Immortal Lord Deepgloom! His cultivation base was at the peak of Lower Immortal! He was an experienced killer, and was known to be the strongest expert among peak Lower Immortals.

In the pursuit of his dao, he had come very close to the great circle. As his eyes opened, they glittered with killing intent.

"They took the bait," he murmured quietly.

During this war, both gods and immortals had set up very complicated and wide-ranging plans!

The squadrons weren't the only bait. The dao flags, the cultivators guarding the dao flags, the staging areas of the eastern theater... and even Immortal Monarch Silent Dao himself. They were all bait! The goal was to turn the eastern theater into a massive vortex of flesh and blood. Like a bright lantern on a dark night, it would grab the attention of the army of gods. And it would also be a cover to hide the true plan....

A cultivator with a mysterious origin, an assassin, was heading to the front lines in the Fourth Star Ring to secretly kill the commander of the gods' eastern army, a peak True God.

Let's see what happens first. Will you manage to isolate me here and kill me, or... will my mysterious assassin take you out?

Silent Dao's eyes narrowed as he looked off into the distance.

Who is that mysterious cultivator...? Master picked him and trusts him. And he's strong enough to kill a True God? There aren't many people like that...

Mutagen raged in the staging areas of the eastern theater. It was getting stronger and stronger. The Transporter squadrons were shaken by all the developments. Of the more than one hundred squadrons that had come, most had suffered casualties.

Within the mutagen-filled starry sky, Xu Qing and his squadron all had very serious looks on their faces.

Sounding very grim, Zhou Zhengli said, "Based on what I can tell, about seventy percent of the squadrons... have been wiped out! Those who survived have moved in the direction of the nearest dao flags. What's coming next is going to be a major offensive by the gods. That means we have a decision to make as well. Do we try to make it to the nearest dao flag? Or... do we keep going?"

Zhou Zhengli looked at Xu Qing. He wasn't the only one. The other ascendees were all looking at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing surveyed the surroundings quietly. The sudden development had been surprising even to him. Things in the starry sky had changed in an instant. The immortal energy was gone, and mutagen was everywhere. He actually felt somewhat stunned.

Truth be told, he was used to being in places with a lot of mutagen. In fact, it felt familiar. It was very much like the Revered Ancient mainland. He knew that cultivators with powerful cultivation bases could resist mutagen for a time. But if they stayed in such an environment for too long, they would gradually be invaded by it.

What was more... the cultivation base required replenishment after use. And when you absorbed the energy of heaven and earth, and it contained mutagen, then eventually you would show signs of mutation.

Given all that, it seemed that searching for a dao flag wasn't the best option. Besides, failure to find one could mean death, and he would have no control over that.

As for continuing onward.... Getting out of the staging areas and to the front lines also came with a lot of unknowns. For one thing, he had no idea what they might encounter along the way. What was more, he didn't know how badly the front lines were infected with mutagen. There was also the possibility of getting lost.

But at least there's a chance for survival amidst those unknowns. And I'll have some measure of control! If I stay here, and really do find a dao flag, then it will just mean getting stuck there. And that will be an even more passive position.

After some consideration, his eyes shone with determination. His voice echoed out.

"I want to keep going. I want to reach the front lines of the eastern theater. But if the rest of you want to do something else... I won't stop you."

With that, he started moving onward. Li Mengtu and Zhou Zhengli followed immediately. Sir Vilespirit and Yuanshan Su hesitated briefly, during which time Sir Star Ring followed Xu Qing. Hordeslayer and Rampart gritted their teeth and did the same. Finally, Yuanshan Su joined them. Sir Vilespirit sighed inwardly and made the same choice.

As for the other ascendees, the majority made the decision to continue with Xu Qing. Some of them chose not to. Over eighty people had been with Xu Qing during the journey. For the first time, they split up.

Fifty continued on. Thirty went their own way.

It was currently impossible to say which group made the right choice.

Chapter 1233: A New God Arrives

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Fighting raged in all the universes in the staging areas of the eastern theater. God armies poured forth from various locations, like unstoppable blades surrounded by mutagen. Intense fighting broke out around the dao flags in all the universes.

In some universes, the altars atop which the flags stood were reduced to ashes in an instant. The dao flags were contaminated by mutagen, and crumbled into dust. The cultivator armies in those locations were very unlucky. Some experienced mutation, some were enslaved by the gods, and some just died horrible deaths. It was a brutal scene.

However, in some universes, the altars stood strong. The dao flags continued to emit immortal energy, and the defending cultivators stood against the gods. But a price was paid. The battlefield soon reeked of blood and gore.

Taken in as a whole, the staging areas of the eastern theater were full of endless slaughter. The central army of the eastern theater arrived to provide backup. That army fought back and forth with the army of the gods. They were like dogs snapping at each other. Casualties were inflicted on both sides.

Death dirges rang out constantly! The eastern theater had turned into a brutal, blood-soaked grindstone.

As the grindstone turned, gods and cultivators alike were sucked in, their bones crushed, their flesh pulverized, their souls eradicated. Blood oozed out. And thus, everything became stained with red.

Eventually, it was like a blood-red lantern, flickering on the battlefield between the Fourth and Fifth Star Ring. Gradually... it attracted some attention. However, it was only a dimly flickering light, not enough to attract a lot of attention. The light needed to be brighter. The smell of blood and gore needed to be stronger.

More god armies arrived. More cultivator troops showed up.

Each side had different goals. But all of it served to make the fighting in the eastern theater grow more intense. There was no respect for life in war. There were only ideals and viewpoints that motivated each side to fight and kill.

To the gods, these cultivators were lower beings insulting their superiors. They were trying to overthrow the rule of the gods. If it had been something far, far away they might have ignored it. But the Fourth Star Ring was simply too close to the Fifth Star Ring. And the Sixth Star Ring was special. What was more, there was a new God Lord, and that meant they needed sacrifices. Because of that, the gods in the Fourth Star Ring had to wage war.

In contrast, the cultivators didn't think of themselves as lower beings insulting their superiors. They were fighting for freedom. They were fighting to escape slavery. As humans, they were inherently strong-willed. Once they stood up, they would be unyielding! They would never bow down again!

And thus, the slaughter grew increasingly intense.

Because of the slaughter and fighting, time flowed a bit differently in the starry sky. Normally speaking, one's frame of reference related to the planets and universes. Oftentimes, it would take days just to notice a change in the position of such heavenly bodies. In times when there was no war, traveling in the starry sky often seemed very slow-paced, as nothing around you moved. But with a war raging, and danger everywhere, it broke that illusion of stillness.

Zhou Zhengli's hard work was paying off. His foresight didn't just relate to matters of life or death. It related to heavenly bodies as well.

"This universe is dying," Zhou Zhengli said grimly.

Sir Star Ring's expression was grave. His order and balance, as well as the heaven's principle that he had acquired in the Helioterra Universe, were all aspects of natural law. As a result, he could sense the same thing even more intensely. "Order is unraveling. Chaos is increasing."

Xu Qing and the other fifty ascendees felt overwhelmed with danger.

"I can smell the blood..." Sir Vilespirit said. "There's a massacre going on."

Thanks to his broken sword, he was very sensitive to auras of death.

Everyone else instinctively looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered. He could never have predicted that someone like himself would end up surpassing everyone else here. After all, Sir Star Ring understood order far better than him. But he was sensitive to mutagen. After all, he had dealt with mutagen from a young age. Besides, Starfire viewed mutagen the way that cultivators viewed spirit energy.

After taking a moment to assess the situation with his senses, Xu Qing said, "The mutagen here is unusually strong. The life... is proliferating dramatically."

He offered no further explanations. He just sped on his way. Everyone else looked at him, their expressions more somber than ever.

Though he had not offered a detailed explanation, he had made things clear! The stronger the mutagen got, the more dao flags had been destroyed. For life to be proliferating indicated that more and more gods were arriving.

They really had only one option now. They had to get out of the staging areas! That was what everyone was thinking. The situation was so dangerous and serious that everyone was more determined than ever about what to do. And thus, they sped up.

Staying hidden and cautious, they continued toward the border between the staging areas and the front lines of the eastern theater. They ran into a few obstacles. But Xu Qing was like a sharp blade that could cut through anything they faced. Some people sustained injuries, but they were always able to continue onward at top speed.

Maybe they were lucky. Or maybe the gods were so focused on the dao flags that they didn't bother to place many forces in the periphery of the action. Regardless, Xu Qing led everyone onward safely.

Unfortunately... they didn't stay lucky forever. When they were very close to the border of the staging areas, only about three universes away from the front lines, they ran into something that completely halted their forward progress.

It was a squadron of gods about two hundred strong. There were many in the Godfire level, as well as Altar Gods. In leadership positions were two peak Altar Gods.

Originally, they had not been targeting Xu Qing and his people. Their original mission had been to serve as support troops. They were simply passing through to serve as reinforcements for an army besieging a dao flag, to boost their morale.

But when the two Altar Gods noticed fluctuations in the surrounding mutagen, they didn't hesitate to take advantage of the situation.

"Did a Transporter squad really make it this far?"

The two peak Altar Gods were actually the same species. They were violet-black from head to toe, with six arms and a fiery, diamond-shaped scale on their foreheads. As those scales glittered, the two peak Altar Gods turned expressionlessly to look in the same direction.

"There must be something unusual about these cultivators. They shouldn't have made it to this point."

The two of them sent out messages of divine will, and their squadron changed directions to head toward Xu Qing and his people.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing's pupils constricted as he sensed the mutagen stirring. Sir Star Ring, Zhou Zhengli, Sir Vilespirit, and the others all sensed the same thing shortly after.

"Some gods have locked onto us!"

"There's an intense killing intent approaching!"

"The starry sky has been sealed!"

As everyone reacted with varying degrees of shock, Xu Qing said, "Everyone speed up!"

Acting on pure instinct, Xu Qing shot forward with greater speed. Everyone used different ways of following along.

Unfortunately, the surrounding mutagen was going wild, almost like an explosive storm that prevented them from escaping. The unique chanting of the gods filled the area. Their minds blurred, their flesh distorted, and their perceptions were overturned. They were all affected to varying degrees.

Xu Qing threw his hand up. Eyes filling with determination, he called out to Starfire. *"I need to borrow your clay fox god form!"*

Starfire could tell that it was a moment of crisis, and didn't hesitate to open her mind and let Xu Qing's divine will in.

Xu Qing currently had a pure immortal body. But he also had a god clone. He just hadn't brought it to the Fifth Star Ring. But before leaving, he had gained enlightenment of a number of godly authorities. That included the godly authority of sound, the godly authority of blood, as well as his godly poison curse. And there was the godly authority of good luck, not to mention others.

The end result was that Xu Qing was not unfamiliar with gods and their godly magics. In fact, he was extremely familiar with them. The only difference was that his current body wasn't suitable for such things. He needed a medium to be able to control mutagen!

But... things were different with Starfire's body. That body could be a medium! With that body, Xu Qing could control mutagen.

In terms of god magics, he could imitate them perfectly using Xeno-Immortal School techniques. All in all, he wouldn't be imitating someone else's techniques. He would be imitating the magics of his own god body, with which he was extremely familiar.[1]

As for what happened next....

Xu Qing's eyes glazed with an aggressive light as he stretched his hand out. It was a god technique that Xu Qing had not unleashed in the Fifth Star Ring. But now he was going all out.

The mutagen in the area surged as it became part of Xu Qing's will. All sound in the area, including the chanting of the gods, ceased. He had seized sound as part of his god magic. Turning it around, he sent the voice of the gods back toward the gods in deadly fashion!

There was more. The mutagen in the area transformed, causing the blood of the gods to seethe. The gods that were chasing them suddenly found their god blood going wild. There was also a godly curse. It was a poison that struck with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force.

It was as if a new god had arrived in the world!

1. I bet you thought the author forgot about the Xeno-Immortal School, didn't you? Or maybe *you* forgot?? Well, the last mention of xeno-immortal stuff was in [chapter 1042](#), and it was first mentioned in [chapter 768](#). 

Chapter 1234: The Dual Brilliance of an Immortal and a God

Chapter 1234: The Dual Brilliance of an Immortal and a God

All gods had their own personal mutagen ready to release at any time! Mutagen was the manifestation of the aura of a god. And right now, the mutagen filling the staging areas of the eastern theater came from the aloof Gods and spirits, as well as all the other gods in the area.

And in the God Lord's attempt to create a sense of unity among the various gods, hē had removed hīs will from hīs mutagen, which allowed it to commingle perfectly with the mutagen of the other gods. The result was that as the gods descended on the starry sky, their mutagen worked together to create a shocking godly might.

But if those gods could do that... then Xu Qing could do the same with Starfire's clay fox body. As the two Altar Gods and thēir host of nearly two hundred god subordinates closed in on Xu Qing and his followers... his godly authority erupted.

The might of the godly authority had Starfire as the basis, but was drawn out by Xu Qing's will. Back when Xu Qing used his god magics, he had been limited to the constraints of the Godfire level. But Starfire was an Altar God now. Combined with Xu Qing's control using the Xeno-Immortal School techniques, his god magics were now on the level of an Altar God.

Rumbling sounds swept forth into the hearts and souls of the advancing gods. It became Xu Qing's godly voice.

"Halt!"

The moment that word echoed out, the approaching gods' expressions flickered. Only gods could hear that godly voice. Any cultivator who listened to it wouldn't understand it. All they would hear was a chanting that would fill their bodies and souls with terror.

As Xu Qing spoke in his godly voice, the god blood inside of the gods seethed. Those in the Godfire level trembled. The Altar Gods immediately called on thēir own godly authority to suppress the effects. The gods immediately understood the karma at play.

But there was more. The mutagen around them went wild as a vicious god curse was unleashed. Many of the gods felt sudden sensations of intense crisis. Thēy knew that this entire situation could mean only one thing! And that was... there was a terrifying Altar God here.

However, thēy didn't know who this Altar God was. All thēy could be certain of was that it wasn't fake. This was a pure godly voice and true godly authority. What was more... they were full of extraordinary godly might.

The approaching gods slowed down, and the two peak Altar Gods' eyes glittered. Thēy didn't hesitate to unleash thēir own godly might into the area. It quickly made contact with the unfamiliar Altar God up ahead, allowing thēm to assess the mutagen at hand. Thēy quickly understood the situation.

And then the godly voice spoke again. *"These humans are my prisoners of war."*

Many of the approaching gods chose to stop in place and advance no further. There were rules in place in the army of the gods. For instance, prisoners of war were considered private property. It didn't matter how many you took, they were yours.

The two peak Altar Gods stopped in place. After all, thēy were on a reinforcement mission, not a mission to seize resources. If these humans hadn't already been taken prisoner, thēy would obviously attack them. But if they had been taken prisoner by another god already, that was a different story.

That said, ever since this war with the Fifth Star Ring began, it had become more common for them to encounter situations in which gods had been enslaved. It was always possible that this group of cultivators had done that. Although it would be hard to control a god this perfectly, one of the peak Altar Gods nevertheless stepped through the void to perform a closer inspection.

When Xu Qing sensed the resulting fluctuations in the mutagen, he sighed inside. That said, it wasn't too much of a surprise. Borrowing Starfire's clay fox form to unleash godly authority to hoodwink these gods had been a gamble. So he had been prepared for failure from the beginning. As the Altar God approached through the void, Xu Qing's eyes glittered coldly.

Having made a decision, he shouted, "Attack!"

Without any hesitation, he fully unleashed all of the godly authority he had sent out. Just to make sure it was as deadly as possible, he didn't target the two peak Altar Gods. Instead... he aimed for their subordinates, the Godfire gods and weaker Altar Gods!

The moment the peak Altar Gods began to move, the mutagen in the void thrummed. The chanting of the gods from earlier, as well as Xu Qing's godly voice, and even the sound of the blood flowing within the gods, and the imperceptible noise of their cultivation bases... was seized by Xu Qing!

As of that moment, Xu Qing was the lord of all sound. Everything went silent, and then... a sound like thunder echoed out. It was a godly voice like a tempest, and it was directed straight at the Godfire gods and the Altar Gods. All such gods trembled. Their blood then flowed in reverse, as if it wished to explode out of

Next, the taboo poison curse erupted along with the roiling mutagen, melting everything it touched. That poison could strike fear into the hearts of cultivators, and it could shake gods as well.

At the same time, the void shattered as a huge rift was ripped open. The kelp plant shot out, heading directly toward the large group of gods. Next came chains of order as Sir Star Ring emerged, pulsing with killing intent. Then came huge mountains, immensely heavy. Yuanshan Su stood atop the biggest of the mountains.[1]

After breaking through to Quasi-Immortal, Zhou Zhengli's canon manifested as an enormous eye, and he also appeared, shaking the souls of the gods. Li Mengtu unleashed his poison. Sir Vilespirit went all out. He was blood-red from head to toe as he unleashed slaughter with his broken sword, becoming a streak of red that shot with deadly force toward the gods.

In addition to all that, the remaining ascendees from Xu Qing's squadron, knowing how deadly the situation was, unleashed all sorts of trump cards. In the blink of an eye, the void filled with booms and shock waves. Bloody fighting raged.

Of course, the two peak Altar Gods didn't react with any emotional fluctuations at all. They looked coldly at everything playing out, including the cultivators and their own subordinate gods. They didn't react visibly in any way. It was almost as if the deaths here were inconsequential to them, to the point of being uninteresting.

But what did excite them was... the rift that had been torn open. From inside of it... emerged Xu Qing, striding step by step out into the open. He pulsed with the powerful aura of a god, causing

godly projections to appear around him. Streams of godly authority flickered around him, manifesting a pure godly aura.

But at the same time, immortal fluctuations rolled out from him. His immortal embryo formed, gigantic and pulsing with the pure will of a cultivator. He was manifesting the traits of both gods and immortals, all at the same time! He emerged from the rift to hover in the void.

The gazes of the two peak Altar Gods instantly locked onto him. Then thēir eyes shone with golden glows, as if thēy could see Xu Qing inside and out.

“So, you enslaved a postheaven Altar God, allowing you to manifest Godfolk authority.”

“That said, godly authority this pure is rare indeed.”

“I’ve heard that a lot of lesser species have tried to explore the dao of gods. But your godly authority is different.”

“Just like us Godfolk, you have the blessing of a higher star ring.”

“Don’t tell me, you... were once a god?”

“One look makes it all clear.”

The two gods spoke in very emotionless tones. Thēy didn’t seem moved at all. Thēy couldn’t have been more apathetic. This conformed to exactly what Xu Qing would expect of preheaven gods. Given his various dealings with all sorts of gods, he knew how gods could do this. It was... omniscience.

He was right. The moment he stepped out, the peak Altar Gods’ eyes glowed golden, which meant that thēy had activated thēir omniscience! And thēy weren’t just assessing his state, thēy were also attempting to see his past.... Thēy wanted to see his origin!

And that was exactly what Xu Qing had been waiting for! That was exactly why he had walked out as a mixture of immortal and god.

1. Quick reminder that Yuanshan Su’s surname literally means ‘distant mountain(s).’ 远山

Chapter 1235: Executing Gods!

Chapter 1235: Executing Gods!

The power of omniscience from the two peak Altar Gods flowed forth with thēir godly might. It came with a nearly paramount pressure, which turned into an almost corporeal light that spread out over Xu Qing.

Godly might was erupting! Omniscience was being unleashed!

Xu Qing shivered. He felt like he was transparent both outside and inside. That included his fleshly body, his immortal embryo, his soul. Nothing could be hidden, not even his past!

Chaotic fighting raged in the area, but he was separated from all that. Everything slowed down, as if the operations of the world, the movement of the starry sky, and everything else was moving in slow motion.

And the two peak Altar Gods' omniscience was slowly peeling through everything related to Xu Qing, layer by layer. They were peeling away the shell of reality, and rifling through thoughts of the past. They were thoroughly observing Xu Qing.

If they succeeded, then they would know everything about Xu Qing, and that would indicate... that Xu Qing would have no power to fight back against them. That was how the omniscience of the gods worked.

What was more, because this was coming from two peak Altar Gods working together, it would be incredibly difficult for Xu Qing to resist. And so, they succeeded in seeing Xu Qing's history. By means of Xu Qing's transparent body and soul, they saw the Revered Ancient mainland! On that unfamiliar landmass, they saw cultivators and gods. And they traced the origin back to Sea-Sealing County, and the subterranean palace complex there.

That was where they sensed the phoenix temple, and... a figure seated cross-legged in front of it, pulsing with an eternal will. It was a god that looked like Xu Qing in every respect.

"This is the origin?"

The two peak Altar Gods looked thoughtful as they hovered on the battlefield. At the same time they suddenly sensed some unknowable danger.

"There's something... wrong about this god!"

The Altar Gods' hearts started to race as they realized that the growing sense of danger came from that unfamiliar continent, and that unfamiliar star ring, and that unfamiliar god. That was especially true considering that, behind this god, they saw darkness and gloom.

Endless, never-ending darkness and gloom. It was that darkness and gloom that caused the sensation of danger in them to grow stronger and stronger.

And that was because their omniscience was telling them that the darkness and gloom was taboo! It was instinctual. And because of that, they gave up further inquiry and prepared to retract their omniscience.

Unfortunately, that was when the cross-legged god's eyes snapped open. Golden light spilled out! Then a godly voice spoke, as if using fate itself, right into the minds of the two Altar God's god souls.

"Since you're looking at this origin, you might as well look closely."

Gods were omniscient. But omniscience was relative. To some extent, that was actually the higher star rings' way of protecting the gods. It made sure that they weren't invaded by entities stronger than them. After all, superior entities weren't subject to the omniscience of a god. They could not be sensed or perceived.

When gods looked at such things, it was akin to a mortal looking into a dark room. It wouldn't be possible to see anything within the pitch-black.

Only people who actually lived in the darkness, and were part of it, would be able to see such things. For instance, the living things in the Revered Ancient mainland, who could simply look up into the sky.

Outside gods, however, would have no way to see or sense any such things. There could be no karma for them to root out. Theoretically speaking, even when these two Altar Gods locked down onto Xu Qing with their omniscience and looked into his past and his origin... they should have seen his god body but not the origin. The reason was that they should have been protected from the origin in question. They should have seen only darkness.

But... someone illuminated the darkness!

The moment Xu Qing's god clone spoke, the godly authority of fate swelled, and the tattoo on the clone's back shone brightly. It was a tattoo of a candle! And the candle had just lit up! The light of the flame flashed, instantly becoming a sea of light around Xu Qing's god clone. As a result, it illuminated everything around it, lighting up the darkness, as well as the omniscience of the Altar Gods....

It forced them to see everything! It forced them to look deeper into Xu Qing! It forced them to witness his origin! It was as Xu Qing had just said!

"Since you're looking at this origin, you might as well look closely."

The minds of the two peak Altar Gods reeled. Their god souls trembled as if immense weight were crushing down onto them, all as an infinitely paramount broken face... appeared within their omniscience. It was as if it had bypassed their defenses and forced them to violate a very strict taboo!

Their omniscience had shown them a higher being! It didn't matter that the higher entity's eyes were closed. The mere godly might emanating off the entity surpassed anything they had ever encountered in their lives. Anguished howls erupted from the depths of their god souls.

"That... that's...."

Their god bodies writhed. Their god souls convulsed. Their godly authority melted. And the two peak Altar Gods were filled with unending terror and astonishment. They went mad.

On the most instinctual level, they would pay any price possible to escape. They would even burn their own bodies and sever the wills that attached them to this place. And that was because they could tell that they must not stay in this place under any circumstances! And they must not be there when this broken face's eyes opened!

But then the broken face's eyelashes twitched, as if those eyes were about to open!

That only caused these two Altar Gods to descend further into madness. They immediately took steps to destroy their own godly authority and damage their god souls to get away. But just as they were about to sever the threads of will....

Golden light shone from the forehead of Xu Qing's god clone, and a golden carving knife emerged. It was a carving knife that contained fate! The moment it appeared, it slashed toward the thread of will that was breaking apart the most quickly!

It looked like it would slash the thread in two, but when it made contact, it actually bolstered it! Fate blessed that will, and from its countless futures, it carved out an ending of death! And thus, the will that had been about to break actually became stronger. It didn't break. The connection grew stronger, until that god... couldn't leave!

"YOU!!!" the god shrieked in terror.

At exactly the same moment, the other Altar God's will actually did break, and the god vanished.

Only one stream of will was left behind. And what awaited that god was the broken face hanging high in the dome of heaven over Revered Ancient. The face's eyes opened.

Outside the phoenix palace, Xu Qing's god clone bowed his head and murmured, "Amen!"

The will that had been left behind howled in agony, fury, and madness. It tried to reach Xu Qing. But before that could happen, the god became a stream of golden light. A stream of unstoppable gravitational force latched onto it, and it was dragged up to the mouth of the broken face.

The broken face's eyes closed.

Xu Qing's god clone looked up. "Sadly, I was only strong enough to stop one of them."

*** The source of this content is No(v)elFire.net

Back on the remote edges of the Fifth Star Ring, in the staging areas of the eastern theater, near the front lines, a scream filled the starry sky. The gods all looked over at a scene that shook their god souls to the core!

Both of the two peak Altar Gods were glowing with golden light. But then, one of them went completely and utterly dark. And then, the god disappeared as if being erased from existence.

It wasn't just the god's body that disappeared. It was also the soul, the will... and all memories of that god. The god's past, present, and future disappeared, along with all traces of existence.

The cultivators from the Fifth Star Ring who had seen that god, as well as the gods from the Fourth Star Ring, suddenly had no memory of him. That was true death. The gods and ascendees who had seen that Altar God with their own eyes suddenly forgot.

The remaining Altar God's golden light flickered between light and dark. His eyes turned gray, and hē suddenly turned to flee. Hē wanted to escape this place immediately. Hē didn't remember hīs companion, nor what hē had seen in hīs omniscience. But the feeling of death that overwhelmed hīm caused hīm to unhesitatingly flee.

Of course, Xu Qing remembered.

As he hovered in the starry sky, his eyes flickering coldly, he said, "Execute them!"

That was a signal based on the plan they had put in place. Upon hearing it, the ascendees' killing intent skyrocketed. The vast majority of them went all out to kill the surrounding gods.

The kelp plant emerged in full. Ten huge leaves spread out like barriers, splitting the area into two sections. On the inside was the peak Altar God. On the outside were all the other gods! The kelp's mission was to buy time for the ascendees on the outside to kill the other gods!

Meanwhile, on the inside, Yuanshan Su's eyes glittered coldly. The endless mountains around her unleashed unrivaled weight, which crushed down onto the fleeing Altar God, stopping hīm from fleeing. Zhou Zhengli was there too. The eye formed from his canon was bloodshot as it emitted soul-crushing weight, a gaze that could cut off the path of all souls! Next was Sir Star Ring, whose countless chains of order swept out as he unleashed heaven's principle on the Altar God.

This was the might of judgment!

Sir Vilespirit's eyes were bloodshot, and his killing intent was at the pinnacle. He was under the control of the broken sword now, and he pulsed with avarice and madness as he streaked toward the Altar God in a red blur.

And Xu Qing used Starfire's clay fox form to unleash godly authority. Taboo poison. Authority of sound. Blood authority.

The godly authorities complemented the ascendees perfectly as they attacked. At that critical moment, the peak Altar God acted on instinct alone to throw out god magics. Unfortunately, hē had paid a heavy price to retreat from within hīs own omniscience, and was badly injured. Next... killing intent erupted!

The tolling of a bell erupted from Xu Qing. As it thrust everything into silence, a black iron skewer emerged! Within that deathly silence, Xu Qing called on the power of his immortal embryo, the might of the immortal palace, and the trump cards of the other cultivators to form... peak strength!

The skewer shot forward! It was a single blow that could execute a god! It ripped through the void, ripped through space-time, and ripped through everything. It shot right up to the peak Altar God and stabbed right into his forehead!!

Chapter 1236: Acquisitioner Squad Reporting for Duty

Chapter 1236: Acquisitioner Squad Reporting for Duty

The starry sky shook!

The kelp plant was pushing itself to the limit. But even with the kelp's help, the dozens of ascendees weren't a match for so many gods.... The fighting simply wasn't even. When Xu Qing and the other top ascendees made their move, the kelp plant could just work hard to buy time. It didn't take long for the kelp's sealing barrier to start breaking down. The huge leaves were battered away.

The ascendees, despite giving it their all, were so badly wounded they had to fall back.

The isolated area opened up, and the gods who had been temporarily blocked outside were able to rush inside. Except... as the gods entered one by one, they were shocked to the core.

They had already forgotten that they previously had two peak Altar Gods as their leaders. In their minds, they only had a single leader.

But that leader was in horrible condition. His skin was covered with a gruish tattoo that looked like a host of mountain peaks. Those distant mountains contained an incredibly heavy canon that sealed the enemy with the power of 10,000 mountains.

Hē was also wrapped up with a host of chains, each of which glittered with the light of order, and emanated the might of heaven's principle. Every moment that passed, the chains pulsed with the power of judgment. His chest was a mangled mass, out of which grew a huge eye! The evil, bloodshot eye was the manifestation of Zhou Zhengli's canon, which suppressed the god soul and cut off all avenues of escape!

On the god's back was a bright red flower that was the manifestation of Li Mengtu's canon.

Furthermore, buried in the location of his heart was a broken sword. In fact, the sword pierced right through the Altar God's heart, where it pulsed with avarice and madness.

There was also a taboo poison curse, manifested as streams of black smoke that covered the god, invading him and inflicting excruciating pain.

Beyond all that, an endless voice reached their ears and echoed into their minds, rising and falling with sounds of torment. All of the blood in his body was flowing backward, causing the god to slowly wither in on himself.

But most importantly of all was the fact that an iron skewer had stabbed into his forehead!

Xu Qing had two iron skewers. He had left one behind in the Revered Ancient mainland, with Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior as the spiritual soul, to stand guard over Plumdark. The other had

been forged by the apprentice of Immortal Lord Nineshores in the Fifth Star Ring. It contained Xu Qing's personal canon, so it could enter overlapping universes and form resonances with multiple space-times! It also had a mote of heaven's principle, and given all that, the iron skewer's personhood was extremely high. It also had immense 'weight.' It was a weight that even Quasi-Immortals would have to fear and respect!

It could well be said that his second iron skewer was a precious treasure of canon, and the most powerful weapon Xu Qing currently controlled! Its Infinite Timelessness was something no one could tamper with!

When it stabbed into this Altar God, it sealed space-time, cutting him off beyond the timescape. He was not in the current time! He was completely and utterly suppressed!

After the iron skewer stabbed into the god, it glittered brightly. And then, in front of all the other gods, the peak Altar God simply disappeared. He was imprisoned in Infinite Timelessness!

The gods were astonished beyond belief. After a brief moment of shocked silence, Xu Qing and the others' killing intent raged out across the battlefield again.

This had been the plan all along. First, deal with the Altar Gods. Then, go on a rampage! One couldn't afford blunders when fighting the gods! It was fine to shrink from a fight with them. But if you chose to do battle, you needed to kill them. You had to go all out.

That was especially true in a case like this one. After all, even though Xu Qing and the other top experts had dealt with the peak Altar Gods, the enemy still had a huge advantage. They still had a desperate fight ahead of them!

Preheaven gods had no emotions, but they did have an instinctual desire to remain alive. That obsession to live meant that they would do anything to avoid death. To truly resolve this crisis, they had to kill these cultivators despite their instinctual desire to avoid death.

In the blink of an eye, intense fighting broke out in the starry sky. Blood sprayed everywhere. The blood of gods and the blood of cultivators intermixed and flowed. The stench of gore filled the void. Slaughter turned the area into a living hell. Screams of mourning. Howls of rage. Cries of anguish. The sound of clashing magical techniques, divine abilities, and god magics. The mixture of canon and godly authority. Such things all mixed together. Mad killing took place!

Li Mengtu and Yuanshan Su were splattered with blood from severe injuries. They were nearly spent. That was especially true of Yuanshan Su, whose face was ashen. Her canon was destabilizing. Zhou Zhengli was in similarly bad shape. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Sir Vilespirit trembled from head to toe. The flame of his life force was flickering weakly.

Sir Star Ring's chains of order had lost much of their luster, and he was having a hard time controlling them. Hordeslayer and Rampart flitted about unstably. They were even reaching the point where they couldn't curse and grumble in their hearts.

Exhaustion and injuries spread like a rising tide. God corpses were piling up, but so were the mangled limbs and disfigured corpses of ascendees. And yet... the slaughter continued.

Xu Qing was like the ambassador of death, bringing a massacre wherever he went. His space-time canon erupted, causing numerous instances of space-time to appear around him. He was like a nightmare for the gods.

But even terrifying nightmares would end upon waking. Xu Qing and his squadron were getting very tired, and thus, it seemed like that awakening would come sooner rather than later.

Thankfully... the instinct to avoid death seemed to be coming even sooner. When about half of the gods had been slaughtered, the survivors began to feel the instinct to flee, rising up from their god souls. After all, their leaders had been captured and mostly killed.

Eventually, one god turned and vanished into the void. All living things have the instinct to seek benefit and avoid harm. That was even truer of the gods. If the two peak Altar Gods were still around, they could use their status as superior gods to compel the others to fight. But now... the inherent cold apathy that existed in the bones of the gods prompted them to flee.

Soon enough, a second god disappeared. As the moments passed, it happened again and again. The gods began dispersing. The scale of the fighting grew smaller. Eventually, silence filled the battlefield. There wasn't a single god left.

Xu Qing and the survivors hovered in the starry sky. They were completely and utterly spent, in both mind and body. What was more... their numbers had been reduced.

There were no longer over fifty of them. There were now hardly twenty. And they were in bad shape.

However, each and every survivor had an intensely baleful aura, and their eyes were the color of blood. This group had been with Xu Qing on a long journey. They had experienced the incident in the Helioterra Universe, they had seized ringsource with him, they had pillaged the god prison, and they had fought with him.

When they had been given the chance to leave with the other ascendees, they instead chose to stick with Xu Qing. Having survived to this point, they were warriors who had gone through countless trials, and all of them were now elites among elites!

Xu Qing looked around at them for a long moment, then hoarsely said, "Let's go!"

At that point, Xu Qing stopped using the clay fox form. Turning, he shot off into the distance. No one said a thing. But at the same time, they didn't waste any time. Turning into beams of prismatic light, they followed him. Together, they made their way off into the starry sky like a pack of wolves! NEW NOVEL CHAPTERS ARE PUBLISHED ON NovelFire.net

In that manner, time passed.

The fighting in the eastern theater went on. In fact, it grew more intense. Gods continued to invade from other areas. Cultivator armies that had been waiting in hiding also joined the fighting.

The eastern theater had truly become a grindstone of flesh and blood. One after another, the dao flags in various universes crumbled. Entire armies of gods transformed into corpses.

Countless cultivators were buried in the starry sky, including all of the ascendees who had left Xu Qing and the rest of the squadron. Ascendees were like seeds. But in war, they didn't count for much. And that was because only the true seeds would end up growing! Those who died were not truly seeds.

The glow of blood grew stronger in the eastern theater. It became like a torch in the night, attracting more and more attention. It seemed as if both sides were getting closer and closer to reaching their goal.

The two peak Altar Gods who had gone missing weren't very important at all. The fact that the small squadron of gods didn't make it to the fighting wasn't even noticed. When bright light shines, dust can't be seen.

Similarly, as the light grew brighter, no one noticed Xu Qing and his exhausted squadron fleeing into the darkness. Slowly but surely, they approached the border between the staging areas and the front lines of the eastern theater.

The closer they got, the emptier the starry sky became, and the weaker the mutagen. At a certain point, the mutagen disappeared entirely, and they could sense that they were surrounded by immortal energy.

Everyone looked around in surprise. They had left the staging areas. They were now... on the front lines of the eastern theater!

Off in the distance, they could see the massive ramparts that had been erected by the magical techniques of the cultivators. The ramparts went on forever and ever, glittering with bright light.

"We're finally here," Zhou Zhengli murmured. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was badly wounded.

For the most part, it was the same with everyone. As they looked at the distant cultivator ramparts, they breathed sighs of relief.

The starry sky here was dazzling, and because the dao flags were all in place, there was no mutagen. The immortal energy was strong. Because of that immortal energy, Xu Qing and the rest of the squadron felt their injuries starting to heal even faster than before. That said, they still weren't completely safe, so they continued moving forward toward the protective magical techniques.

About two hours later, they were very close to the ramparts. That was when a vast stream of divine will emerged from the ramparts and covered them. Along with the will came a flabbergasted voice.

"Who goes there?"

It spoke into the minds of Xu Qing and the others like heavenly thunder, forcing them to stop in place.

Xu Qing stepped forward. "We're a squadron from the Department of Acquisitions in the Nineshores Heaven, here on orders from Immortal Lord Nineshores to deliver the ringsource we have acquired to the front lines!"

Chapter 1237: Lieutenant General!

Chapter 1237: Lieutenant General!

The border between the staging areas of the eastern theater and the front lines consisted of magnificent, never-ending ramparts. The walls glittered with dazzling light as they spanned galaxies and universes. They served to completely isolate the staging areas from the front lines.

At a certain point along those endless ramparts, Xu Qing's hoarse voice rang out. The exhaustion in his voice matched the exhaustion that the eighteen surviving members of his squadron couldn't hide. They stood there quietly as the majestic will from the ramparts scanned them. And they could sense their identity medallions responding to the inspection.

From a distance, they were insignificant in comparison to the ramparts. After their identities had been verified, the will slowly retracted. Then the walls rippled, and an opening appeared. It was a small path.

On the other side of the path, beyond the opening, were over a hundred cultivators, just barely visible, but clearly looking closely at the group. They seemed surprised.

Xu Qing took little note of their facial expressions. He could guess why they were reacting this way. *We're probably the only squadron that made it through.*

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing flew onto the path, followed by Zhou Zhengli and everyone else. After they were all on the path, the opening disappeared, and the ramparts went back to the way they were before, glittering and impassable.

Inside the ramparts was gentle starlight and strong immortal energy.

After Xu Qing and everyone was present, the more than one hundred cultivators unblurred, making their facial features and expressions clear. Their gazes were those of astonishment and curiosity, leaving Xu Qing and the others feeling like they were rare oddities.

Xu Qing became more convinced than ever of his theory. Looking at the assembled cultivators, he said, "Where do we hand over the ringsource?"

A middle-aged cultivator in black armor stepped forth, looked them over, and finally fixed his gaze on Xu Qing.

"The lieutenant general has summoned you. My squadron will escort you there safely."

Xu Qing's heart thumped in his chest. Given his previous experience in cultivator wars, he knew a bit about how the departments and ranks worked.

He was aware that Immortal Lord Deepgloom was in charge of the war effort, and made major strategic decisions. Beneath him were three ministers of war, who commanded the three major

war zones, those being the eastern theater, the central theater, and the western theater. Responsibilities in each of the theaters was divided among several lieutenant generals.

In this part of the front lines of the eastern theater, the highest-ranking officer would be the lieutenant general. And now, right as they had arrived, he had summoned them for an audience. This just seemed to confirm Xu Qing's theory.

Sir Star Ring and the others exchanged glances. Zhou Zhengli's spirits seemed to lift.

Finally, Xu Qing said, "We shall follow the orders of the lieutenant general!"

The middle-aged cultivator nodded slightly. Then, after a moment of consideration, he instructed some of his subordinate cultivators to give some healing medicinal pills to Xu Qing and his people. After that, they blurred into motion.

Xu Qing and his people followed. And thus, under the protection of this group of cultivators, they made their way through the front lines of the eastern theater toward the lieutenant general's camp.

After their journey through multiple universes, via many teleportations, moving through the front lines seemed like looking at a scroll painting. Along the way, they saw numerous heavenly bodies being gathered to serve as tents. They were packed densely and were too numerous to count.

Some heavenly bodies were being dragged across a swirling whirlpool that seemed like rivers, which tugged at the starlight to create a dazzling scene. The flame of the life force within them was astounding, and pulsed with an energy that left Xu Qing and the others shocked.

There were also terrifyingly huge dharma statues trudging through the starry sky, dao flags hoisted behind their backs. They pulsed with terrifying pressure as they went about various missions.

Xu Qing also saw numerous suns. Each sun had a huge face on it that seemed to absorb the heat and fire of the sun and turned it into nutrients. After taking in enough nutrients, the faces would fly up and transform into dazzling butterflies that flapped their wings and flew off into distant parts of the starry sky. This chapter is updated by NoveI.Fire.net

Overall, the cultivators seemed to be waiting in combat readiness. The mood was solemn.

If Xu Qing and his squadron had been sent directly to the front lines, they would probably be impressed. But they had just gone through the staging areas and experienced chaos and slaughter. So though these sights were intriguing, they were not shocking. After all, they had gone through a mish-mash of mutagen and immortal energy to get here, not to mention the grindstone of flesh and blood. As a result, this place seemed more like the rear echelon.

As they went along, Xu Qing and his squadron saw a lot of cultivators. Some stuck to themselves, but others stayed in groups. Everyone had responsibilities, and everything was very orderly. The vast majority of cultivators, after noticing Xu Qing and his group, stared at them as they passed.

Xu Qing and his squadron noticed but didn't react. As they proceeded, they could sense a faint force of rejection coming from the starry sky. It seemed to indicate that they were guests here at the front lines, and had not been completely accepted.

About half a month later, they reached the heavenly body occupied by the lieutenant general.

It was an extremely bright, red-colored sun. It was larger than any sun Xu Qing had ever seen, so much so that the suns from his Inksun Universe seemed like dust in comparison.

It seemed unstable, as if it was constantly sucking in things from the void around it, all while simultaneously ejecting things at top speed. The result was that there was something like a cloud surrounding it. The pressure weighing down on it distorted the starry sky. The starlight in the area bent as if unable to sustain the force. The end result was that the sun seemed like it might explode at any moment and unleash terrifying power. Strangely, the sun actually wasn't as intensely hot as one might expect.

"That's a dying sun," Zhou Zhengli said quietly. "It's already gone through its primary life cycle, and has become a red giant!"

Everyone else looked at it, their hearts pounding in astonishment. The cultivators who had escorted them on the journey looked deeply at Xu Qing and the others, then clasped hands and left.

Soon, only Xu Qing and his squadron were left in front of the red giant. As the pressure from it weighed down on them, Xu Qing solemnly bowed to it, as did Sir Star Ring and the others.

"Our Acquisitioner squad has come to offer greetings, Lieutenant General!"

Rumbling sounds echoed out from the red giant, and a terrifying aura spread out. The surrounding clouds seethed. Then a black palace appeared, slowly emerging from the red giant into the clouds. A frigid coldness spread from the palace into the starry sky, along with streams of divine will that settled onto Xu Qing and his people.

It was another inspection. Each and every stream of divine will caused Xu Qing and everyone else to shiver mentally. It was immortal will!

The final stream... caused all the others to dim, as if it was far superior to them. Along with it came a calm voice from the hall of the palace.

"You're the first group, and perhaps the only group, to make it here to deliver the ringsource you acquired. As such, I don't want to forcibly probe your souls to see what you went through. Instead, I'd like you to simply explain. Tell me how you managed to escape that grindstone of flesh and blood."

Sir Star Ring and the others instantly got nervous. The use of the word 'escape' seemed ominous. They looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's mind raced. But in the end, he chose to simply tell the truth. And so, he explained their experiences along the way, including why they made the decisions they did. He didn't go into explicit detail, he just stuck to the basics.

After hearing Xu Qing's explanation, the divine will of the lieutenant general said nothing. However, one of the other streams of immortal will spoke.

"It must not have been easy for your group to stick together through so many setbacks, and in the end, still reach this point to deliver your ringsource. It counts as a great service. Although the lieutenant general doesn't wish to probe you with divine will, when it comes to the peak Altar God you encountered... do you have proof to back your claim?"

Xu Qing's heart and mind stirred. On the surface, it seemed like their story was being questioned. But after everything Xu Qing had experienced in life, he could tell that there was a deeper meaning to the words. Their successful journey counted as a meritorious service, but at the same time, they were being asked to prove what they had done.

The real reason for this caused Xu Qing to look at the surviving members of his squadron. Ascendees all had important backgrounds. For any of them to reach this point would require significant backers, and those backers were now more important than ever.

The key to the whole thing is how he mentioned 'sticking together.'

After some thought, Xu Qing waved his hand. His canon rippled, and Infinite Timelessness opened. The imprisoned peak Altar God was now visible for everyone to see. It was possible to see wounds inflicted by various types of canon. And the iron skewer embedded in the god's forehead pulsed with fluctuations of suppression. This explained everything.

Xu Qing immediately said, "I could not have captured this peak Altar God on my own. We worked together!"

Suddenly, Xu Qing heard laughter. It was the lieutenant general in the palace.

"You're an interesting bunch, I'll give you that. You experienced a lot of twists and turns crossing the field of battle. It was obviously extremely difficult to deliver the ringsource and accomplish your mission. It definitely counts as a major service."

"Slaughtering a host of gods and capturing a peak Altar God counts as further service. Well then... you might as well stay here in the eastern theater army."

As the lieutenant general's voice echoed out, the red giant rumbled, and the black palace sank back down into its depths. All that remained behind was a command medallion that flew over and hovered in front of Xu Qing.

There was also a final bit of divine will that said, *"Go to Planet Spirit Restoration and wait for an assignment."*

Xu Qing and the others bowed their heads.

"Yes, sir, Lieutenant General!"

Xu Qing reached out and took the medallion. As soon as he did, the force of rejection from the starry sky vanished. They were no longer just guests.

Xu Qing breathed a sigh of relief. So did Zhou Zhengli, Sir Star Ring, and everyone else. They exchanged glances. Given all that they had experienced, they now felt relief. They had been turned from Acquisitioners into Transporters, and had been sent to the field of battle. That mission had been accomplished.

They had paid a heavy price. They had started out more than a hundred strong. Now... they didn't even have twenty.

"This is how ascendees are trained," Zhou Zhengli said quietly. "Only those who survive until the very end can truly become dao seeds."

Chapter 1238: Mission, Please!

Chapter 1238: Mission, Please!

After Xu Qing took the medallion, he then handed over the ringsource. Then they left the red giant and disappeared into the starry sky.

After they were gone, the huge red sun continued to emit both mist and bright light. Inside of the sun, in the ancient, pitch-black palace, a sigh drifted out.

"I never imagined the pawns would actually manage to cross the river. And they're ascendees. Now that I've seen them personally, I guess it's not too surprising they made it this far. The question is whether or not any of them have the potential to become true dao seeds. Or... are they just pale imitations.^[1]

"It's the same with us, after all. With the exception of the esteemed general, all of us are ascendees, and we're still finding our path. It's been many years since the Immortal Paragon's decree, and though immortals like us have proliferated, there has yet to be any new Immortal Lord."

More sighs could be heard in the palace hall. As time passed, none of the immortals there said anything.

Eventually, the lieutenant general spoke in a hoarse voice. "It's easy to start a new endeavor. But it's not as easy to keep it going. That's how things work in the mortal world, and it's the same with cultivators in the Fifth Star Ring."

The immortals present all understood that truth. In fact, they understood it better than most.

It was especially true in the Fifth Star Ring. In the past, the star ring had been controlled by gods, and ruled by a God Paragon. Eventually, the Immortal Paragon struggled into prominence, leading humans from a minor world to carve out a path for cultivators and a dao for immortals. They advanced step by step through countless hardships and tribulations, slaughtering minor worlds and gods along the way.

Ultimately, they crushed the God Paragon, imprisoned the God Lords, and severed the origins of all gods. They enslaved countless members of the Godfolk, and hewed out twelve heavens beyond heaven in the Fifth Star Ring.

Then, in the very middle of it all, they enshrined the Immortal Capital with its crucial mission. And that mission was to eventually turn all of the thirty-six higher star rings into places like the Fifth, in other words, places that belonged to humans and cultivators!

There was no way a task like that could be described as easy. No, it was something extremely difficult! And even more difficult than starting such a task was to continue working on it long-term.

And that was especially true... considering that the person who was originally supposed to be the second Immortal Paragon had perished. Immortal Lord Aurora. When he died, it cast doubt on the future of the entire Fifth Star Ring. After all... with the exception of the Fifth Star Ring and a couple of other very special star rings, all star rings were the home of gods. And though the Fifth Star Ring seemed like a place bursting with life and activity, the reality was that it was already past its zenith and on the decline.

The only way to change that was for a second Immortal Paragon to rise up in the Fifth Star Ring! Before another Immortal Paragon could rise up, there needed to be another Immortal Lord. And that was the reason for all the rigorous training the ascendees went through over all the years.

It was a brutal arrangement. Fostering cultivators who eventually ascended from the Immortal Capital was a process similar to raising venomous bugs in a jar. It didn't matter what fate or karma had in store, those who died were considered nothing but imitations. Those who lived were the true dao seeds! And those who continued on to the end would be kindred spirits in philosophy!

"I just hope the day will come soon. It doesn't matter which generation that person comes from, as long as they're human and as long as they're a cultivator."

Time passed as Xu Qing and the others remained on the front lines of the eastern theater.

In a flash, three months went by. During that time, the grindstone of flesh and blood continued to turn, casting red light onto all of the battlefields in the eastern theater. Xu Qing and the others didn't know how the war was faring overall. However, the ebb and flow of events on the front lines gave them an idea of how things were going.

The action in the staging areas was reaching a critical point. That much was clear because of the lack of movement among the military forces on the front lines.

On a snowy mountain full of immortal energy on Planet Spirit Restoration, Xu Qing and the rest were gathered around a fire pit.

Snow drifted down calmly from above as Zhou Zhengli said, "It indicates the event is almost complete. Based on the information I've been able to gather, there are more small-scale clashes with gods on the true front lines. It seems likely that we'll be getting our mission soon. That's the extent of what I've been able to learn."

The snow brought cold with it. However, the heat from the fire pit melted the snow, creating a mist that filled the area.

They were surrounded by snowy mountains in all directions. In fact, if one took in Planet Spirit Restoration as a whole, they would see that it was full of numerous snowy mountains. There were a lot of them. Atop every single mountain, there was a fire pit blazing with red fire. The flames danced, letting out both heat as well as something else very mysterious. Whatever that mysterious power was, it helped cultivators to recover from injuries and rebuild strength.

After spending three months on the planet, Xu Qing and the others had long since recovered. In fact, they had only stayed atop the mountain for the first month. After that, they had scattered, and had spent two months in other places, only returning at specific times to touch bases. Today was their third time meeting up again.

After Zhou Zhengli was done speaking, Li Mengtu took a turn. “The information I got led me in a different direction than Zhou Zhengli. I wanted to find out if anyone else made it through the staging areas in the last few months. None did.”

Li Mengtu knew he wasn’t very good at digging for information, so he had chosen a much simpler task. When he was done with his report, he looked around at the others. Whenever they regrouped, they would share any information they had uncovered, then come up with a new plan before parting ways again. In that way, they were able to gain an understanding of the front lines much more quickly.

Yuanshan Su, Sir Vilespirit, Hordeslayer, Rampart, and everyone else took turns sharing what they had learned.

Finally it was Sir Star Ring’s turn. He looked at Xu Qing. “I looked into those people you mentioned last time we met up, and I learned a thing or two.”

Xu Qing turned to look at Sir Star Ring.

Of course, Xu Qing had gone out just like the rest of them, and had used his own methods of getting information on the front lines. At a certain point, he had noticed some cultivators who seemed to belong to a special army organization. They seemed similar to the Department of Acquisitions, but were very secretive and had very few dealings with anyone outside of their organization.

As a result, Xu Qing wasn’t able to interact with them much. However, he was very curious about them, and had let everyone else know they should pay attention and try to get information if they could.

“They form an auxiliary force in the army, made up of fifty squadrons. They operate on the front lines, specifically, in locations where battles are fought with the gods. They’re called... the Corpsedrainers! Their mission is simple. They clear battlefields. They go to front line positions where the bodies of dead gods are located, and they collect ringsource and other loot.

“Similar to Acquisitioners, they can keep a bit for themselves. The more battles are fought, the more active they are. That’s been especially true over the last month, as there have been a lot of skirmishes with the Fourth Star Ring forces. Virtually all of their forces have been sent in that

direction.” Looking closely at Xu Qing, Sir Star Ring said, “Why exactly did you want us to pay attention to them?”

Xu Qing looked around thoughtfully at the small group. They had gone through a lot together, so he was very familiar with them at this point.

“It’s been three months since we handed in our ringsource and got sent here to rest and recover,” he said. “During that time, the lieutenant general hasn’t made any arrangements for us.... So I was thinking that, instead of waiting for an assignment, we could take the initiative and find something to do.... Maybe we could even apply for a specific position.

“I’ve almost run out of ringsource to use for cultivation. I’m guessing you’re all in similar positions, right? If we don’t replenish our stock, it’ll affect our cultivation progress.”

In response, Sir Star Ring’s eyes glittered, Zhou Zhengli smiled faintly, Sir Vilespirit licked his lips, and the brothers Hordeslayer and Rampart emitted faint sounds like the humming of swords. Even the normally reserved Yuanshan Su seemed excited. The other ascendeers reacted similarly. Their baleful auras pulsed, causing the snowflakes in the sky to turn black.

Li Mengtu was the first to speak. “That’s exactly what I’ve been wanting to do!” Content originally comes from novelfire.net

He seemed to have given voice to what everyone was thinking, as their eyes glowed like wolves in a wolf pack. All of these people had fought tooth and nail to ascend from the Immortal Capital. They had gone through all sorts of deadly training, and were like blood fiends who were ruthless to the core. In the three months that had passed, they had been hard-pressed to remain patient. It was only natural that they responded enthusiastically to Xu Qing’s suggestion.

Seeing their reaction prompted a nod from Xu Qing. Not wanting to waste any time, he stood and solemnly took out the command medallion from the lieutenant general. Then his immortal embryo glittered as he sent some immortal will into the medallion. It became a dao voice that caused the medallion to tremble.

“This is Xu Qing, leader of the former Acquisitioner squadron and now Transporter squadron. I would like to submit a petition to the lieutenant general. My squadron is fully recovered and well-rested. We’re in peak condition now. We have been emboldened by seeing our fellow soldiers slaying gods on the front lines, and would thus like to submit an application for a new mission....

“We are willing to go to the battlefields of the front line as a Corpsedrainers squadron. We... would like to continue our previous mission of acquiring ringsource!”

Everyone else stood in anticipation.

However, there was no response from the command medallion. Xu Qing’s immortal will disappeared like a *stone ox thrown into the ocean*. Everyone, including Xu Qing, stood there waiting patiently.

About an hour passed.... Then the medallion vibrated. Red light shot out from it, surrounding them, and along with it came a stream of majestic immortal will.

“Approved!”

“Yes, sir, Lieutenant General!” Xu Qing said loudly.

Everyone else voiced the same words. The red light shone into the wind and snow like the rising sun!

1. The pawns/river is a reference to Chinese chess. Note: Chinese chess, transliterated xiangqi, translated “elephant chess,” is NOT the game of Go! Go is transliterated weiqi and is directly translated as “encirclement chess,” and it has simple black and white stones that you use to carve out territory on the board. In contrast, Chinese chess (xiangqi) has pieces that correlate to members of an army, similar to international chess. One big difference in Chinese chess is that there’s a ‘river’ in the middle of the board. When a pawn crosses the river, it usually signifies a big change in the game. For one thing, the pawn gains additional abilities when it crosses the river. Beyond that, crossing the river usually signifies an advancement beyond the opening or middlegame. Incidentally, nowadays Chinese chess is much more popular and common than Go. You will see people (usually old guys) playing the game on the street or in the park. Even in overseas Chinese communities, the game is popular. Back when I lived in Chinatown in Manhattan, I remember seeing old dudes playing the game in the park all the time. In fact, [here’s a picture I took](#) in a Chinatown park in around 2009 of a bunch of guys gathered around a Chinese chess game. 📷

Chapter 1239: Corpsedrainer Squadron

Chapter 1239: Corpsedrainer Squadron

The war was heating up in the eastern theater. Fighting was breaking out all over the place. Sparks flew. The scale of the fighting wasn’t very large. Most battles were skirmishes involving about a thousand combatants. But the number of battles was growing.

Of course, war had to be judged as a whole. And there was a reason for everything that was happening. It didn’t matter if it was large-scale battles or minor skirmishes, they all played out for specific reasons. And if those various goals were met, then it would build up momentum to reach the biggest goal of all. That was the essence of war. It was like a game.

For example, the information brought in by Xu Qing and everyone else seemed to point to the same conclusion: the event in the staging areas of the eastern theater was over. At the same time, more skirmishes were breaking out on the front lines. Given that... the goal was obvious.

Both gods and cultivators were using the skirmishes to hide their true motives! At the moment, as sparks were flying because of all the skirmishes, there was one battlefield located in an asteroid belt.

The fighting was bloody. Taking in the scene as a whole, rumbling booms echoed out, rubble sprayed everywhere, and mutagen clashed with immortal energy constantly. One side was making an incursion. The other side was trying to stop them. It was a very intense situation.

Beyond the periphery of the fighting, amongst some scattered asteroids, a group of people was observing the battlefield. There were a few hundred of them, all wearing gray and black garments. They looked like vultures, their eyes glittering as they kept a close eye on their surroundings. Clearly, they were ready to fall back if the fighting got too close to them.

One of them, an old man, was talking to some cultivators standing around him. Read full story at [novel•fire.net](#)

“I was right, eh? I knew this fight wouldn’t end quickly. My guess is that it’ll keep going for at least another hour. You know, if I hadn’t noticed you a few months ago, and also sensed your command medallion just now, I wouldn’t have called you over here.”

The cultivators around him all had baleful auras that were surprising even to him. That was especially true of their leader, who had the strongest baleful aura of all.

“You know, you’re actually pretty famous for getting through the staging areas to the front lines. But since you’re part of the Logistics Division now, there are some things you need to understand.”

The people around him were, of course, Xu Qing and the other ascendees. After their request for a mission was approved, they had been assigned to this location, and had arrived only about four hours ago. However, before they could get close to the battlefield, this old man had stopped them.

He was also a Corpsedrainer. Being aware of who Xu Qing and the other ascendees were, he had shown them some goodwill by inviting them over.

In response to his words, Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring exchanged a glance, then clasped hands, bowed, and sincerely asked for more information.

The old man nodded. “Technically speaking, we’re part of the Logistics Division. But that’s just the official, nice-sounding version of what we are. As you know, everybody calls us Corpsedrainers!

“Considering we clean up after battles, it only makes sense that we have to wait until the fighting is over before we start working. If we didn’t, then we wouldn’t be Corpsedrainers. We would be actually fighting in the war! Remember, the fighting is done by the army cultivators. We don’t take part. We only go in *after* the fighting!

“That’s because... if we went in too soon, it could affect the strategy and tactics of the army cultivators. What’s more, part of our mission is to make sure that our army cultivators have a path of retreat if they suffer a defeat!”

The old man clearly took his responsibilities very seriously.

Xu Qing and everyone else nodded solemnly. Truth be told, they hadn’t intended to go onto the battlefield. They had just wanted to get close enough to be in the position to get ringsource as quickly as possible. After all, they believed themselves to be quite skilled at acquiring ringsource.

They had quite a bit of experience due to their time in the Department of Acquisitions. During that time, they had managed to meet all their quotas, but had also been able to siphon off plenty of ringsource for their own use. The difference was that they had taken ringsource from living targets before. This would be their first time harvesting it from dead gods.

When the old man saw how attentive Xu Qing and the others were being, he relaxed a bit and cleared his throat.

“Everything I just said is the official position of the army. In reality, we don’t really need to guard the escape routes. And if we do go onto the battlefield, there’s almost no chance we would affect the army.

“Now I’ll tell you the real deal. The truth is that we don’t want to go onto the battlefield too early because, for all we know, it might get us killed. Once the fighting starts to wrap up, things are a lot safer. Of course, it’s hard to predict how things will end in war, so we need to always be ready to evacuate if our side ends up losing.

“You lot are just too young and inexperienced. If I hadn’t stopped you just now, you would have gone too close to the fighting, and that would have put you in a lot of danger. Another thing you should keep in mind is that you should never get into conflicts with the army cultivators, as—”

All of a sudden, Xu Qing’s expression flickered. He, along with Sir Star Ring and the others, all looked over at the battlefield. The old man stopped talking and did the same. They saw a huge swell of immortal energy, and could hear cheering. Then a dao flag was hoisted up.

“Victory!” the old man said, his eyes lighting up. Not bothering to go into any further detail about the rules, he shot forward. “Let’s get to work, everybody!”

As he led the way, the squadron under his command flew forward like vultures who had spread their wings. Xu Qing and the others followed. In short order, they slashed into the asteroid belt like sharp blades.

Within the rubble, they saw god corpses and god blood everywhere, as well as severed limbs and destroyed treasures. There were quite a few cultivator corpses as well.

The cultivator army had already moved on, although a few warriors had remained behind to collect ringsource. The old man and his subordinates didn’t seem surprised by that. They didn’t even glance at the warriors as they swarmed over the unattended corpses. Some cut things apart, some focused on collections, some stored up the gains. They worked together smoothly and with great speed. They were obviously very used to this. Only a few dozen breaths later, they had already cleared much of the battlefield.

The god corpses were collected up, but the cultivator corpses were treated with great respect.

Xu Qing and the others looked on with astonishment. Zhou Zhengli and the other top ascendees suddenly felt great respect. There was no doubt that the old man and his subordinates had pushed their harvesting skills to the point of perfection! Their speed was nothing short of stupefying.

“These people are on a different level when it comes to looting corpses,” someone said. “They’re totally beyond us!”

Xu Qing and the others exchanged glances, then hurried onto the battlefield to start working.

Despite having a background in the Department of Acquisitions, compared to the old man and his people, they couldn’t compete in terms of speed and thoroughness. Furthermore, these gods were

dead, so the ringsource in them wasn't very active. The levels were also much lower than in living gods, which meant that it took a lot of work.

Thankfully, there were plenty of corpses. Obviously, getting a lot of ringsource would involve dealing with a lot of corpses. The Corpsedrainers had their own set of rules. Once someone started working on the corpse of a god, no one would interfere, even if they were taking a long time.

Xu Qing realized that quickly, and made sure to abide by the rules.

And yet, there were still conflicts. They weren't conflicts between Corpsedrainers, but with the army cultivators. The army cultivators were bossy and domineering, and when it came to collecting the corpses, they were rude and unreasonable. They didn't make any attempt to hide their disdain of the Corpsedrainers. It made sense considering that their army was the one who had killed these gods....

But there were official arrangements for the resources and battle trophies of war, so there was no grounds for the army cultivators to do much. What usually happened was that after army forces won a battle and moved on, they would leave some people behind to collect some loot, all for the purpose of keeping morale up. Such practices were tacitly approved of.

The Corpsedrainers were used to it, and would usually just rely on their speed to make up for the difference. Xu Qing and the ascendees had just started as Corpsedrainers, so they were clearly not as fast as the others. As a result, they were the first ones the army cultivators targeted.

A few hours later, the massive battlefield was almost totally cleared. The corpses of the cultivators had been attended to properly, and taken away by the army. The corpses of the gods had been collected, with the old man and the Corpsedrainers getting about sixty percent of them. The army cultivators got about thirty percent. The final ten percent... went to Xu Qing and the ascendees.

When the battlefield was cleared, the army cultivators left. Xu Qing and the ascendees were left muttering a bit discontentedly.

Seeing that, the old man came over with a broad smile on his face. "You don't seem too happy. Feel like you got robbed? You'll figure things out soon enough. In the end, they did kill these gods, so it's not unusual at all for them to take some of the corpses. Things will get better for you as you learn to go faster."

With that, the old man bade farewell and led his subordinates away.

Xu Qing and the ascendees were now alone in the asteroid belt. They didn't feel any less discontent.

The old man had misjudged them. Their discontent wasn't because they had performed poorly or were angry. It was true that the army had slain these gods, so it was completely justifiable for them to take the corpses as loot. After all, if the ascendees were in that position, they would be irritated if other people showed up and took the corpses of the gods they had slaughtered. No, they were discontent for a different reason....

"We're not as fast as the other Corpsedrainers, and we have no right to get in arguments with the army cultivators...."

“Since the Corpsedrainers can only start working after the fighting is over....”

“Maybe we should just go onto the battlefield earlier.”

Everyone exchanged glances, and their eyes were glittering.

Chapter 1240: Side Hustle

Chapter 1240: Side Hustle

The same mysterious light glittered in the eyes of Xu Qing and all the ascendees. They had not done well in this, their first time clearing a battlefield. After they handed in their Corpsedrainer quota, they would hardly have any ringsource left for cultivation purposes.

Everyone slowly looked over at Xu Qing. They were waiting for his final decision.

He scanned the empty battlefield, and then the distant starry sky. Finally, he said, “Entering the field of battle early is definitely an option. But we need to find the right opportunity. And we need to make sure we have a clear assessment of the battle prowess of both sides. Things can change very quickly on the battlefield, and if our timing is wrong, we could end up in a deadly situation. After all, we’re not strong enough yet to be able to crush all opposition.”

Xu Qing suppressed the urge to be impulsive. He knew that this was a situation in which hasty decisions weren’t a good idea.

The glow in the eyes of the other ascendees began to fade.

However, that was when Sir Vilespirit licked his lips and said, “Captain... the truth is we’re better at dealing with living gods than dead ones! You can harvest more ringsource from the live ones....”

The glow returned to the eyes of the ascendees. They understood what Sir Vilespirit was getting at. He was suggesting they start hunting gods. They were also thinking about the god prisons they had been to.

When Xu Qing heard someone calling him ‘Captain,’ it left him feeling a bit dazed. It was actually the first time anyone had addressed him that way so far. *I wonder what Eldest Brother is up to right now...*

Meanwhile, Sir Star Ring said, “You can’t accomplish anything without rules. We’re not Acquisitioners anymore. We’re Corpsedrainers.”

Sir Vilespirit’s eyes glittered as he coldly replied, “And can you really do better than those other Corpsedrainers? They got sixty percent of the corpses! Sir Star Ring, your ‘order’ isn’t going to help at all when it comes to draining corpses!”

Sir Star Ring glared back coldly at Sir Vilespirit. Sir Vilespirit wasn’t about to shrink in the face of that, so he pulsed with a baleful aura and faint Quasi-Immortal fluctuations. Everyone had

improved to certain degrees recently. As for Sir Vilespirit, he had broken through into the Quasi-Immortal level. As the two ascendees glared at each other, Xu Qing looked at Zhou Zhengli.

Zhou Zhengli cleared his throat, stepped forward to stand between Sir Star Ring and Sir Vilespirit, and then bowed to Xu Qing.

“Your Majesty, we know your primary concern is keeping us alive. But we’ve made it all the way here to the battlefield. We’ve gone through a lot, and we know that rewards come only with risk. As long as the potential gains are worth it, we don’t mind taking risks. In fact, that’s the best way to get what we need.

“Therefore, what Fellow Daoist Vilespirit just said about targeting the living is true. But so is what Fellow Daoist Star Ring said about rules. I think we could probably find a compromise here.”

Zhou Zhengli licked his lips and continued, “We’re Corpsedrainers, sure. But if we hunted down some gods and turned them into dead bodies, *then* collected them, well... that wouldn’t be a conflict, would it? We don’t have to look for a battlefield, we can make one. We don’t have to look for corpses, we can make them.”

With that, Zhou Zhengli bowed again to Xu Qing. Sir Vilespirit’s eyes glittered as he also bowed. The other ascendees said nothing, but their eyes glittered as they, too, bowed. Sir Star Ring thought about it for a moment, then nodded and looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked around at them. He knew that everyone present had their own goals and motives. What was more, they were not greenhouse flowers. They had been born amidst foul winds and raining blood. They were running out of ringsource and were getting antsy to devour gods. Given all that....

Xu Qing’s eyes flashed with determination, and he nodded. In response, the other ascendees smiled like wolves that had been let out of their cages. Zhou Zhengli made some final arrangements, and then they scattered. They would use their own various talents to try to find targets, and would send information back for Zhou Zhengli and Sir Star Ring to consider.

As for Xu Qing, he sat down cross-legged on an asteroid to wait.

Half a month passed by. Information continued to pour in from the various ascendees. All of it related to the activities of various gods. However, the vast majority of situations didn’t seem suitable to Xu Qing. Either there were too many gods present, or the scenarios were just too risky.

Roughly a week passed. That was when one of the ascendees named Daoist Bloodcloud sent information about a situation that seemed promising. Sir Star Ring and Zhou Zhengli studied the message to confirm its authenticity, then forwarded the information to Xu Qing.

“Captain, I found a team of scouts about thirty in number. The most powerful is a mid Altar God. They’re definitely Godfolk. I’ve been secretly following thēm for about two days. Thēy come in all shapes and sizes, and thēy seem perfect for our purposes!”

Xu Qing considered it. Then his baleful aura surged as he sent out orders. After that, he stepped out into the void and disappeared. The other ascendees in different areas got the orders, whereupon

their eyes glittered. And then, like a pack of vicious wolves, they raced toward the location. This chapter is updated by novellire.net

A few days later, near a planet called Graytomb, Xu Qing and the ascendees met up. Daoist Bloodcloud had been waiting for them there. As Xu Qing arrived, flanked by Sir Star Ring and Zhou Zhengli, Daoist Bloodcloud bowed.

“Captain, this group of gods is well-hidden. However, I happen to have a special magic that lets me sense thēm. I followed thēm here, and this is where thēy’ve been for the past few days. In order to avoid detection, I didn’t go onto the planet. But I’m certain that’s where thēy are.”

Sir Star Ring nodded. “I can sense great chaos in the area.”

Zhou Zhengli licked his lips and smiled. “Your Majesty, my canon is informing me that thēy’re still there.”

If the information had been coming from Daoist Bloodcloud alone, Xu Qing would have wanted further proof. But since Sir Star Ring and Zhou Zhengli were corroborating the details, it seemed much more likely to be accurate. As Xu Qing looked at the planet, his immortal embryo stirred, and his canon of space-time spread out. In that way, he was able to confirm the situation on his own as well.

“We strike quickly,” he said in a cold voice. “Collect the ringsource as fast as possible. Everybody... let’s go!”

The ascendees surged with baleful auras as they rushed toward the planet. Over a dozen beams of light shot through the clouds and headed toward the gods at top speed. Xu Qing was among them, and he was going all out to approach the target destination.

There were over thirty gods present, including the Altar God. And upon nearing, the ascendees were able to see what thēy were doing. Thēy were performing some sort of ceremony around an octagonal altar.

Astonishingly, there was a black bowl in the middle of the table. Inside the bowl was blood, and it was bubbling as if boiling. The boiling blood was causing an intense mutagen to form. And it seemed to be building up toward some sort of detonation point.

When Xu Qing and the ascendees arrived, the gods looked up in surprise.

The Altar God’s pupils constricted. “The god altar isn’t complete. The ceremony hasn’t started. The mutagen hasn’t erupted. The foundation is still forming. How could cultivators have shown up already??”

The Altar God was surprised, but acted decisively. Godly authority flared, causing the unfinished altar to burst into flames early. The black bowl of blood suddenly shattered. Massive amounts of mutagen spilled out like roiling black smoke. It was supposed to infect everything in the area. Unfortunately, it wasn’t strong enough, so the effect wasn’t as good as it should have been, making it unclear whether or not a new battlefield could form here.... However, hē had no other options.

At almost the exact same instant that the god aura surged out, the ascendees, who had been holding their longing in check for quite a while now, unleashed everything at their disposal. Down they descended like razor-sharp blades.

Xu Qing extended his hand, and his immortal embryo emerged, blocking out everything as its palm dropped. Its aura shook all of the gods to the core, and immediately covered the effects of the bowl of blood. The black mutagen fell under its power and was crushed. A cracking sound rang out as the mutagen smoke seemed to solidify and then break!

At the same time, the crimson eye manifestation of Zhou Zhengli's canon opened. Yuanshan Su's heavy mountains descended. Sir Vilespirit cackled as he rushed forth with killing intent and devilishness. Li Mengtu's poison swirled while Hordeslayer and Rampart shone with astonishing sword light.

The slaughter was commencing!

In the starry sky some distance away from Planet Graytomb, a group of army cultivators were on patrol. They were one of the nine great army corps in the eastern theater's front lines. They were the Longscale Regiment, who served as vanguard troops when assigned to battle. During peaceful times, they would go on patrol to look for gods in hiding, and to clear areas of mutagen.

There were a bit over a thousand members, organized into battalions of roughly a hundred. Currently, the battalions were seated cross-legged atop enormous green flying ships. The ten flying ships flew the banners of the Longscale Regiment as they sailed majestically through the starry sky.

When the black bowl of blood shattered at Planet Graytomb, the sound of drums suddenly echoed out from the lead ship. The sudden, deafening noise shook the starry sky, and caused all of the cultivators on the ships to open their eyes.

A solemn voice then echoed out. "Gods are erecting an altar to serve as a foundation for a mutagen assault. That is why the god-crushing drums have sounded. Profound. Overlook. Ink. Spirit. Wing. You five battalions will follow the direction of the drums to inspect the area ahead. Find the altar and destroy everything there!"

Five of the flying ships shifted directions and then flew off in the direction indicated.

"Yes, sir!"

Chapter 1241: Draining With No Corpses

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In a battlefield in the starry sky, dazzling starlight shone down, and the sound of a very unique drum echoed out, filled with immortal magic that made the void tremble.

They were called the god-crushing drums. They were one of the signature weapons of the patrolling battalions of the Longscale Regiment, and they were designed to flush gods out of hiding. They could sense traces of gods in a wide area, and were very sensitive to mutagen. Guided by the sound of the drums, five ships from the patrol regiment veered off and shot into a specific direction.

The remaining battalions continued on their way to continue inspecting other areas. They would not just sit and wait for the five battalions to complete their mission and return.

And thus, time slipped by. Before the remaining battalions could reach any other locations to inspect, a message came in from the ships that had departed. The person delivering the message sounded a bit flummoxed.

“Exalted one, we’ve followed the drums to Planet Graytomb, where the gods were erecting an altar. However, the only thing here are dead gods.... There’s nothing else. Some unknown party apparently arrived before us and wiped them out.”

In the main patrol group was the man in charge of the mission, a middle-aged cultivator with a stern look on his face. He wore a blue-colored suit of scale armor, and he pulsed with the extraordinary fluctuations of a peak Quasi-Immortal.

After receiving the message, he opened his eyes, revealing a thoughtful look. In this relatively large section of the battlefield, the Longscale Regiment was the only group tasked with carrying out patrols. And yet, some unknown party had beaten them to the punch....

After only a moment of consideration, the middle-aged cultivator issued new orders. Shortly after, all of the flying ships changed course and sped through the starry sky toward Planet Graytomb. Before long, ripples spread out through the void outside Planet Graytomb, where the Profound, Overlook, Ink, Spirit, and Wing Battalions waited. Then the rest of the flying ships arrived.

The Quasi-Immortal leader flew off his ship, followed by over a hundred members of his personal guard. Looking like shooting stars, they flew directly toward the planet. After landing... all of them looked around with strange expressions on their faces.

The god altar had clearly been destroyed, and the surroundings were littered with god corpses. The corpses had clearly been sucked dry. It wasn’t a case of them having been killed with fatal blows. They had clearly been milked for all of the ringsource they contained. It had been accomplished very tidily. Not one bit of ringsource was left behind.

The Longscale cultivators exchanged awkward glances. This was definitely not how the Longscale Regiment operated.

The leader looked around at the members of his guard and said, “This looks more like the work of a squadron of Corpsedrainers.... Such efficiency.”

He had merely given voice to what they were all thinking. What they were seeing really did seem like something done by Corpsedrainers. Extracting ringsource was delicate work, and the fact remained that none of them could have accomplished it with such finesse. Work like that took a lot of practice. But then people started questioning the situation.

“But the Corpsedrainers are like vultures. They only show up on big battlefields.”

“You never see them at places like this with only a few dozen god corpses.”

“Maybe it’s the work of scouts from some other regiment. Could they have Corpsedrainers with them? Maybe they’re working together.”

As everyone discussed the situation, the Quasi-Immortal leader looked around at the corpses, studied the altar, and finally fixed his gaze on one corpse in particular.

That was when his eyes suddenly glittered. “That god... is a mid Altar God! Thēy had hidden this place to set up that god altar. But thēy were forced to activate it before thēy were ready. Thēy were obviously in a rush.

“Whoever attacked thēm didn’t sense thēm by means of god-crushing drums. The attackers... were following thēm. To kill an Altar God in such short order, and also remove any evidence of their presence, making it impossible for us to identify thēm... well, it indicates these people are no simpletons.”

No one responded to his words. A moment passed, and the leader looked away from the Altar God corpse.

“Report this matter up the chain of command. It’s probably just some fellow warriors from another regiment who accidentally crossed into our area of operations.”

With that, he flew back up into the starry sky, followed by the others, all the way back to his flying ship. However, along the way, many of his personal guards looked over their shoulders and sighed. They were all thinking similar things.

They crossed into our AO and brought Corpsedrainers with them...?

A good distance away from Planet Graytomb was Xu Qing and the other ascendees, who the Longscale Regiment had taken to be fellow warriors who had crossed into their area of operations. They were proceeding along in concealment, all the while talking back and forth as they analyzed how the fight had played out.

“We’re still too slow. The extraction wasn’t fast enough.”

“We might be good at extracting ringsource from living targets, but in the past they were always sealed first. And sealing takes longer than killing.”

“And to get the best results you have to continuously provoke the target....”

“Basically, life extraction is fine under normal circumstances, but on the battlefield, it really is better to deal with corpses!”

“Maybe we should just practice more on the dead bodies. Rapid extraction really is the most suitable for the battlefield.”

At a certain point, Xu Qing interrupted. “From now on, we’ll continue with our assigned Corpsedrainer mission, but at the same time, we’ll do as we just did. We’ll track down suitable god squadrons to practice our extraction techniques!”

Everyone nodded, then scattered to look for new targets.

Soon, Xu Qing was the only one left behind. After watching everyone leave, he found an asteroid where he hewed out a temporary mansion grotto. Once inside, he settled down cross-legged. His plan was to continue absorbing ringsource and push his cultivation base higher. At the same time, he was thinking about the war in the context of everything he had experienced up to this point.

Given how these skirmishes are playing out in the eastern theater, it almost seems like the two sides are playing a complicated game. They both have their own goals. Unfortunately, I don’t have enough information to figure out exactly what those goals are. But one thing is for certain.... Given the scale of the war, and the sacrifices being made, both sides are attempting to accomplish something of great strategic significance!

In order to get a better idea of what was going on, it was necessary to understand the larger trends.

I’m currently an early Quasi-Immortal. If I want to reach the great circle, I’ll need more ringsource. A lot more.... There’s just not enough time. I need to think of ways to speed things up!

Taking out some extracted ringsource, he started absorbing it.

Three months passed in a flash. During that time, the Longscale Regiment experienced several situations similar to what had just played out on Planet Graytomb. Every single time, there were gods in hiding, but before the Longscale patrol could reach them, they were wiped out and their ringsource extracted. The speed of fighting and extraction only increased. The battlefields were left cleaner and cleaner.

Before long, a rumor started to spread in the Longscale Regiment. Supposedly, a squadron from another regiment had crossed into their area of operations. They were said to be cruel and ruthless. What was more, they were traveling with Corpsedrainers, and whenever they took action, they were quick and deadly.

Over time, the other Corpsedrainer squadrons in the area were getting a bit irritated. What was more, the army leadership eventually noticed what was happening. Unfortunately, nothing anyone did to identify the mysterious squadron actually worked. Though the incidents kept happening, it seemed impossible to identify the perpetrators, so the Longscale Regiment gradually stopped working so hard to find them. Another factor at play was that the war was starting to heat up.

On an enormous pure white planet, a small skirmish was playing out involving a few thousand combatants. Booms and screams rang out everywhere. God magics and immortal techniques flared, sending multicolored light shining in all directions. The fighting was getting intense.

On the border of the field of battle was a gigantic white mountain, where a squadron of Corpsedrainers waited. Among them was the same old man Xu Qing had run into a few months before. Xu Qing and his people were there as well, seated cross-legged and keeping an eye on the fighting.

While the other Corpsedrainers were obviously on guard, Xu Qing and the ascendees seemed a bit impatient. Hustling on the side had been quite profitable recently, and they were getting a lot better at their extraction techniques. Their cultivation bases had also improved. However, because more battles were being fought in the war, they had less time for their side hustle, and had to do more official work as Corpsedrainers. They had already been waiting for a long time atop the mountain, yet no side had yet prevailed. Eyes glittering, they began to look over at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing was frowning. The ringsource he had acquired over the past few months had helped his cultivation base a lot, and he was eager to move on to the next battlefield. Unfortunately, there didn't seem to be any end in sight for this particular skirmish.

After some thought, Xu Qing stood and started walking forward. The other ascendees excitedly got to their feet as well.

The other Corpsedrainers looked over in surprise. That was especially true of the old man who had given Xu Qing advice earlier on. He even opened his mouth to speak. But before he could say anything, Xu Qing burst into motion. Rumbling sounds then echoed out as he became a streak of light that shot like a blade toward the battlefield.

Zhou Zhengli and everyone else followed him without hesitation. They looked like vultures, but at the same time wolves, and it left the other Corpsedrainers on the mountain feeling shaken to the core.

The old man's eyes widened. "They're going in early? But—"

He was clearly shocked, but before he could even finish his sentence, Xu Qing and the ascendees reached the battlefield! They charged into the fighting without hesitation! Deafening booms rang out, and shockwaves from magical techniques spread out in all directions.

Xu Qing was a blur of afterimages that stopped right in front of the corpse of a Godfire god. He reached out, placed his hand onto the god's chest, and even as both sides of the conflict continued to fight, he began to extract the ringsource! The corpse of the god withered up in front of him.

Meanwhile, when the combatants noticed what was happening, be they gods or Longscale Regiment cultivators, they looked over in astonishment. No one had ever seen anything like this happening.

As the stunned gods and cultivators looked on, Zhou Zhengli and the other ascendees arrived, spread out, and started finding god corpses.

They started extracting ringsource like crazy! They were fast and skilled, after extracting all the ringsource, they would quickly move on to the next corpse.

Everyone looked on in pure astonishment. The fighting was clearly not over, and yet this group of Corpsedrainers had swooped in right in front of everybody to extract ringsource from the corpses.

The cultivators found it strange, but since these people were humans, they didn't react like the gods. On the other hand, the gods were obviously provoked, and immediately tried to attack them.

However, the Corpsedrainers' goal was clear. As soon as they met any resistance, they just gave up and moved on to a different god corpse.

Previously, there had been a deadlock on the battlefield, which could have tipped either way. But with these Corpsedrainers here, there were plenty of distractions, and the Longscale Regiment cultivators were quick to take advantage of that. As a result, the gods were forced to take the fighting seriously.

Besides, these Corpsedrainers were extraordinarily strong, and were like fish in water on the battlefield. They were going around like crazy, absorbing ringsource from all the corpses. Latest content published on NoveFire.net

If that were all there were to it, it might not have been a big deal. After all, there weren't even twenty of the Corpsedrainers, and they didn't affect the fighting much.

But... before long something different happened. It started with Xu Qing. As he was racing toward a god corpse, a peak Godfire god appeared in front of him, who was locked in deadly combat with a Longscale Regiment cultivator.

The god's eyes were cold and apathetic as he unleashed god magics, causing the ringsource to seethe within him. The Longscale Regiment cultivator's eyes were bloodshot, and he was about to put everything on the line. That was when the vision of the cultivator and the god blurred.

Xu Qing suddenly appeared right in front of them. Before either could react, Xu Qing reached out and latched his hand down onto the god's throat. The power of his immortal embryo surged like flood waters, sweeping into the god. A howl of anguish escaped the god's lips as he felt his life force about to be snuffed out. Then a cracking sound echoed out from the god's neck, and then he fell to the ground. The god was a corpse now.

Xu Qing squatted down over the corpse and efficiently extracted the ringsource.

The Longscale Regiment cultivator stared in astonishment. Then his eyes shone with gratitude.

Sir Vilespirit was quick to notice what Xu Qing had done. Licking his lips, he suddenly attacked a god who was fighting a nearby cultivator. The god quickly became a corpse. The other ascendees followed suit, lunging toward the gods like wolves or tigers. If they ran into corpses, they sucked them dry. If they saw enticing targets, they turned them into corpses. If they had to fight, they fought. If they had to launch sneak attacks, they did. If an opponent was too strong, they would rely on life-saving techniques to get away.

In that manner, they became a huge wave sweeping across the battlefield. Though their influence was minimal at first, when they went crazy under Xu Qing's lead, they soon became the center of attention.

The leaders on both sides saw what was happening. The leader of the gods frowned. In contrast, the leader of the cultivators, who was that same peak Quasi-Immortal from before, looked on with shining eyes.

On the nearby mountain, the other Corpsedrainers, including the old man, were dumbstruck.

“Are they really Corpsedrainers?” one of the squadron members muttered.

“They are. But from what I can see, they kill them first, then drain them....”

Chapter 1242: Look Up and See the Bright Shining Moon

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They were indeed draining corpses! During the three months that had passed, Xu Qing and the ascendees had learned a lot. It was generally better to drain living gods. But for a number of reasons, it was difficult to do so quickly. Therefore, they had focused their training on corpses. That was the best skill to enhance for use on the battlefield.

After all, battlefields were usually full of corpses. And if an enticing target presented itself that *wasn't* a corpse, all they had to do was kill it and turn it into a corpse....

During the three months that had passed, their corpse-draining skills had improved a lot.

The battle on this huge planet was the first time they had acted in the open, and it left all onlookers shocked to the core. The Corpsedrainers on the mountain weren't the only ones staring in shock. The cultivators on the battlefield were similarly astonished, and suddenly felt less pressure.

The fighting had been balanced before, so that meant that whatever pressure left the cultivators was transferred to the gods. Now, the gods not only had to worry about deadly combat with the army cultivators, they also had to worry about being ambushed and drained as corpses.

Xu Qing and the eighteen ascendees roved the battlefield like hungry wolves, or swords shaped like snakes, ready to stab anything they encountered. Wherever they went, corpses were drained dry, and weak gods crumbled. Even the strong gods had to be careful; if they weren't, they also ran the risk of getting killed.

Naturally, the ascendees only attracted more and more attention. In fact, some of the gods, after being ambushed, forgot about the battle with the Longscale Regiment and instead focused on Xu Qing and the ascendees.

Of course, it went without saying that Xu Qing and the ascendees, given all that they had experienced and survived, were no weaklings. And they had plenty of life-saving magics. In instances where they ran into gods they couldn't defeat, they just fled as quickly as possible. If they were in a wide, empty space, or were fighting in a dueling environment, then such life-saving magics might not have helped them escape gods this strong. But things were different on a battlefield.

The environment provided all sorts of variables. And even though such variables weren't necessarily monumental, when they built on each other, they turned into a trend that the gods had to pay attention to.

Unfortunately... the leader of the gods quickly issued orders to try to stabilize their position and shore up their defenses. The results were middling. Xu Qing and the ascendees were too crafty and too strong. And they knew when to fall back in the face of overwhelming force.

Xu Qing was the best of all. He targeted the Godfire gods, and given that he had a Quasi-Immortal cultivation base, as well as a terrifyingly strong immortal embryo, he could kill such gods with a single blow. In any instances in which he couldn't drain a corpse on the spot, he just collected the corpse to deal with later.

If the battlefield was a jungle, then the ascendees were predators! And Xu Qing had been developing such skills since he was young. Starfire was drawn out by the excitement of the fighting, and secretly used god magics to absorb the godly authority of the dead gods. Get full chapters from novel^{*}fire.net

Little Shadow had finally woken up, and was attracted by the mutagen as well as the flesh and blood of the gods. As a result, it instinctively let out emotional fluctuations of hunger and excitement. Xu Qing gave silent approval, and a moment later, the shadow spread out onto the ground to lunge on nearby injured gods.

The leader of the Longscale Regiment took advantage of the developing situation to issue new orders.

"Longscale Regiment, let's finish this fight!" He wanted to take advantage of the variables and the chaos to mount a major offensive. He himself shot forward to attack the leader of the gods, who was a peak Altar God. "Die!"

The battlefield was descending into madness.

On the distant mountaintop, the other Corpsedrainers saw what was happening and were starting to get excited. The old man who had originally given advice to Xu Qing suddenly scowled viciously.

"Let's go down there too!" he shouted. And with that, he blurred into motion as he headed down the mountain.

The other Corpsedrainers hesitated.

"But the rules—"

"Screw the rules!" the old man roared. "If we don't get down there, we won't have a thing to drain!"

The other Corpsedrainers threw caution to the wind and followed. When they reached the battlefield, they weren't as proficient as Xu Qing and the ascendees. But it was still like *adding flowers to the brocade*, and it tilted the entire battle further in the direction of the cultivators.

The decisive final moments of the battle had arrived. Booms rang out. Screams filled the air. Gods were being killed, and corpses were being drained.

Within all that chaos, Xu Qing was like a specter, flitting about here and there, attacking ruthlessly and leaving behind no survivors. Starfire and Little Shadow were extremely excited.

Xu Qing stopped in front of a peak Godfire god. The god's face fell, and hē prepared to fall back. But then Xu Qing's right hand clamped down onto the top of hīs head. The power of his immortal embryo swept forth. Starfire unleashed a god magic. Little Shadow began to devour hīs flesh and blood.

A god that would have been the subject of devout worship in the Revered Ancient mainland was wiped out in an instant, hīs godly authority seized and hīs corpse half-eaten by Little Shadow. Xu Qing took the remains to drain further at a later time.

Having accomplished that, Xu Qing licked his lips. He had benefited a lot so far, and yet, he still wasn't satisfied. Godfire gods weren't enough for his needs. Turning, he looked down the battlefield, his eyes shining with mysterious light.

He was looking to where the peak Quasi-Immortal was fighting the Altar God. Both were going all out trying to kill the other. To fight the leader of the Longscale Regiment, this god was pulsing with a godly aura, and was unleashing god magics that could change the face of heaven and earth.

The ringsource fluctuations... were very enticing.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he projected a message to Starfire and Little Shadow. Then he blurred into motion, heading in the opposite direction and disappearing into the chaos of battle.

Starfire sent out mutagen to cover Xu Qing, causing his immortal aura to disappear. It was replaced by mutagen. His aura was completely hidden. Next, it was Little Shadow's turn. The shadow covered Xu Qing, making his fleshly body invisible. At the same time, Xu Qing used his space-time to cover himself. Now even his soul was invisible. Using those methods, he made it so that he hardly seemed to exist. In the end... he completely disappeared from the battlefield.

Soon the fight between the two leaders was reaching a critical point. The peak Quasi-Immortal and the peak Altar God were both attacking each other ruthlessly. The Altar God just wanted to get out of this fight. Whether doing so would ultimately change the course of the battle, or whether hē just escaped, it didn't matter.

But the leader of the Longscale Regiment wanted the opposite. The cultivators had gained the advantage of the battlefield. If he could keep the Altar God leader locked down for long enough, things would tilt even further in their favor.

The battle intensified. Injuries mounted on both sides. Deafening booms rang out, and the blinding light of god magic and immortal techniques rose high. Casualties mounted. Everyone was resorting to trump cards.

As for the Altar God's trump card, it was a peak eruption of godly authority, which caused a white sun to form. Instead of emitting heat, however, it emitted frigid coldness and death. Close

examination of the sun would reveal that, shockingly, it had innumerable faces on it, and all were distorted and screaming.

As both parties went all out trying to kill each other, an invisible figure crept across the field of battle toward them. It got closer and closer. Soon it was only about 3,000 meters away.

That was when the peak Altar God, who had a humanoid torso but a lower half made of black smoke, turned his head, eyes shining with cold apathy. Lifting his right hand, he split the trump card he had just unleashed, causing a pair of deathly pale suns to appear.

The first blocked the leader of the Longscale Regiment, while the other shot toward that spot 3,000 meters away. All of it happened too quickly.

The terrifying white sun crossed the 3,000 meters in an instant, then exploded. White light spread out, destroying the void, shattering magical laws, and distorting everything.

It also forced the invisible figure out into the open. It was none other than Xu Qing. He tried to fight back, but it did no good. An eruption of godly authority from a peak Altar God was too terrifying. The white light shredded everything to pieces.

Xu Qing writhed as his flesh and blood was ripped apart, as if it might peel off him. At that critical moment, Xu Qing's eyes shone with determination. Separating his soul, he fell back, hoping to avoid the danger.

And yet, at that exact moment, a host of gods appeared around him. They pounced, unleashing all of their power. The rumbling booms caused many to look in that direction.

Observers on both sides of the conflict saw Xu Qing's soul and fleshly body ripped to pieces! Zhou Zhengli and the ascendees howled in grief, their eyes bloodshot as they rushed in that direction. Little Shadow became visible. Erupting with emotional fluctuations of madness, it lunged toward the peak Altar God. Starfire did the same, eyes radiating madness. She became a stream of god light that shot directly toward the Altar God.

The leader of the Longscale Regiment took advantage of the moment to unleash an immortal magic. It turned into a red moon, which cast a red glow that turned into a gargantuan cloud of sky-obfuscating, land-enshrouding moths. Looking extremely grish and sinister, they dropped down toward the Altar God. In the blink of an eye, blood-red light filled the battlefield thanks to the never-ending moths.

A sensation of imminent danger filled the Altar God's heart. Glaring at the Longscale Regiment leader, as well as the cloud of moths, he suddenly shot backward, all while thrusting his palm out in front of himself numerous times to unleash a secret magic.

His body quickly withered, becoming very weak. That was the price to pay to use that magic. Latent power erupted, converging in his core as sunlight spread out. It was as if he was transforming into a sun!

He was now at his weakest, but by temporarily transforming into a sun, he could inflict a grievous injury on the leader of the Longscale Regiment. By exhausting his strength, he could create the

time and opportunity hē needed to escape. White light shone as hē replaced hīs god body with a sun.

However, that was when something extremely dramatic occurred! The void behind hīm suddenly folded in on itself like a piece of paper. Fluctuations spread out, filling the dome of heaven and causing wild colors to flash.

They were ripples in space! They were flows of time! They were overlapping space-times!

A hand appeared, gripping an iron skewer. And it moved with incomparable speed, in a very gruish fashion, as it stretched out from the overlapping space-time! It appeared right in front of the weakened Altar God's throat! With blinding speed, unmatched accuracy, and fluid skill, it slashed through the god's throat!

What a show of ability!

The god's skin was flayed. The flesh was opened up. The bones were severed. The skewer came out the other side! In addition, the tolling of a bell echoed out, like a death knell. It happened so quickly that the leader of the gods couldn't react quickly enough to fight back or put up a defense.

The skewer was incredibly sharp and was made of spectacular materials. In the hands of a skilled wielder, it could unleash incomparable power. Most importantly... the person wielding the skewer, though weaker than the god, was not *that* much weaker than hīm. And that meant that this sneak attack... was all the more effective!

Hīs eyes went wide as hē looked at hīs own body underneath the shadow of the red moths. For some reason, that body had no head! God blood spurted out of the neck, like a fountain connected it to the red clouds above. The god soul inside the body had been slashed by the skewer, cutting it into two parts.

The red moths smashed down into the body, burrowing into the flesh and destroying it! And then all of it, including hīs will and hīs senses, sped off into the distance. However... what was going off into the distance wasn't the body. It was the head only!

Hīs head had been grabbed by someone who was racing away! As hīs consciousness faded, hē finally saw who had grabbed hīs head.

It was a young man in a black robe, splattered with god blood. He had violet hair and beautiful facial features. His eyes were incredibly cold. He was... the very same Corpsedrainer that he had just killed!

"You—" hē said hoarsely, but an instant later, hē was sealed. Hīs world turned dark.

The battlefield went quiet.

Xu Qing, who had just escaped with the head of the Altar God, looked completely composed as everyone looked at him. What had been destroyed earlier was only a space-time version of himself. His true form had been in hiding. The gods on the battlefield were astonished. The cultivators were shaken. And then Xu Qing stopped and held up the sealed head. He said nothing. The red glow behind him looked like a moon.

Down on the battlefield, cheering erupted. And then... the cultivator army flowed toward the gods like a mountain-toppling, sea-draining flood.

Chapter 1243: Daughter of a God Emperor

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The blood-red glow in the sky was like an aurora as the countless moths swirled about. It was a beautiful sight. Xu Qing hovered in the air, his hair swirling around him, the head of the god held aloft. That image would remain fixed in the memories of all the cultivators who could see him.

The battle between the gods and the cultivators had been at a deadlock. But when Xu Qing and the ascendees arrived, they became a variable that proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back. And thus, the balance in the skirmish was changed, and the battle inched toward a conclusion. The sound of slaughter raged as the gods suffered a major defeat in the face of the cultivator onslaught.

Zhou Zhengli, Sir Star Ring, and the other ascendees took advantage of the moment to go crazy in draining corpses.

Xu Qing floated down. As far as he was concerned, getting ringsource was the most important thing right now.

The other group of Corpsedrainers rushed forth like vultures.

About an hour later, the battle was over. The battlefield was covered with god corpses. Though the cultivators had suffered some casualties, it was still a major victory. The gods had been annihilated.

The cultivators felt a mix of exhaustion and exultation as they stood amidst the blood and corpses. All eyes were on Xu Qing and the ascendees as they roved the battlefield draining the corpses of any remaining ringsource. Some of the ascendees had minor injuries, others had more serious wounds. But regardless of how tired or hurt they were, they weren't slowing down a bit. All were going crazy to collect ringsource.

This time, the Longscale Regiment cultivators didn't interfere. Their eyes were full of nothing but respect for Xu Qing and the ascendees. Even the old man and the other Corpsedrainers had backed away to let them take the lead. And thus, Xu Qing and the ascendees collected the majority of the ringsource from the thousands of god corpses.

After taking about eighty percent of it, they stopped. The ascendees gathered around Xu Qing, and he looked at the army cultivators, especially the leader.

The leader clasped hands, bowed, and said, "Many thanks!"

Xu Qing returned the salute, then turned and raced off into the distance. Zhou Zhengli and the others followed. They wanted to make haste to the next battlefield. NEW NOVEL CHAPTERS ARE PUBLISHED ON novel—fire.net

The people who remained behind watched them go. They could tell that the nineteen of them... had baleful auras, surging blood energy, and down to the last one of them, were vicious wolves.

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After everything the ascendees had survived, they could do well on their own. But as a team in an army, they were even more outstanding. About half of them were already Quasi-Immortals, and the rest were extremely close to that point. All had terrifying battle prowess. As a group, they were like a pack of wolves. And as their leader, they had Xu Qing, who was.... the king of the wolves.

Time passed. This time, it was several months. During that time, Xu Qing and the ascendees continued to collect ringsource. They kept busy and got better and better. When they appeared at a battlefield, they used their unique methods to make sure there were plenty of corpses available.

Their activities caused their name to spread like wildfire. Eventually, just about all the cultivators in the Longscale Regiment's area of operations had seen them in action, or at least heard of this terrifying Corpsedrainer squadron.

There were only nineteen of them, but most were Quasi-Immortals, and all of them had plentiful fighting experience. They excelled at using life-saving magics, and could all be considered unparalleled chosen. That said, they lacked the arrogance common among chosen. They had astounding battle prowess, yet didn't hesitate to use ambushes or assassination techniques. And they were blindingly fast and efficient when it came to draining corpses.

They were taking the reputation of Corpsedrainers to another, much higher level. As a result, the army cultivators' attitude toward the Corpsedrainers in general was changing.

As for the other Corpsedrainers, they were paying attention to what was happening. Gradually, people started imitating Xu Qing's group. Although not many succeeded, those who did succeed made a big difference. Gradually, more and more people were following in Xu Qing's footsteps. Slowly but surely, those Corpsedrainers who followed the new way started becoming so famous that they earned a new nickname.

Now they were called... Undertakers!

As things ran their course, the war in the eastern theater slowly headed toward a critical juncture. The grindstone of flesh and blood was moving at such a fever pitch that the lantern drew attention from all corners. Skirmishes played out constantly on the front line of the eastern theater.

Even the stupidest gods and cultivators could tell that something unusual was going on. Everyone assumed it was the prelude to a huge storm. But in reality, there was another possibility. And that was... without people realizing it, the storm had already passed.

In the eastern theater of the Fourth Star Ring, where the mutagen was strong, there was a series of planets that resembled statues. They pulsed with incredible holiness as they floated in the starry sky. There were millions upon millions of them. Ripples spread out in all directions from them.

Every single planet was inhabited by gods and their subordinate slave species. Also on the planets were huge beasts, evil god faces, and numerous temples, all of which emanated terrifying godly might. The statue planets and the temples seemed to go on forever.

Nearby was a majestic, endless river of stars that circled the entire area. Occasionally, tentacles would appear from within it.

Chanting sounds from the gods filled that part of the eastern theater. This place was a temporary garrison for the gods.

And in the middle of that garrison were nine enormous altars. All nine were made of countless bones. Some of the bones were just skulls, but there were also bodies with flesh still attached. They came from many species, and while some were cultivators, others were gods. Yet others were from the gods' slave species. Altogether, they created a very sinister and deathly ambiance.

The fire of the underworld burned on the altars, pale white fire that cast pale halos out in all directions. They were like candles of death, burning silently and without end. The light of each altar overlapped with the other.

In the middle of the nine altars, illuminated by the shapeless, overlapping halos of candle light, was an astonishing item. It was... a huge coffin with no lid. The coffin itself was as large as a planet. And inside of it... was the corpse of a violet god!

This god had three heads and six arms, and was covered with godly striations that made him seem unusually noble. And that was because those godly striations wrapped around him to form a very mysterious ring!

Unfortunately, the ring had gaps. It wasn't complete. If that ring were to be completed, then this god would have been... a God Lord!

Among the gods, this particular god was second only to an actual God Lord, which meant that he definitely wasn't some anonymous god. He was actually the commander-in-chief of the countless gods here in the eastern theater! A peak True God!

But now... he lay in the coffin as a corpse. On the forehead of each of his heads was a ghastly wound that pierced through the soul, destroying it.

He was dead! A month ago, a mysterious cultivator ambushed this god and delivered a fatal blow.[1]

If Xu Qing had been there to witness the scene, he would have realized the truth. And that was... the purpose of the grindstone of flesh and blood in the eastern theater, and the lantern it formed, was almost certainly bait for this particular god! The cultivators in the eastern theater were the bait, and the lantern was there to provide cover for the assassin!

Clearly, the assassination had worked! What was more, if Xu Qing were present to see the marks left by that cultivator, he would find the whole thing very suspicious.

If this plan had been successful, then why was the grindstone of flesh and blood still turning in the eastern theater? In fact, things were getting more intense! It didn't make sense, unless... the

assassination of this commander-in-chief was only one part of the plan being carried out by the cultivators! If that was the case, then this plan was definitely... supremely exceptional!

Near the coffin, in what had previously been empty space filled only with the underworld light, the terrifying aura of numerous gods suddenly spread out. All of thēm were very tall, with impressive godly might and extraordinary physical forms. All of thēm were True God officers among the gods of the eastern theater.

Upon arriving, thēy spread out in a circle around the coffin. Then thēy prostrated to the starry sky above. As thēy offered worship, rumbling filled the starry sky as a rift opened up, as if some immense power had ripped it open.

Godlight spread out from the rift. Within that light it was possible to see a magnificent god kingdom, endless universes, and innumerable gods. And all of thēm... were prostrating. As thēy offered worship, a graceful figure in a long, blue gown appeared, slowly emerging through the godlight.[2]

Hēr facial features were blurred, making them impossible to see clearly. Hēr clothing was extravagant, like all the seas of the Fourth Star Ring combined. Atop hēr head was a phoenix crown covered with numerous pearls. The crown emitted a sound like a phoenix howling in grief, and if you looked closely at the pearls... they were actually eyeballs. Each eyeball came from a different species, specifically, the most beautiful god species. The eyes all blinked at different times. It was gruish yet beautiful.

All of it went to show that this was the daughter of a god, someone with incredibly high status. As shē emerged from the rift, the True Gods around the coffin all bowed to

“Your Grace Starryeyes.”

The voice of the gods vibrated in the starry sky. It was as if the natural laws of the Fourth Star Ring were doting on this goddess.[3]

The reason was that shē was the newly crowned god emperor’s only child! Among the gods, God Lords were also called god emperors. Hēr father was the highest-ranking officer in the war between the Fifth and Fourth Star Rings, which meant hē was comparable to Immortal Lord Deepgloom.

Normally speaking, Starryeyes would never have come to this place. But now... the god that had been entrusted with a special mission here in the eastern theater had perished before succeeding! And thus, shē had to come, to use the godly authority of the imperial clan to bring the perished commander back as quickly as possible!

With the godly authority in hēr blood, shē could effectuate the return of a perished True God under her father’s command, in a much shorter time. It would only take a few months! Although it would come at a price, it wasn’t more than shē could bear. And that was because it came from the power of hēr father’s godhood!

At the same time, shē had come here with a mission of hēr own. Hēr mission was to stay behind and continue the work being carried out by the perished True God.

That work was only just beginning today.

Elsewhere at that exact moment, far from the Fourth Star Ring, on the cultivator's front line positions, Xu Qing was draining a corpse of ringsource. He suddenly shivered and looked deep into the Fourth Star Ring. He slowly frowned.

"Is that..?" he murmured. For some reason that he couldn't fathom, he had just sensed something unusual in his heart and soul. It was a lingering sense of fear or a slight trepidation. It was as if something foreordained to occur, something with unstoppable momentum, had suddenly arrived.

1. The assassination was mentioned in [chapter 1232](#). ❹
2. This is only the second time in the novel that we have heard about a 'god kingdom.' The first time was in [chapter 1196](#), and even then there was no definition or explanation about exactly what they are. Given how cultivation novels generally work, I think most of us can guess. ❹
3. The term goddess was introduced in [chapter 1226](#). As I mentioned back then, it's used in this novel to mean 'daughter of a god.' ❹

Chapter 1244: Immortal Lord Deepgloom Wasn't Lying

Chapter 1244: Immortal Lord Deepgloom Wasn't Lying

All of it made Xu Qing think about the True God he had imprisoned in the Green Heaven....

To mortals, fate was a mysterious thing that could hardly be comprehended. But to most cultivators who walked a path that defied heaven, there was a point in life in which they had to bow their head to fate. When that happened, they would smile bitterly... and admit that they accepted fate. That was just the helplessness of life. It was a way to add meaning to fickle reality. There was no point in fighting it. It was better to just acclimate to how things worked.

Unfortunately... some living things, for instance gods or immortals, were higher forms of existence. To them, fate was not something mysterious. Nor was it something unperceivable. They could see the evidence of fate, and could even lift the veil covering it. Some could even tamper with it, making certain things uncertain, or uncertain things certain.

Back in the Fifth Star Ring, there had been a very famous god known as the god of pain! Bimo Si! Though hē was not a God Lord, hīs godly authority was special. In fact, it was so special that, if hē encountered a God Lord in hīs heyday, that God Lord would treat hīm with honor.

That was because hīs illusions contained truth! That was why, when hē encountered Xu Qing during hīs attempted return, the unleashing of hīs godly authority caused certain things to change.

Right now, the fear within Xu Qing was like the wings of fate flapping. What he had sensed just now, other than something similar to what he had experienced when fighting the god of pain, was an even more important karma. It was... An old enemy he was very familiar with. It was his older brother, the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan. It was another terrifying entity who also commanded the power of fate.

Xu Qing had long since been fighting back against him. In fact, due to a destined opportunity in Revered Ancient, he had acquired a very similar godly authority!

That was his carving knife of fate! It could carve out additional fates, and make outside variables become the main reality. It could make fates appear beyond ordinary fate. He didn't have that carving knife with him. He had left it behind with his god clone, back in Revered Ancient. But the karma was still connected to him.

That was the reason for the thoughtful look on Xu Qing's face. He was thinking about the True God imprisoned in the Green Heaven, and the pain he had experienced thanks to his godly authority. His eyes became very cold.

I went to the front lines and ran into the daughter of a god. The God Lord eventually killed everyone.... Is that what happens next? I run into this goddess?

His eyes narrowed as a fierce coldness filled his heart. Eventually, he looked away from the Fourth Star Ring and focused on the work at hand on the battlefield. Occasionally, the same sensation would strike him.

A month went by.

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During that time, Xu Qing went about his usual routine. He drained gods, he worked on cultivation, and he absorbed ringsource. His cultivation base continued to climb. He was now very stable in early Quasi-Immortal.

The lingering sense of fear appeared now and then, but he ignored it. He already knew what he would do about the situation. And so... he waited. He was waiting for ripples in fate. He was waiting for that which was foreordained to present itself to him.

The starry sky was like a sea, with waves rippling through it. They were caused by godly voices.

In the eastern theater of the Fourth Star Ring, important things were still happening in the garrison of the gods. The true name of the commander of the army of gods was repeatedly being uttered from the area of the nine altars.

It wasn't just the prostrating True Gods who were saying the name. The life force of all the countless corpses and bones that made up the nine altars were also calling out. They were all chanting that true name! All of those godly voices gathered around the goddess who hovered above the coffin, whose bloodline power spread out into the void, connecting the ancient to the modern.

The higher star ring cherished the ancient agreement, and thus gave the blessing of power that would call the True God back after death. It lit the path, becoming the guide, and opening the barriers! The aura of returning grew stronger. Godly might grew more majestic, slowly becoming viscous, turning into an actual sea in the starry sky.

Mutagen and godly authority were turning into a god sea! This was the first step of returning.

The commander-in-chief of the gods in the eastern theater was truly on the way to awakening. The eyes of all the other gods present were shining. Clearly, it was time to start the second step of the return.

However, that was when something very dramatic happened! An ear-splitting boom shook the starry sky. The nine god altars looked like they might collapse. All of the statue planets and the temples shook violently. It was the same with the river of stars.

The True Gods chanting the true name of their commander-in-chief, plus the goddess above the coffin, were all stunned. The entire area was part of the Fourth Star Ring, and it was full of dense mutagen. It originally was a swath of pitch black. But now... the color white had appeared!

It was the momentum of the immortals! It was a sudden invasion. [READ LATEST CHAPTERS AT novel_fire.net](#)

The starry sky was transforming. Anyone who looked up with eyes profound enough to see would be able to spot, high in the void, was something that stretched out over both the Fourth and the Fifth Star Ring. Two magnificent entities were there, fighting a battle of momentum.

Immortal Lord Deepgloom had played a game piece in the eastern theater of the gods! Because of this immortal invasion, the entire area became like an ink painting.

Black and white crisscrossed. Ink flowed. Both sides were fighting back and trying to get the upper hand. As the black and white moved, the ink moved, and the battle status changed! Clearly, this incursion of white immortal energy was the result of a lot of preparation. The instant the barriers of the star ring were broken, numerous cultivators started teleporting, pulsing with baleful auras!

In the lead was a grim, middle-aged man who was Immortal Lord Deepgloom's second-in-command. He was the commander-in-chief of the eastern theater, Immortal Monarch Silent Dao! Astonishingly, he had come straight from the grindstone of flesh and blood to this spot, teleported along with his subordinates. The moment he appeared, pulsing with a baleful aura, his eyes shining so coldly they could freeze universes, he shot... toward the goddess!

The gods were so stunned they couldn't react.

From the look of it, this had been Immortal Lord Deepgloom's plan all along. The lantern that had been lit in the eastern theater was the distraction. And then the mysterious cultivator assassinated the True God, which drew out the goddess. From beginning to end, the goal had been the goddess!

Goddess Starryyeyes was the only child of the God Lord opposed by Immortal Lord Deepgloom. She had her father's bloodline godly authority. If he could capture her... then he would gain massive momentum in the war!

This was a battle that surpassed any of the previous battles. Over a hundred True Gods and Lower Immortals participated, along with countless other cultivators and gods. And things... were just getting started! Boundless slaughter spread, shaking universes.

As the cultivators launched their incisive sneak attack, a blow to the gut of the gods' army... the subject of the attack, the goddess that Immortal Monarch Silent Dao was after... didn't react at all. Shē just kept chanting the name of the True God!

An instant later, more dramatic things occurred! All of the temples, and all of the statue planets, plus the entire star river, began to glitter, sending out beams of golden light.

Terrifying pressure built up! The starry sky seemed to shatter, as if some veil were suddenly being forcefully lifted away.... A host of spectacular god formations suddenly appeared on the battlefield! There were no less than 1,000,000 of them. And they all erupted at the same time!

Godly might swelled. Mutagen swept out. The cultivators who bore the brunt of it were suppressed. Their minds and hearts trembled as blood sprayed from their mouths. Their souls felt like they were being extracted, and massive weight crushed onto their fleshly bodies. In contrast, the gods were bolstered, and their battle prowess improved. The decline of one side and the improvement to the other was obvious.

At the core of the 1,000,000 formations was the fallen commander-in-chief of the gods. As hē returned, the power of the god formations built up.

This entire thing was a trap! The Immortal Lord had been plotting against the God Lord. But the God Lord had used hīs daughter as bait to plot against the Immortal Lord! Both sides had played game pieces. And now those pieces were clashing!

The slaughter instantly intensified. In the very middle of the battlefield was the goddess, hovering above the coffin, wearing an expression of pure calm.

Immortal Monarch Silent Dao was racing toward hēr. But the god formations were blocking his path and preventing him from entering the very middle of the battlefield.

Then, the void around the goddess blurred as three True Gods stepped out. After surveying the area coldly, thēy stood guard all around

Starryeyes smiled faintly. Not even looking at the battlefield, shē closed hēr eyes and continued to chant the true name, hēr voice growing continuously ethereal. All shē had to do was successfully call back the commander-in-chief of the eastern theater. The process of awakening would bolster the god formations, and the cultivators would continue to be slaughtered. And then, when the commander-in-chief woke up, the battle... would end in victory for the gods.

As the chanting continued, shē lifted her right hand to hēr forehead. Suddenly, shē shivered from head to toe. Then hēr skin withered, and hēr life force rippled. Hēr blood seemed to burn. Astonishingly, shē... was paying a steep price to speed up the process. Even if shē hērself dropped from the True God level temporarily as a result, it was worth it to speed up the return.

The sense of awakening from the corpse in the coffin grew more intense. This sudden twist put the cultivator force in imminent danger.

Immortal Monarch Silent Dao's gaze turned razor sharp as he tried to break through the barriers. Unfortunately... the god formations surged, and the lockdown in the central area only grew stronger. What was more, the three True Gods standing guard were bolstering the defenses as well, making it impossible for Immortal Monarch Silent Dao to get in anytime soon. There wasn't enough time!

In hēr determination, the goddess let hēr cultivation level drop. Then shē spat out a mouthful of god blood, which shē turned into a boundlessly mysterious symbol that pulsed with the aura of the star ring itself. It dropped down into the coffin, where it landed on the chest of the commander-in-chief.

The moment it landed, the goddess's voice echoed across the battlefield. "Return!"

The starry sky seemed to congeal. Everything turned slow and sluggish, all while a tempest of soundlessness seemed to fill the area. Wind swept from all directions toward the coffin, where it converged on the corpse.

The corpse... suddenly twitched. The eyes slowly opened! The corpse stood! His massive frame pulsed with a terrifying aura, causing countless life forms to tremble. The awakening was complete!

1,000,000 god formations erupted. Countless gods chanted in godly voices. Mutagen swept across the battlefield, and godly voices overwhelmed everything.

The cultivators were completely taken aback.

As for Starryeyes, shē stuck up hēr chin. Hēr bloodline and status, as well as the help shē had provided in the return, ensured that, as shē stood there, the commander-in-chief immediately bowed.

It seemed that everything was over. But then, just as it appeared that the cultivators were going to experience a huge catastrophe, the black mutagen of the gods seethed. A boundless will then erupted from inside.

"He's not a

All of a sudden, the gods' commander-in-chief shivered. Then hē swiveled and thrust his fist out toward the goddess! It was only a single fist, but it caused the starry sky to collapse. Boundless and terrifying power very close to that of a God Lord swept forth destructively.

The goddess's face fell, and hēr pupils constricted. But there was no time for hēr to evade.

It was the same with the three True Gods! The development was simply too unexpected. In the blink of an eye, the three True Gods were ripped to shreds. That single fist caused all of them to explode, even their god souls.

As for Starryeyes, hēr entire body blurred. And then it was just barely possible to see an ancient lamp. The lamp went out, and shē disappeared.

The entire battlefield was thrown into an uproar.

Countless gazes locked onto the commander-in-chief up in midair as hē murmured, “God Lamp Life Substitution?”

Hē looked up. Both gods and cultivators on the battlefield were too stunned to react as hē began laughing. Then... hē began to shine with dazzling light. It wasn’t the gold of the gods. It was... silver!

The light swept out to fill the starry sky. Then a hoarse voice could be heard.

“I am the cultivator Spirit Jade.”

The words struck the battlefield like an earthquake! The gods were stunned, but the cultivators were exuberant. As the words left his mouth, he waved his hand, and the 1,000,000 god formations inverted. Cultivator morale went through the roof.

If Xu Qing had been present, he would have recognized that name. It was the name inscribed on one of the gravestones in the Heroic Immortal Tombs in the Nineshores heaven beyond heaven.[2]

“Life is like a dream, and time is like a song. And the starry sea eventually comes to an end.

“I am Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade. I eradicated a True God and drank hīs blood. I wiped out hīs mark like the turtledove occupying the magpie’s nest. Let’s see what happens in the future.... Will it be hē who returns, or me?

“If hē returns, my corpse will emanate golden light, and later generations can erase the True God from existence. But if it’s me... then silver light will shine, and I will slay gods again!”

Immortal Monarch Silent Dao’s expression was calm, as if this wasn’t a surprise at all. Nodding at Spirit Jade, he said, “How’s that body feel for you?”

Spirit Jade grinned. “This isn’t the god I slayed. But to bring me back in the body of this commander-in-chief.... Well, Immortal Lord Deepgloom really wasn’t lying when he said he could make it happen!”

1. Just like in English, the pronouns are pronounced exactly the same. So in reality, this dialogue wouldn’t work when spoken. It only works when you can see the characters. (Actually, in Chinese, he and she are pronounced exactly the same as well, as is the other common pronoun “it” that’s usually used for animals.) ㄟ

2. The name Spirit Jade was previously mentioned in [chapter 1202](#). ㄟ

Chapter 1245: The Fools Are Unexpectedly Smart

Chapter 1245: The Fools Are Unexpectedly Smart

In the vast starry sea between the Fourth and Fifth Star Rings, the void rippled as a huge rift cracked open. Two figures flew out from inside. They appeared to be a man and a woman.

The one who looked like a woman was pale in the face, and wore a wrinkled garment that had once been blue, but was now pale. It was as if it had contained a great sea that had dried up. Atop the head of the woman was a phoenix crown, except that phoenix had long since perished, and the pearls made of eyes that had decorated it were as gray as ash.

As for the man, he was a decrepit old god whose cultivation level seemed unstable, and who was covered with an assortment of wounds that were in the middle of healing.

After emerging from the rift, both the man and the woman coughed up huge mouthfuls of blood. It was golden blood that shed bits of mutagen. The old man looked around with eyes that shone with golden light. Seeing the spreading mutagen, the man lifted a hand and clenched it down hard. The mutagen was erased from existence. The same happened to their aura and all other evidence of their passage.

Having accomplished that, the old god turned to the woman and spoke in a hoarse voice. “Your Grace Starryeyes... this wasn’t your fault. Clearly the cultivators had planned everything out!”

The woman was none other than that only child of the God Lord, Starryeyes, and the man was her dao protector. Back when Spirit Jade launched his attack on the battlefield, Starryeyes’ three dao protectors had been killed.

As for Starryeyes, it was only by using the life-saving magic her father had given her, the God Lamp Life Substitution, that she managed to escape catastrophe. Unfortunately, she had drained herself in the effort to bring back the dead commander-in-chief, so her cultivation base had dropped. And so, despite having escaped certain death, she was still badly hurt.

If it weren’t for the fact that she had a fourth True God dao protector keeping watch from hiding, who had helped her at the last minute, then even her God Lamp Life Substitution wouldn’t have been enough to save

For her to escape to this location was really a fluke. But... though she could accept the drop to her life force and cultivation base, she couldn’t stop thinking about that unforgettable scene.

It was the moment Spirit Jade’s eyes had opened!

“But why was it a cultivator that came back and not the commander-in-chief...?” It was a devastating blow to her. Even now, being so far from the battlefield, her eyes were blank because of it. “And the war in the eastern theater...”

The old god said, “Your Grace, that immortal was once a peak Lower Immortal, and is now using the body of a True God in the great circle. With battle prowess as terrifying as that, he’s basically as strong as you can get without being a God Lord! This chapter is updated by novelfire.net

“With an expert as powerful as that to suddenly show up on the battlefield, well, it’s a foregone conclusion how things will end in the eastern theater. You really have to stop worrying about it.

“My injuries are so severe that I could die soon. It’s a struggle simply to stay in the True God level. I won’t be able to keep you safe for much longer, Your Grace.

“Right now... we’re not in the Fourth Star Ring anymore. We’re somewhere between the two star rings. Given the immortal energy here, we’re obviously closer to the cultivators. That’s going to make it even more difficult for us to recover. What’s more, it’s highly likely that the cultivators will be looking for us.

“Your Grace, we’re going to be facing danger from all sides. We need to stay under cover and be very careful as we travel. Until we get back to the Fourth Star Ring, we cannot reveal our true identities! Your safety is of concern to the God Lord himself, Your Grace, so... please, pull yourself together!”

Starryeyes said nothing for a moment, but the blankness in her eyes faded, to be replaced by coldness. “I hereby promise that if you perish, then after I recover and get help from my father, I’ll personally bring you back!”

The old god nodded in response to her words. Then he closed his eyes, causing his body to flash briefly with golden light before turning completely transparent. That will of transparency then expanded to cover the goddess.

The two gods vanished.

Days passed.

When Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade returned to the eastern theater in the Fourth Star Ring, the war shifted into high gear. It was like a huge, swelling wave.

Cultivator morale had never been higher. At the same time... the gods were stunned beyond belief. In the past... the gods’ ability to awaken from death was a grace shown by the higher star rings. It was one of the main foundations for the power and strength of the gods. True Gods never really died. As long as the true name of such a god was remembered, then that god could come back.

But what happened in the Fourth Star Ring’s eastern theater completely upended the gods’ perception of reality. There was no doubt... that their goddess had been waking up their commander-in-chief, only for a cultivator to be the one that woke up!

That indicated that the natural law that was their very foundation had been tampered with by the cultivators! If it happened once, then it could happen twice.... And if the cultivators had that ability, then it meant that they had developed providence, which had once been the reserve power of only the gods! This could change everything!

It also meant that whenever a True God was woken up in the future, this same type of thing could potentially happen. It was a case of *the turtledove occupying the magpie’s nest* and completely taking over! The gods in the eastern theater were shaken in the most unprecedented way possible.

After all, this entire development meant... that the supposedly eternal laws governing undying True Gods had changed! Considering a cultivator had returned, then... what had happened to the original owner of that god body, the commander-in-chief of the gods' eastern theater? His return had been tampered with? Therefore, where was

It was completely unknown. And the gods... hated unknowns. Although the event would only specifically affect what happened in the fighting in the eastern theater, it had profound implications for the war in general.

It was easy to imagine what would happen as the news spread. It would certainly cause a storm through the war regions, and beyond that, the Fourth Star Ring as a whole! And that storm was no less significant than the arrival of a new God Lord!

Any spectator would come to the conclusion that this entire thing was a plan hatched by Immortal Lord Deepgloom!

First was the 'lantern' in the cultivator's staging areas. After that was the assassination. Third in line was getting the goddess to come. And then, the goddess was used to awaken the True God, all while a major offensive was launched to distract from what was really going on. From the look of it, everything had been done to make sure that final awakening occurred!

"Now I get it!"

On the front lines in the eastern theater of the Fifth Star Ring, Xu Qing and the ascendees had just finished some Corpsedrainer work, and were stunned to hear the news in a war report. The war report about the events a few days earlier had been spreading far and wide in the eastern theater. It explained everything clearly, and was really improving morale among the cultivators. It also dispelled a lot of the confusion felt by Xu Qing and the ascendees.

"Just what I would expect of Immortal Lord Deepgloom," Li Mengtu sighed. "He's not someone known to be constantly hatching plots and schemes, but he's obviously clever. And then there's Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade.... I wonder why I've never heard of him before."

The eyes of Sir Star Ring and the other ascendees glittered thoughtfully. What Spirit Jade had accomplished was unimaginably shocking to them.

As for Xu Qing, he just kept thinking about Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade's epitaph written on his gravestone back at the Heroic Immortal Tombs.

He did it.

Xu Qing was understandably taken aback. However, given what he knew of the gods, he had already reached his own conclusions about the matter. He wasn't convinced that this was something that would happen a lot. It was the result of some very special plans and circumstances.

Meanwhile, Zhou Zhengli said, "If there's someone in the Fifth Star Ring known for plots and schemes, it's Immortal Lord Nineshores.... I wouldn't be surprised if he's the one that's actually behind it all. What's more, the success of a plan like this... surely involved overcoming many obstacles. I'm afraid it's not likely to happen again.

“Otherwise, why would Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade be the only one to come back? If it was easily repeatable, then why not bring back a whole bunch of cultivators, have them stay under cover, and then launch a one-time surprise attack?”

“But they didn’t do that. They only brought back one cultivator. Though we won a victory, the gods are on guard now. And I’m sure they’ll try to figure out how it happened.”

Everyone clearly took Zhou Zhengli’s assessment seriously.

As for Xu Qing, he looked up at Zhou Zhengli. The two of them were obviously on the same page. However, the success of the operation also caused Xu Qing to think of something else that was very important.

That goddess....

Xu Qing’s pupils constricted.

At almost the exact same moment, Zhou Zhengli said, “And why did they want the goddess there?”

Sir Star Ring and everyone else just considered the question thoughtfully. In contrast, Hordeslayer and Rampart didn’t hesitate to offer their opinion.

“You guys are making this way too complicated. Enough with all the jibber jabber. We two brothers can explain everything. It’s simple. Immortal Lord Deepgloom and the other bigshots were just trying to get the attention of the Fourth Star Ring.”

“You all were talking about the eastern theater being turned into a lantern, right? Well, they just wanted the lantern to shine more brightly.”

Hordeslayer and Rampart weren’t known for being intellectual powerhouses. But their assessment caused Xu Qing to look over at them. Zhou Zhengli and everyone else did the same.

Hordeslayer and Rampart seemed taken aback. They had just been speaking off the cuff....

“If that’s the case,” Zhou Zhengli said, “then... then the ultimate plan for this war must be mind-blowing!”

Zhou Zhengli instinctively looked at Xu Qing. Eyes shining, Xu Qing was about to speak, when out of nowhere, their mission jade slips vibrated. Orders were being sent to everyone on the front lines of the eastern theater.

“All forces will break into small groups and begin a full search of the front lines. Go into all areas, regardless of whether they are full of immortal energy or mutagen.... You will search for... Goddess Starryyes, the daughter and only child of God Emperor Death Departure! Do not use lethal force!

“Anyone who provides clues leading to hēr capture will be rewarded with 1,000,000 military credits and 10 portions of ringsource!

“Anyone who captures hēr will be rewarded with 10,000,000 military credits and 100 portions of ringsource, will be given the daoist title true monarch, and will also be given... a dao weapon forged by an Immortal Lord!”

Chapter 1246: A Wave of Destiny Arrives

Chapter 1246: A Wave of Destiny Arrives

Military credits were the main ways cultivators could be promoted in the army. And they were the main currency that could be used to acquire ringsource.

Although it wasn’t hard to earn military credits on the battlefield, it would definitely be difficult to get 1,000,000 of them. Normally speaking, getting that many would involve killing ten Altar Gods, or perhaps one peak Altar God. As for 10,000,000... it would be impossible to get that many without killing a True God.

But now, even just evidence leading to the capture of the goddess could bring in 1,000,000, while capturing hēr was worth 10,000,000. The vast majority of cultivators would find such a reward extremely enticing.

That wasn’t even to mention the fact that, in addition to military credits, the reward included ringsource. Ringsource was usually categorized into ‘portions.’ When Xu Qing and the ascendees were in the Department of Acquisitions, their mission requirements usually involved getting 100 portions of ringsource!

Considering that, a reward of 10 portions of ringsource for evidence of the goddess was equivalent to ten percent of their previous mission quota. Meanwhile, capturing the goddess would bring in 100 portions, which was obviously an astonishing amount.

As these orders filtered through the front lines, it caused a big surge of excitement among the army cultivators. Given the ringsource reward, even the most outstanding figures among the cultivators were interested.

But what was most enticing to the high-level cultivators, particularly those in the great circle of Quasi-Immortal, was... the daoist title of true monarch! True monarch was a title reserved for apprentices of Immortal Lords. It was a representation of status, resources, and a bright future. In other words, anyone who captured the goddess would gain an Immortal Lord as a Master!

Add all of those factors together, and it resulted in ninety-nine percent of cultivators being worked up into a frenzy.

The one percent who weren’t very excited by those things were the leadership cultivators who were already Lower Immortals, or army vassals with extremely high cultivation base and status. Yet, even their eyes were currently glittering, and their hearts pounding. That was because of the final item mentioned in the reward for capturing the goddess.

A dao weapon forged by an Immortal Lord! It would be a precious treasure that contained the might of an Immortal Lord! It would be *easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn* than a treasure as rare as that. Even Lower Immortals would find something like that exciting.

The end result was that the new orders caused a huge sensation on the front lines of the eastern theater. In the blink of an eye, a massive search effort began. All army units and all cultivators, even the Corpsedrainers, took action!

Lower Immortals personally joined in the search, but also sent orders to their subordinates to do the same, while also offering their own rewards for those who reported clues.

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Xu Qing and the other ascendees were just as excited.

That was especially true of Sir Vilespirit, whose eyes were completely bloodshot. The broken sword he wielded was his greatest strength, but it was also starting to hold him back. He had to constantly control it; if he failed to do so, then the blade would quickly turn him into nothing more than a puppet. But if he could become the apprentice of an Immortal Lord... then that could all change!

Li Mengtu struggled to control his breathing. He had long since hoped to get rid of the karma of his Master, Poison Monarch. And this mission... could be just the opportunity he was looking for. Check latest chapters at novel—fire.net

Yuanshan Su and other ascendees were thinking similar things. Everyone had their own struggles and dreams that they never talked to others about. Now was their chance to fight for those hopes and dreams!

Hordeslayer and Rampart were particularly excited. Their thoughts were more simplistic than the others. If they could get an Immortal Lord as a Master, then they could envision Xu Qing groveling in front of them as a result.

Even Sir Star Ring's eyes glittered. This reward was simply too amazing.

Of course, the reward also confirmed their previous speculations. This goddess was very important. That much was obvious considering that it was necessary to capture hēr alive.

Zhou Zhengli was feeling excited, but when he looked over and noticed that Xu Qing didn't seem to be reacting at all, he forced himself to cool down. But after some thought, he decided that wasn't the best tactic.

"Everyone, we need to refrain from being impulsive!" The thunderous boom of his voice struck the ascendees to the core.

They looked over. With a solemn expression, Zhou Zhengli continued, "Considering how important this goddess is, it doesn't matter that shē's injured.... We cannot afford to look down on hēr! Hēr father is a god. Not just any god. Hē's God Lord Death Departure!

“This goddess will definitely have a lot of life-saving techniques to employ, and will have no shortage of bodyguards. Granted, the war reports indicated that some of hēr bodyguards died. But I refuse to believe that shē didn’t have backup plans in place! Considering this mission has such a spectacular reward, it goes without saying that it will be very dangerous!”

Yuanshan Su and the others considered his words.

But Sir Vilespirit’s eyes flashed. “That’s absurd! We’re cultivators! We defy the heavens! Since when do things go smoothly for us? Our whole lives are about fighting. We fight people. We fight the heavens. We fight gods!”

Zhou Zhengli snorted coldly. “We’re talking about going up against a True God! If we’re not careful, we could all end up dead.”

Sir Vilespirit laughed coldly and looked at everyone else. Soon, the others began giving their own opinions. It was something they had become accustomed to doing after working together for so long. When facing a new situation, they would discuss all the possibilities and ramifications. In the end, Xu Qing would make a decision based on that.

As they discussed whether or not to participate in the hunt for the goddess, Xu Qing looked off into the starry sky. Within him, Little Shadow was sending some emotional fluctuations....

“Mil... milord... there’s strong.... Very strong perfume!” With some effort, Little Shadow was able to share what it was sensing with Xu Qing.

Within Xu Qing’s soul, he could sense the fluctuations of fate growing stronger. Back when he got the war reports, Xu Qing had already come to the conclusion that his speculations were correct. The scene shown to him by the god of pain was becoming a reality. There really was a goddess on the battlefield. Fate was like a wave, and just as he had predicted, it was bringing the goddess to him....

“Milord, not far now.... Shē’s hidden... but shadow strong, senses, locked tight!” Little Shadow was getting increasingly excited.

Meanwhile, Zhou Zhengli and everyone else were reaching the end of their debate.

“How can you practice cultivation with such fear in your heart?”

“It might be dangerous, but if we’re the ones who find hēr first, think of the military credits!”

“This is pointless, everybody. The front lines are massive. The chances of us finding the goddess are miniscule.”

“It’s like *fishing a needle from the sea*. The only way we’ll run into this goddess is if it’s foreordained.”

“Therefore....”

All eyes eventually focused on Xu Qing. Even Zhou Zhengli sighed and looked at him, his heart burning.

Xu Qing shifted his gaze away from the starry sky and looked at the companions he had been traveling with for so long now.

“I might have a way to find the goddess,” Xu Qing said calmly. “But people will die.”

Everyone looked at him curiously.

Sir Star Ring gazed at Xu Qing with great meaning. “Before Zhou Zhengli started down this line of reasoning, I didn’t think we had any chance of finding this goddess. But he thinks it’s possible... and now you think it’s possible. It’s my choice how I live and die. If we succeed... we share the reward!”

Sir Vilespirit laughed. “Same for me!”

Li Mengtu, Yuanshan Su, and all the other ascendees thought about it and then agreed to join the effort.

The foolish but seemingly intelligent Hordeslayer and Rampart had started out very excited, but Zhou Zhengli’s arguments had been very convincing to them. Now they were hesitating. But everyone else had already agreed to continue, so they quickly transmitted a conversation between the two of them.

“This Xu fellow says he can find hēr? Is he telling the truth, or lying?”

“He said he ‘might’ have a way! I bet he’s just trying to show off. He said it that way so that he’ll have a good excuse if we don’t find hēr. And if we do find hēr, then he can take all the credit! Hmph! We can play tricks like that as well!”

“That’s so smart, brother!”

The two brothers proudly agreed to face the danger with everyone else!

Seeing that everyone had agreed, Xu Qing’s eyes glittered with determination. Turning, he followed the direction provided by Little Shadow. By tuning in on the fluctuations of fate, he shot off into the starry sky. Sir Star Ring and the others followed.

Time passed. A few days later... a rather small stellar wind drifted through the starry sky of the front lines in the eastern theater. It was full of dust and other unknown particles that made something like a nebula. It was like a long, thin strip, with lightning that crackled occasionally both inside and outside of it.

Nebulae like this weren’t uncommon in the starry sky. Because of the immense weight inside of it, the inanimate objects would clump together, eventually becoming hotter and hotter until a sun formed. Such nebulae formed when suns died. To a certain extent, it was correct to say that a nebula like that was the final breath of a dying sun.

Within this particular nebula was Goddess Starryeyes, the most wanted subject of the massive search effort. The old god was also there. They had withheld no effort to conceal their auras, and had even used the magic of gods to hide in this stellar nebula. They were actually using that final breath of a dying sun to help recover from their injuries.

“This magic will conceal our auras,” the old god said. “This location will conceal our energy. It should buy us some time to recover. Unless a Lower Immortal actually came into this nebula, the cultivators shouldn’t be able to find us. Your Grace, have you tried using your bloodline abilities to get in touch with the god emperor?”

Starryeyes was in the middle of doing some breathing exercises. Not bothering to open hēr eyes, shē calmly replied, “I got no response.”

The old god thought for a moment and was about to say something, when all of a sudden, hīs eyes flashed with golden light. He looked outside of the nebula. Out in the starry sky, he saw something rippling. Circular fluctuations rolled out as, astonishingly, a host of cultivators appeared.

They stopped right outside of the nebula. There they hovered, clearly not intending to go anywhere. There were a total of nineteen of them. In the lead was Xu Qing! His eyes glittered brightly as he looked at the majestic nebula.

Inside the nebula, Goddess Starryeyes’ chest tightened. Shē opened hēr eyes and looked out. Somehow, hēr eyes met Xu Qing’s eyes.

The tugging of fate caused Xu Qing’s heart to pound like thunder.

At the same time, Little Shadow was excitedly shouting within him. “God... God Lord’s... bloodline!”

Chapter 1247: Kill This Person!

Chapter 1247: Kill This Person!

Everything seemed normal in the starry sky! A nebula that was the last breath exhaled by a dying sun drifted along.

Xu Qing and the ascendees hovered next to it. Looking into the nebula, they saw flickering lightning and blurriness. It wasn’t possible to see the interior of the nebula clearly.

Hiding inside the nebula was the old god, whose expression was the same as ever. Hīs cultivation base had been damaged so badly hē had to struggle to remain in the True God level. However, hē fully believed that Quasi-Immortals would be incapable of seeing thēm in thēir hiding spot. It seemed to hīm that these cultivators were simply searching the area. On any other occasion, hē would simply kill them all. But at the moment... the best thing to do was ignore them.

“Your Grace, these humans cannot see us,” hē said.

The cross-legged Goddess Starryeyes’ gaze burned with golden light. After a moment of hesitation, shē suddenly said, “Kill them!”

The old god frowned and turned to look at the goddess. As far as hē was concerned, there was no need to do anything, as it would just expose them to danger.

But the old god's gaze only caused the goddess's gaze to turn more serious. Shē obviously knew that staying concealed was the best option. But for some reason, shē got a strange sensation when looking at the cultivators outside of the nebula. It was as if failure to attack and kill these cultivators would bring about some sort of deadly catastrophe upon hēr. It was a strange feeling, and it was extremely strong. Seeing that the old god wasn't taking immediate action, shē glared at hīm coldly.

“Right now!”

The old god felt that something strange was going on, but hē lifted hīs right hand and made a snatching gesture. The result was that the nebula that was hiding them suddenly seethed into motion. As the nebula was taken control of, it seemed to become a sea of poison.

A wave of dust roared out toward Xu Qing and the others, threatening to instantly engulf them. The shocking power of the wave contained natural and magical laws, as well as unshakable personhood! The void rippled and the starry sky shook as destructive power was unleashed!

The moment the nebula started moving, Xu Qing and the others burst into motion.

Heaven's principle glittered as Sir Star Ring unleashed chains of order and the canon of balance. He was bolstering everyone! A gruish eye appeared above Zhou Zhengli, linking the souls of everyone present so that they could act in unison. Sir Vilespirit waved his hand, and his bloodthirsty, devilish blade shone with red light as it offered a powerful defense. Li Mengtu's poison became a mist that filled Yuanshan Su's heavy mountains....

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Everyone else took similar actions. All of the ascendees unleashed trump cards to deal with the incoming nebula.

At the same time, the power of Zhou Zhengli's gruish eye ensured that they complemented each other perfectly. Thanks to their training and the ringsource they had collected, they had all long since broken into the Quasi-Immortal level.

Combined, they were as powerful as a rocky shoal on a beach. And surrounding them was Xu Qing's majestic and astonishing immortal embryo! And the canon of space-time stretched over it all like overlapping cliffs! The wave that was the nebula swept forth with destructive force, and then slammed into the rocky shoal.

RUMBLE!

A deafening boom broke the silence.

The attacks of a True God were incomparably terrifying. Even though this was a weakened True God, this nebula attack came with a peak level of pressure. The rocky shoal only lasted for a short time before collapsing.

Everyone was injured to some degree. Some coughed up blood, while others tumbled backward. Despite that, they had managed to defend against the attack of a True God!

They were in ragged shape. They were bleeding, and their cultivation bases were in chaos. Yet they acted with smooth efficiency, and unleashed various life-saving magics. That said, there was no way they could prevent themselves from being stunned. But what stunned them wasn't the attack. It was... that they had really found the goddess! NEW NOVEL CHAPTERS ARE PUBLISHED ON NoveI.Fire.net

Xu Qing had said he could find hēr. But Zhou Zhengli and many others had secretly doubted that he was right. It wasn't that they didn't trust him. It was just hard for them to believe it was true. In fact, if the words hadn't been uttered by Xu Qing himself, they would have refused to believe.

The front lines covered a huge area, so logically speaking, it should have been almost impossible to find the goddess. But now....

Feeling utterly astonished, they looked at the nebula ahead of them. As the attack dissipated, everyone realized that the nebula in front of them was now thinner. In other words, it couldn't hide its interior as effectively as before.

And now, two figures were just barely visible inside! One was in front of the other!

The one in front looked like an old man, seemingly human, with a golden robe, terrifying fluctuations, and a cold expression. The old man stepped forward, and a screaming wind kicked up, filled with howls of agony and screams that could shake the soul. An aura spread out, creeping along and causing the starry sky to ripple and distort.

Behind the old man was an illusory temple. It was a dilapidated temple, almost a ruin. And through the broken walls, shadows shifted and writhed, as if some vicious beast were lurking inside, or a twisted monster bristling with fangs and claws.

There was a god enshrined in the temple. The god hovered in midair, looking extremely gruish, with spindly legs as thin as tree branches. Its body was twisted strangely, and it had very long fingers that wriggled like worms. The fingernails were as long as needles, and glinted sharply in the darkness.

It seemed to have been severely injured, as it was twisted up in the most freakish manner. Its torso had seemingly been bent around with great power, while its legs were bent at the waist at a sickening angle, making it seem like they might break off at any moment.

The face of the god was covered with black scales, each of which glittered with a bizarre light that made them seem like countless eyes. The mouth was freakishly huge, with the corners reaching all the way to the ears. And it was filled with razor-sharp fangs. Behind the fangs was a blood-red tongue that twitched back and forth like a living being, like a greedy snake that was ready to strike out and lick up all life in front of it.

Atop the head grew a huge crystal that emitted a faint light. It was irregularly shaped, and seemed to contain endless streams of mysterious, gleaming light. Surrounding the god were faint, violet halos that contained distorted human faces.

This was the godhood of a True God! Within it was a godly will that surpassed natural and magical laws!

Behind the old god was a young woman, who was astoundingly beautiful!

Shē looked exactly like a slender human girl. Hēr embroidered gown was the color of the deep night, and the skirt glittered with darkness. Every line of embroidery seemed to contain countless anguished souls, and every step shē took seemed to cause ghostfire to flicker within the darkness.

Hēr skin was as fair as snow, to the point where it seemed pale, as if shē had spent years out of the sunlight. And shē seemed extremely cold. Hēr facial features were exquisite, almost like a statue made by a master craftsman. Yet the angle of hēr eyebrows seemed to reveal some deep pain or resentment. Then shē frowned ever so slightly, seemingly from a profound fear inside of

Hēr eyes were like deep, mysterious pools of water, while hēr pupils glowed with a bizarre red light that somehow seemed flirtatious in the darkness. As for hēr lips, they were a stunning red color, almost as if they were covered in blood. And when shē parted those lips to speak, it seemed certain that shē would utter a curse that would damn everyone to myriad tribulations. Hair cascaded down hēr back like a waterfall, and it was a pale, lifeless, silver color.

Surrounding hēr was a faint mist, within which it was just barely possible to see tormented ghost faces. They had fangs and claws, and screamed soundlessly. None dared to get too close to hēr, but merely orbited hēr carefully.

All of it made hēr seem extremely beautiful, but at the same time, profoundly gruish. At the same time, anyone in the starry sky who caught a glimpse of hēr would be stricken with fear by hēr gaze. Shē was like an exquisite spirit who had climbed out of the abyss, combining elements of both dreams and nightmares.

When Xu Qing and the ascendees laid eyes on hēr, their minds reeled! But at the same time, all of them felt the desire to do battle.

Sir Star Ring's eyes glittered brightly. Sir Vilespirit bristled with baleful energy. Zhou Zhengli's eyes narrowed. Everyone else reacted similarly.

It was only Hordeslayer and Rampart who reacted differently. They were astonished. We really found

Both of them were trembling down to their souls.

Xu Qing had remained calm the entire time, yet his gaze... was fixed on the beautiful, gruish goddess who was emerging from the nebula! Goddess Starryeyes looked at all of them before focusing on Xu Qing.

Without the nebula in between, their gazes locked, and all of a sudden, the goddess' heart filled with intense fear. Hēr eyes glittered with blood-red light, and shē pointed at Xu Qing.

"Cut him down! Pay any price!" Hēr voice echoed with uncharacteristic determination, causing the old god's eyes to glitter.

Hē had been hēr bodyguard for many years, and had never seen anything like this happen! After the previous defeat on the front lines, shē had been lost, but hadn't acted like this. But there was no time for hīm to make inquiries. Since hē had chosen to act earlier, hē now had no choice but to erase all traces of their presence here. As for these cultivators... hē would kill them all! And it had to happen quickly!

The old god who looked like a human closed his eyes. Behind him, the temple rumbled, and the god floating inside of it erupted with godly might. It sent the starry sky into chaos, ripping the nebula to shreds as the temple appeared above. It went from illusory to corporeal, and it began to unleash a terrifying mutagen.

That power spread out to lock down the area. Then the god inside of the temple came out into the open! The starry sky transformed dramatically.

Chapter 1248: Fighting a True God

Chapter 1248: Fighting a True God

Xu Qing had encountered True Gods before. But this was his first time dealing with a True God in the true sense! Bimo Si, the god of pain, had been returning, and not complete. In fact, there were many details about him that had been different from his complete form. For example, his temple, the god inside of it, and his godhood....

That god in the temple is nearly cut in half at the waist. That must be the doing of Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade. This god... is already seriously wounded!

Xu Qing shot backward, but his eyes glittered as he focused on the temple. The other ascendees unleashed their cultivation bases as they also fell back.

The temple, meanwhile, rumbled loudly and shone with golden light. Though it was largely crumbling, the godly might from inside was as majestic as a sea. And as the god from inside emerged, intense rumbling sounds filled the area. Mountain-toppling, sea-draining power swept out like a storm.

The starry sky rippled and the void distorted. Xu Qing and the ascendees were shaken to the core. It was like an instinct from their life force, causing their souls to tremble out of control. Fear took root inside of them on the deepest level.

Then a godly voice echoed out.

“Terror!”

The godly voice caused the seed to grow. It bloomed, producing fruit and bringing terror to every corner of their beings. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, as bizarre mutations struck them.

They grew scales all over their bodies, their arms became very skinny, they felt their faces distorting, and they sprouted fangs.... They were all starting to transform to look exactly like this god!

The fruit of terror blossomed within them, causing them to shake violently from fear. It seemed like their souls were being corrupted. If the process completed, they might not be dead, but they would be close to it. And that would be because what was left behind wouldn't be them. They would simply be believers in the True God to possess as mediums!

That was the real strength of True Gods.

The grievous blow landed by Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade, and the suppression by the immortal will in the area, put this True God at a big disadvantage. The god was struggling to do this. If he had been dealing with ordinary cultivators, things might have been going better. His weakness wouldn't have been so obvious.

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But Xu Qing and the ascendees were not ordinary cultivators. Therefore, the instant that this True God's power spread out, Xu Qing and the others unleashed their trump cards.

Whether it was the hypertoxic poison Li Mengtu could utilize after becoming a Quasi-Immortal, or Sir Vilespirit's mysterious broken blade, or Zhou Zhengli's eye of foresight... they let loose all of them in a defensive manner. Sir Star Ring, Yuanshan Su, Hordeslayer and Rampart held nothing back.

They suppressed the mutations. Furthermore... their formation did not falter. They stayed tightly organized around Xu Qing.

Each person unleashed a trump card in defense, but not just in self-defense. The trump cards spread out, overlapping and merging together to completely cover Xu Qing! They were like numerous barriers around him! Within those barriers, Xu Qing didn't need to worry about his own defenses. All he had to do... was attack!

This was the strategy they had devised along the way. Xu Qing was the strongest among them. He was the heart of their team. So they would bolster him. At the moment, their fleshly bodies were mutating, their souls were being corrupted, and their minds were full of terror. But they went all out to form the defenses, whereupon Xu Qing summoned his immortal embryo.

It towered high into the starry sky, the Aurora Immortal Palace glittering within it. The immortal embryo lifted its hand... and smashed it toward the temple.

The starry sky trembled as massive pressure built up. The huge hand of the immortal embryo shot down with astonishing momentum. Just as it was about to hit the temple, the True God emerged from inside.

The twisted frame of the god was about to break at the waist, which was a very bizarre sight. The long, spindly arms then reached up, and the god waved a finger in the direction of the immortal embryo's hand. The power of a True God erupted.

The wave of that finger caused Xu Qing's immortal embryo to rumble and blur. Mutagen erupted within it, rapidly spreading out. Before the hand could land, the immortal embryo collapsed. The backlash would have seriously injured Xu Qing, but instead, it was split among the ascendees. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, and their auras vibrated.

Eyes bloodshot, Xu Qing once again formed his immortal embryo.

The True God suddenly vanished, then appeared right in front of the cultivators. That long, skinny finger once again pointed out. A sensation of terror erupted within them, all while the might of the True God weighed down like a destructive mountain.

A rumbling boom echoed out. The blood drained from the faces of Xu Qing and the ascendees. They began to bleed as their bodies withered and their souls distorted from the corruption. Follow current novels on NovelFire.net

The defenses were starting to melt. Li Mengtu's poison was thinning. Zhou Zhengli's eye was shattering. Sir Star Ring's chains were crumbling. Hordeslayer and Rampart were wailing in agony.

Suddenly, two of the ascendees couldn't last any longer, and the flames of their life force were extinguished. And yet, they held nothing back, tapping into secret magics to last a bit longer.

The scene playing out caused the True God to frown. Hē was actually in very bad shape, and the attacks from earlier had taken a huge amount of effort. Although these humans were not Lower Immortals, only Quasi-Immortals, they were clearly extraordinary. The person they were defending had the power of an immortal embryo. If hē was at his peak, hē could kill this person easily, but right now, all hē felt was a sense of great danger. What was even more important to him was that this fight end quickly.

The True God looked in the direction of the goddess, who had been watching this whole time. "Your Grace, let's work together!"

Starryeyes lifted hēr foot to step forward. But before hēr foot could fall, hēr eyes glittered mysteriously. And instead of taking a step forward, shē actually stepped backward. And then, a teleportation portal appeared beneath hēr feet! The portal activated! Hēr gaze then fell upon Xu Qing, who was the very person that was causing fear to build up within

Xu Qing looked over with narrowed eyes. He could see what the goddess was doing. "The portal will complete activation in twenty breaths of time!"

Zhou Zhengli, Sir Star Ring, and everyone else reacted with visible shock, just like Xu Qing. Despite the physical pain and corruption to their souls, they were all frowning.

Xu Qing sighed softly. So did everyone else except for Hordeslayer and Rampart. The plan they had come up with on the way was to work together to unleash all of their strongest trump cards. They would create a killing move that would only work once! In reality, it would have been best for them if the goddess did join in and fight next to the True God. Then their killing move wouldn't be wasted.

But this goddess was very decisive. It didn't matter that they seemed so weak that all the goddess had to do was join forces with the True God, and they would be killed. Unfortunately... shē wasn't coming over!

The reality was that they weren't faking anything. They were really not going to be able to hold out much longer....

At that point, Xu Qing made a snap decision. Killing intent burned in his eyes. His cultivation base raged, and his immortal embryo formed again. And this time... it didn't just have the Aurora

Immortal Palace glittering within it. It had an iron skewer! It was inside the immortal palace, thrumming aggressively.

The canon of all the ascendees bolstered it. Sir Star Ring's order and balance, combined with heaven's principle, settled onto the iron skewer. Zhou Zhengli's eye of foresight flowed around the skewer. Li Mengtu, Yuanshan Su, Sir Vilespirit and all the other ascendees used their canon to add their own effects. Hordeslayer and Rampart turned into swords that merged with the skewer.

With all of their Quasi-Immortal might, the iron skewer pulsed with a glow that illuminated the starry sky. And the addition of Xu Qing's immortal embryo ensured that the iron skewer was astonishingly mighty.

But things weren't over yet.... Next, the Green Heaven appeared within the immortal embryo!! Instantly, the starry sky filled with rumbling sounds, and the True God's face fell.

Just barely visible within the Green Heaven was an astonishing coffin! Inside of that coffin was the god of pain. That god's godly might had already been extracted and put into the iron skewer, filling it with even more heaven-shaking, earth-shattering momentum.

At this point, things still weren't over. Xu Qing's space-time canon and overlapping universes caused a host of images to spring up around the iron skewer. And within every single one of the different space-times, there was another astonishing iron skewer!

As Xu Qing's eyes glittered with killing intent, he waved his hand, and over a hundred iron skewers stirred. They pierced out of the various instances of space-time, and then appeared on the battlefield, where they combined together!

Over a hundred iron skewers merged to make a nail! The nail had the combined power of all the ascendees, including nineteen canons, Aurora's power, and Green Heaven's might. And then, it shot right toward the True God! There was no way to describe how fast it moved. In fact, everyone present saw nothing more than a blur of afterimages that occurred in the past.

But what happened in the present and the future was that the nail stabbed right into the True God! It hit hīm right in hīs injury, at hīs waist where hē was almost cut in half! It stabbed in viciously!

A scream echoed out. The True God trembled as all of the godly might within hīm went into chaos. Hīs temple collapsed, and hīs godhood went weak. God blood poured out of hīm.

But hē was still a True God. The combined trump card of Xu Qing and the ascendees was intended to kill this True God, but even though hē was weak and wounded, that was no easy task. The only way it might have happened would be if this True God was in the middle of returning, similar to what happened with the god of pain.

The result was that this True God was not killed by the nail. However... it did shatter hīs True God cultivation level! Hīs aura weakened, and hīs level dropped! Hīs god magic of terror was diminished, causing the mutations plaguing the ascendees to reverse automatically.

All of this takes a bit of time to describe, but actually happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off a piece of flint. Screaming echoed out as the diminished old god glared with killing intent at the cultivators and prepared to fight back. But then hīs pupils constricted, and hē fell back.

The reason was that... the auras of numerous cultivators were closing in from off in the distance. It was the Longscale Regiment, which Xu Qing and the ascendees had contacted earlier. They were on the way!

The old god rushed toward the teleportation portal being activated by the goddess. Unfortunately... the moment hē started moving, Goddess Starryyes pointed at Xu Qing.

“Self-detonate and kill him!” shē said. “You won’t be responsible for your own resurrection. My father will guide it! That’s an oath I hereby swear on my own bloodline!”

The old god stopped in place.

Chapter 1249: Using Fate!

Chapter 1249: Using Fate!

The old god had already been badly injured, and had narrowly escaped death at the hands of Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade. While escorting Starryyes, it had been a difficult challenge simply to stay in the True God level. It was like a dam that had been thrown together to hold back a chaotic maelstrom of water.

Hīs actions moments before had weakened hīm even further, especially dealing with the combined killing move from Xu Qing and the ascendees. That nail had struck hīm in exactly the same spot where hē had been wounded by Immortal Monarch Spirit Jade, and the reverberations were causing the dam to quiver on the verge of collapse.

Hīs temple had crumbled, making it impossible for hīm to maintain hīs True God cultivation level. His godhood was fading and hē was about to drop out of the True God level. Hē was essentially an oil lamp that was about to run out of fuel.

What was more, among the auras of the approaching cultivators were... Lower Immortal auras!

Given that, hīs mission was in grave danger. Hē had originally been planning to flee with Starryyes and continued to protect hēr. But then Goddess Starryyes gave orders in hēr godly voice. Shē ordered hīm... to die.

For a short moment, all hē did was look at hēr, a complicated expression on hīs face.

Gods did not have emotions. Hē was aware of that, of course. But perhaps because of hīs cultivation level dropping or perhaps because of hīs serious injury, there were fluctuations in hīs godliness. Because of those fluctuations, hē found hīmself thinking about Starryyes when shē was a little girl. Hē had watched hēr growing up, rising to great heights step by step. Hē had watched as shē became famous.

Are these emotions? hē wondered. Then hē turned toward Xu Qing and the ascendees, who were racing toward hīm. Heart filling with determination, hē headed toward them.

Golden light shone in hīs eyes, spreading rapidly to become a huge sea. Within that golden sea was terrifying godly might. The old god’s mangled body was visible in the golden light, rapidly expanding, growing larger, aura reaching terrifying levels.

Scattered bits of deafening chanting rang out that could shatter souls. The sound pushed the golden sea even farther in all directions. These were fluctuations that could shatter starry skies and shake universes!

This was hīs... self-detonation! Though hīs cultivation base had dropped and hīs godhood had dimmed, hē... was still a True God! The sound and light was like infinite suns exploding, creating a destructive force that could devastate anything in its path.

It was a light that could illuminate the cosmos. It swept through the stars! It enveloped everything! The cloud was wiped out of existence by it, as were all traces of the passage of Goddess Starryyeyes. As a result, nobody present was capable of locking onto hēr to track

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Xu Qing and the ascendees raced in the opposite direction, but weren’t fast enough to escape the golden light. The light swept over everything. Planets were reduced to rubble. The starry sky shattered. Everything became nothing! It didn’t matter that a Lower Immortal aura swept out from the incoming cultivators, sending immortal power into the area to counter the mightiness of the self-detonation.

Xu Qing and the ascendees were too close to avoid it.... It was as if this had been foreordained by fate, and was just happening a bit sooner than expected! Xu Qing’s heart raced as he watched the color gold taking over everything he could see.

He unleashed his cultivation base defensively, sending his immortal embryo out to defend, not just himself, but the ascendees around him. Everyone joined their power together. They resisted as one! The source of this content is novelFire.net

However, as the golden light surged.... His immortal embryo writhed, twisted, and then collapsed. As his fleshly body began to vibrate, numerous space-time instances appeared, out of which different versions of himself emerged. He went all out to fight back.

Sir Star Ring and everyone else went crazy, holding nothing back in the moment of crisis.

It was hard to say how much time passed before the light faded away, and the rumbling ceased. The golden light from the old god’s self-detonation had passed them.

The cultivator army arrived.... The cultivators looked at Xu Qing and the others with respect in their eyes, as well as shock at the sight of the devastation. The commanding officer was an old man who was a Lower Immortal. He looked at the spot where the cloud had been, then at Xu Qing.

“You uncovered clues about the goddess, and then you risked your lives to fight a True God. This... will be reported to my superior. All of you... have performed a great service! Now, go back and... rest up.”

He gave some medicinal pills to them, and then shot off to continue the search. The cultivators under his command gave out medicinal pills as well, then followed him.

Soon, everything was quiet.

Xu Qing hovered in the starry sky, his clothes in shreds, and his face pale. He coughed up a massive mouthful of blood. His fleshly body and soul were weak and exhausted. He turned to look at his companions....

Visible on Sir Star Ring's forehead was a magical symbol that was currently fading away. It was a life-saving magic his Master had given him. It had obviously been spent and was now useless. He had a host of wounds, all of which were bleeding profusely. He was soaked in blood.

Next to him was Zhou Zhengli, who was trembling. Black blood oozed out of both of his eyes. His eyes... were empty pits. He had been blinded. That was the source of his canon.

Li Mengtu had been ripped in half at the waist, and was unconscious. It was hard to say if he would live. Yuanshan Su was in a similar state. Hordeslayer and Rampart were barely conscious. In the end, they had abandoned their fleshly bodies to become immortal swords, and in that way had barely managed to safeguard their souls. Sir Vilespirit had lost an arm, and his broken sword was covered in cracks. He had sustained serious injuries.

The other ascendees were all in horrible shape. Some were missing limbs or other parts of their bodies, and most were unconscious and in no shape to fight.

In terms of their numbers... they had lost seven people! Those seven had been destroyed in body and soul by the golden light.... That was the disastrous result of them working together and distributing the injury between them. They had numbered nineteen, but now they were only twelve.

Xu Qing looked at the survivors then stared off into the distance. His heart was ice cold as he sent a message to Little Shadow to have it start looking for the goddess again. He was not ready to give up!

Zhou Zhengli, who had lost his eyes, hoarsely said, "I said before... that this would be extremely dangerous. That was a True God, after all. Were it not for the Young Lord, we would have lost more than we did!

"But we're cultivators. We fight heaven, fight people, and fight gods.... When we perish, it's simply our dao being dispelled. When you fight against fate, death is nothing abnormal! And it makes it worth it to die alongside a True God!"

Zhou Zhengli smiled, but within that smile was a bit of defiance.

Sir Vilespirit's eyes were bloodshot as he listened to Zhou Zhengli. Then he said, "Sadly, we didn't get that goddess!"

His voice seemed full of regret.

Sir Star Ring listened to the two of them. “Xu Qing, you found the goddess once. Can you find her again?”

Xu Qing looked over and met Sir Star Ring’s gaze.

Sir Star Ring’s eyes glowed with killing intent as he continued, “Seven of us died, most of them miserably. Whether it’s for them or for us, I want to catch that goddess! I bet you feel the same, don’t you?”

Sir Star Ring had noted the goddess’s strange actions, and how shē had seemingly restrained hēr own killing intent upon catching sight of Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked over the group. There were only two who were in fighting condition. Himself and Sir Star Ring.

“The True God’s self-detonation wiped out all traces of hēr passage,” he said. “Shē teleported away leaving no clues behind. Right now... shē’s too far away for my spirit pet to detect.”

Sir Star Ring said nothing in response.

Xu Qing turned to look off into the starry sky. His eyes narrowed. “But... there’s something else I can try.”

Xu Qing pulled out a teleportation jade slip. By making a few adjustments, he transformed it into an entropic teleportation slip. Normal teleportation slips would teleport the user to a specific location. But the entropic variety... were random. They would teleport the user to an unpredictable location. How they worked was really up to fate.

This was the method Xu Qing was thinking of using. He could not sense any traces of the goddess. However, fate had already brought hēr to him. So this time, instead of waiting around, he figured he would take the initiative....

His eyes glowed with a mysterious light. If fate had foreordained everything, then Xu Qing was certain that an entropic teleportation would get him just the result he sought.

With the teleportation jade slip in hand, he looked at Sir Star Ring.

Sir Star Ring looked thoughtfully at the jade slip. He asked no questions. He just walked over to stand next to Xu Qing within the range of the jade slip.

Zhou Zhengli and Sir Vilespirit bowed to the two of them. They were not strong enough to participate in the fight that was to come. They needed time to heal. What was more, the unconscious ascendees required medical treatment. Right now, they had to go to the nearest Longscale Regiment garrison.

Voice hoarse, Zhou Zhengli said, “Young Lord. Sir Star Ring. We’ll wait at the garrison for news of your victory! Capture the goddess!”

Xu Qing nodded and crushed the jade slip. The light of teleportation spread, covering Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring. Rumbling sounds echoed out. The two of them vanished!

Goddess Starryeyes sped along in a black beam of light through the front lines of the eastern theater. Shē wasn't very far from the territory of the gods. Shē was using special techniques to stay invisible as shē traveled. Being so close to the Fourth Star Ring meant that mutagen levels were building. That just made it easier for hēr to stay hidden. Luck had been with hēr so far, as the teleportation had brought hēr to a very fortuitous location.

At the most, I'll be back in the Fourth Star Ring in a few days! I just wonder why I haven't received any response from father.

Starryeyes thought back to everything shē had experienced, and hēr eyes grew cold. Shē didn't care at all that the old god had self-detonated. As far as shē was concerned, that was the most logical choice.

It erased all the traces of hēr teleportation, and might have even killed that human cultivator that terrified hēr so much. Thinking about that human caused killing intent to fill hēr heart.

Who was he...?

Regardless of whether or not he died in the old god's self-detonation, shē had already decided to report the matter to hēr father as soon as shē was back. Shē was certain that hēr mighty father would be able to explain things.

With such thoughts in mind, shē was about to speed up when, all of a sudden, a tremor passed through hēr. Then hēr heart started pounding as a scene played out that made hēr pupils constrict.

Ripples had appeared in front of hēr. It was the aura of an entropic teleportation. Two figures materialized. One of them was... the very same person shē had just been thinking about!

"You—" Starryeyes' face fell. Hēr heart and mind were thrown into chaos, and hēr godliness even started trembling. Fear erupted within

All traces of hēr own entropic teleportation had been wiped out by the self-detonation. Theoretically speaking, an extremely powerful expert might have been able to track hēr down. But even then, it wouldn't have been done with such precisions. And that was especially true considering... that it was very clear this person had used an entropic teleportation!

It was random! And he had randomly... appeared right in front of hēr! Goddess Starryeyes felt hēr godliness falling into chaos.

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1250: Gotcha!

Sir Star Ring had once been the number one chosen Shining Star. He had plenty of battle experience, and after teaming up with Xu Qing, he had become a lot less arrogant. He had learned

how to be observant, as well as how to identify the strengths and weaknesses of others. In short, he had grown up and become even more outstanding than before.

Therefore... as soon as he materialized, he didn't spend time wondering about how absurd it was that they had teleported right in front of their target. He didn't hesitate. After all, this was not the first time something unusual had happened during his time working with Xu Qing. He was used to it.

The moment he laid eyes on Starryyes, he attacked! He took advantage of hēr unstable godliness and shaken mindset, to unleash over a hundred chains of order.

Clanking sounds rang out in the starry sky. They instantly latched onto hēr. The moment they did, Sir Star Ring's eyes flared with killing intent, and he went into a double-handed incantation gesture.

"Balance!" he roared. Before becoming a Quasi-Immortal, his canon had been that of order. But after becoming a Quasi-Immortal, it became that of balance. It was capable of taking two parties with different levels of strength and forcing them into a state of balance. In other words, if his opponent was strong, he could make them weak. At the same time, he would be strengthened.

He was going all out from the get-go. He was not holding anything back. Heaven's principle appeared, adding great weight to his balance. And thus... Starryyes was weakened!

The reason he wasn't bolstering Xu Qing was that he knew Xu Qing was stronger than him. If he brought Xu Qing and the goddess into balance, it would mean shē wasn't weakened as much. That was why he brought himself and the goddess into balance. If you considered his canon to be a curse, then he was the carrier by means which the goddess had been cursed!

A rumbling boom echoed out into the starry sky as Starryyes shivered. Shē suddenly felt as if invisible bonds were wrapping around hēr. And hēr aura was on the decline. It was like being bound by fetters.

The sensation forced hēr to quell the chaos inside hēr. Reaching up, shē unleashed all of hēr godly might to try to break the balance. Were shē at her peak, one word from hēr could break it. And even though hēr cultivation level had dropped and shē was also injured, destroying it... was not going to be hard!

But there was no way Xu Qing would give hēr the chance to do that! The moment Sir Star Ring put his life on the line to unleash balance, Xu Qing took action.

He stepped forth, and a will of metal filled the starry sky. A huge tree appeared, and then a massive sea of water spread out. Black fire erupted beneath his feet, hot enough to destroy worlds. It became a black sun. In the distance, earth-colored planets appeared.

All of it turned into a majestic star chart. This was the metal, wood, water, fire, and earth belonging to Xu Qing. The star chart emanated spatial fluctuations, and then... the power of time.

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It combined, becoming a destructive mightiness that bore down on Starryyes.

The danger caused hēr eyes to glitter coldly. Shē had no time to try to break Sir Star Ring's balance. Xu Qing's attack filled hēr with a sense of crisis. As golden light flickered around hēr, shē lifted hēr right hand and pointed at Xu Qing. Then shē spoke in a godly voice!

“Command the Underworld!”

Astonishingly, hēr godly authority was that of the underworld! It was the same godly authority as hēr father, God Emperor Death Departure. However, because hēr cultivation level was low, shē couldn't use the full version. That said, it was still astonishingly gruish. As hēr finger fell, the surrounding starry sky seemed to peel away. Everything, from the light to the dust, was lifted away, making darkness the only thing in the starry sky.

Within that darkness, a chanting dirge spread out, as if from the underworld itself. It was a song of reincarnation. The song drifted, materializing into the form of black strips of paper money. This was the manifestation of hēr godly authority.... It could buy divine abilities, it could buy magical techniques, and it could buy planets. It could buy anything, including life itself!

The paper money floated forth to block Xu Qing. When it made contact with his metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, they all vanished in a bizarre fashion, as if they had been bought away. Even space and time disappeared thanks to this astonishing godly authority. They had been bought and taken away.

A few pieces of paper money shot toward Xu Qing, while a couple flitted toward Sir Star Ring's canon of balance. Xu Qing's pupils constricted because of the gruish godly authority. But then the sound of a bell rang out from his hand.

The bell hadn't worked very well against a True God. But as for an Altar God.... The bell tolled, becoming like the voice of heaven. In an instant, the sound reached the paper money, and they vibrated. Xu Qing's iron skewer then swished out. THIS CHAPTER IS UPDATE BY novel-fire-net

Starryeyes' face fell, and shē prepared to launch a counter attack.

But then Sir Star Ring howled. Veins bulged all over him, and blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth as he glared at the goddess. The canon of balance went wild. An invisible force swept through the canon of balance, and was somehow stripped away from the goddess to pour into Sir Star Ring. As a result, his aura skyrocketed.

Starryeyes was being drained, causing hēr face to turn pale and hēr aura to decline. Shē was already injured, and so, hēr cultivation level showed signs of dropping again. Before, shē had been able to stay at the level of a peak Altar God, but thanks to this use of balance and Sir Star Ring's strength, shē was now struggling to stay in that level.

“Dammit!”

Expression flickering, shē again prepared to take action. But then the bell tolled, a sound that mixed with a whistling scream. That sound came from Xu Qing's iron skewer! It closed in on Starryeyes along with layers of space-time.

Xu Qing himself was right behind the iron skewer, holding a long spear in his hand. Within it was the spirit of a golden crow, and he was aiming it right at the goddess. All of this takes a bit of time

to describe, but it happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off a piece of flint. And then the iron skewer was right in front of hēr forehead.

Hēr face distorted as hēr god magic was nullified by the sound of the bell. However, shē was the daughter of a god emperor, and shē had plenty of treasures. The eyes adorning the phoenix crown on hēr head flickered, then became projections that blocked the iron skewer.

A boom rang out. The iron skewer cut through the eyes like a hot knife through butter. And thus, the eyes that had barely survived Spirit Jade's attack now shattered. Next, the raging sound of an unleashed sea erupted as an illusory blue sea appeared.

The iron skewer was finally blocked!

But Xu Qing was right behind it. His hair swirled and his black robe flapped as the black spear he held appeared right in front of Starryeyes. The spear stabbed right toward

It was right in front of hēr chest, just about to stab into hēr when... Starryeyes' face rippled. Countless striations wriggled across hēr body, like tadpoles, which then raced toward hēr face and entered hēr mouth. Next... an ear-piercing shriek rang out of hēr mouth that could shatter souls and crumble planets.

The sound was astoundingly piercing. Xu Qing's black spear collapsed. Trembling, he used his immortal embryo to block the sound, yet still ended up coughing blood and tumbling backward. Injuries mounted upon injuries!

Sir Star Ring's chains snapped. His balance collapsed. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as the backlash inflicted a serious injury.

And yet, Starryeyes was in extremely bad shape. The sound that had erupted from hēr mouth was the forced manifestation of True God power. But given hēr current state, it was like using a strategy that killed a thousand enemies by sacrificing eight hundred of your own troops.

Shē staggered back, hēr phoenix crown crumbling into ashes. Hēr blue gown was ripped mostly to shreds, revealing the skin beneath. Hēr cultivation base dropped from peak Altar God to mid Altar God. The sensation of hēr lowered cultivation base left hēr feeling extremely unsafe. In fact, shē was overwhelmed by a sense of deadly crisis. Shē seemed to be crying out to hēr father, except... there was no response.

Hēr eyes flashed with golden light. Weak, shē backed up, having already made a decision about what to do. Reaching up, shē smacked hēr hand down onto hēr chest. Then shē shivered from head to toe as shē extracted hēr own godsource!

Again, hēr cultivation base dropped, placing hēr at early Altar God. However, by dropping hēr cultivation base and extracting hēr godsource, shē was able to unleash a trump card!

"Bring the Underworld!" shē shrieked.

Astonishingly, an underworld mansion appeared behind hēr. It had carved beams, painted ceilings, overhanging eaves, and traditional crossbeam architecture. The entire structure was covered with

carvings of vicious ghost faces. And there was no sense of life at all, only endless, sinister coldness.[1]

Mutagen levels suddenly rose sky high. Gruish figures began to appear everywhere. They had cold, empty eyes, filled with nothing but animosity and hatred for their past lives. Though they could not manifest fully, it made this entire starry sky seem like it was the underworld!

This magic, Bring the Underworld, actually summoned an embodiment of the underworld! It could suppress all immortals. It made mutagen paramount.

Sir Star Ring was suddenly like a mortal. He lost his cultivation base, and due to his serious injuries, he passed out instantly.

Xu Qing's expression flickered as all of his immortal powers were suppressed away. Using fleshly body power alone, he fell back and tried to do something to recover.

As for Starryeyes, shē was mentally exhausted and physically weak. But shē was in a better position than Xu Qing and Sir Star Ring. Given that shē was still an early Altar God, shē was still vastly superior in battle prowess compared to them.

"Pitiful bugs!" shē said, eyes glittering coldly as shē walked toward Xu Qing.

Shē wanted to personally kill him. He had been the one striking fear into hēr heart and throwing hēr godliness into chaos. Shē completely loathed him and wanted to destroy him in body and soul. But... even as shē raced toward him, he lifted his hand to do something. Then, something completely unexpected happened!

The surprise on his face disappeared, turning to calm, cold apathy. Astonishingly, mutagen erupted from him! It was Starfire's mutagen, borrowed by Xu Qing. He had been cut off from immortal powers, but not this! It flowed through his hand and out into the open.

"You—" Starryeyes blurted in astonishment. Shē wanted to back away, but... shē was too close to Xu Qing, and hēr cultivation level was very different from before. The suddenness of the development gave hēr no time to do anything.

In the blink of an eye, Xu Qing's right hand shot out and latched onto hēr neck! All five fingers clamped down with full force, digging deep into hēr flesh. Godly authority formed a seal. Little Shadow became fetters. Starfire laughed softly.

Having accomplished that, Xu Qing quietly said, "Gotcha."

Starryeyes was sealed, and hēr face was pale. But hatred filled hēr eyes as shē glared at Xu Qing and hoarsely said, "My father—"

"Shut it," Xu Qing interrupted. Face completely expressionless, he tightened his fingers.

1. The type of architecture described here is a very traditional and ancient type. Here are some visuals. 

