

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1301: The Tenth Extreme

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The path to enlightenment of the tenth extreme was foreordained to be extremely difficult. Xu Qing had put a lot of thought into it on his journey to this point, and had even gained certain bits of enlightenment. Immortal Lord Mi Ming had even helped him....

But to Xu Qing, all of those things were borrowed references that he couldn't choose directly. The development of his own canon needed to be fueled by his own experiences in order to make it his own statute!

This is the process of statute being birthed from canon....

Xu Qing had lifted his foot but not yet set it down. He was currently lost in thought. He was thinking about whether or not he had prepared thoroughly enough.

The five elements are the foundation. I added time and space, and that became space-time.... The chaotic flow corroborated the deficiencies in my own space-time. I came to understand that the combination of correct and incorrect is, in fact, space-time.

In that manner, I laid the foundation to complete my canon of space-time. Next.... If complete space-time is viewed as a singularity, then....

Xu Qing looked up and put his foot down. The moment it made contact with the void, his ninth extreme, which surpassed space-time, became a dao reverberation that swept through the chaotic flow of space-time.

Parallel, overlapping universes.

Those words seemed to have an unusual, almost magical power that connected to Xu Qing's heart and mind. Then the effect spread, and it was as if he had touched on the most profound secrets of a mysterious universe. The illusions in front of him seemed to shoot to a higher level, causing the chaotic flow of space-time he had been in to shrink down dramatically.

In the end, space-time became a singularity in his perception. All of the information Xu Qing possessed about space-time canon existed in that singularity. Astonishingly, beyond that singularity... Xu Qing's perceptions contained many more singularities forming.

They grew increasingly numerous and dense, until they filled his field of view. They became innumerable motes of glittering light. The power of space-time also pulsed from each mote. It was as if each mote of light was a world with its own space-time, and its own host of living beings.

The joys and sorrows of all those countless living beings intersected to create different lives. This was the ninth extreme that Xu Qing had previously gained enlightenment of.

Parallel universes!

Back when he wasn't at the peak of Quasi-Immortal, that canon could only simmer. It was only after he reached the great circle of Quasi-Immortal that he was able to manifest its true potential.

Xu Qing looked on. Within the motes of light were countless versions of himself. He could see countless different versions of life. They were like pictures being unfurled in front of him.

In one picture there was a scholar. The scholar wore a white robe and had his hair bound with a silk band. He had a scroll of ancient records in his hand as he hurried through a very elegant palace courtyard. The courtyard was full of luxuriant plants and fragrant flowers. But the scholar was frowning, as if he were racking his brains about the deeper meaning of life. Or perhaps he was worried about his future prospects as a government official.

Occasionally he would sit at a stone table, grind some ink, and put pen to paper. His calligraphy was delicate but tenacious, as if each brush stroke was testament to his relentless pursuit of knowledge. Little did he know that there was another version of himself looking on intently.

In another instance of space-time there was a heroic swordsman.[1]

He wore a conical hat and black clothing. A long sword was strapped to his hip, its sheath was decorated with ancient and mysterious designs. He strode down the public thoroughfare, tall and straight, his every footfall filled with a sense of ease and heroism.

On occasion, brigands or warlords would block his path. The swordsman's sword would flash through the air, and the villains would fall dead to the ground. The swordsman would sheath his sword and continue on his way. As the sun set in the dome of heaven, the shadow he cast grew longer and longer.

He was the kind of person who had many stories to tell. Stories of the jianghu, filled with passion and vengeance, stories from another life of hot-blooded chivalry.

Eventually, the sun set.

The Xu Qing outside that particular space-time looked away. A profound look could be seen in his eyes as he looked at the scroll painting. It was as if this painting could help him to see the familiar parallels that existed in the great flow of space-time.

He saw artisans, government officials, butchers, bandits, children, and old men. He saw all versions of life. And in every one of those versions of space-time, it was himself that he observed.

In a crude physician's hut, he saw himself treating injured patients. Occasionally, he would frown thoughtfully, and occasionally, he would console the sick. With deft familiarity, his hands would combine medicinal ingredients, whether boiled or crushed into powder, to ease the pain of the patients. Sometimes he would go out with a medicine box into the marketplaces and back alleys, a warm smile on his face as he diagnosed commoners and helped them patiently. He used his skill in medicine to help the meek and the lowly, and to keep the people healthy. It was an ordinary thing, but at the same time, extraordinary.

Different versions of himself. Different lives. There were similarities and differences among them all. It was like how seeds that were grown in different ways would produce flowers that were similar but different.

As Xu Qing calmly watched, the enlightenment became more prominent in his eyes.

In the past, I was wrong.... My canon comes from my perceptions, and it's also limited by my perceptions. When it came to my ninth extreme, in the past, I was obsessed with what I perceived to be the path of cultivators. That's why, in all of those versions of space-time, I was a cultivator.

You could say that they were all parallel versions of what I imagined myself to be. And those are false parallels. The true parallels, and the true parallel and overlapping universes, are actually a complete space-time version of myself. When you dispel the fog of chaos, what is revealed... are lives full of all states.

Each of those lives has a unique flavor. They all contain their own happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy. They all have unique trajectories....

This was the true ninth extreme of parallel universes. Countless choices and possibilities, as well as countless destined opportunities, formed into one magnificent painting.

Sadly, I can't control it right now.

Xu Qing closed his eyes and sighed softly.

In this second phase, I've seen countless parallel space-times, but I can only observe them. That said, I predict that there is more I can do. Everything I did in the past was a minor dao... it was like my eyes were obscured by a single leaf. But what I've seen now represents the first step onto a major dao.

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. *So is the tenth extreme about going from seeing to affecting?*

He pondered the situation. There were still some things he didn't understand fully. Eventually, he opened his eyes.

It seems that manipulation actually falls within the range of what the ninth extreme can do. At the most, that might be half a step into the tenth. But not all the way out of the ninth....

Xu Qing shook his head. He was still not quite at that anticipated tenth extreme. He continued to observe the different versions of himself in the paintings. He had no idea how much time passed.

Eventually, his attention came to focus on one specific version of himself. That space-time was somewhat unique.

He was a painter. The painter painted a lot of paintings in his life. Some were beautiful maidens. Some were magnificent landscapes. Some involved very lifelike animals. The painter became very famous.

In his later years, it was for unknown reasons that he burned all of his paintings up with fire, leaving behind only one blank canvas.

And then, after looking at that canvas for a very long time, he put down a single brushstroke on it. The moment the tip of the brush stopped moving, Xu Qing, who was outside of that space-time, was stunned.

“Unification....” he murmured. “It’s unification! The tenth extreme is unification!”[2]

Xu Qing’s eyes gleamed with unprecedented brightness as all of the confusion vanished from within him.

Now the only question is... how to do the unifying!

Xu Qing looked at the painting and all the countless versions of himself, and he realized he already knew of a way to unify them.

I need to make all of the space-time versions of myself in these parallel universes develop a will of unification. With that as the attractant, I can create a line stringing together all of my space-time selves! And then I can combine the wills of unification among all of the parallels, and unify them! As for exactly how to do that....

Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed. He knew that the biggest obstacle he would face was that his ninth extreme wasn’t complete. Though he could use the ninth extreme to see, he couldn’t do anything with it.

I can only meddle in a tiny portion.

Using that tiny portion to unify all of his space-time selves would be extremely difficult. There were just too many instances of space-time, and too many versions of himself with too many different types of lives. All of those complications would make it hard to combine their consciousnesses.

He really needed to fully command the power of parallelism. Xu Qing’s eyes glittered brightly.

There’s actually another thing I could try.... The god of pain....

He waved his hand, and from within the immortal palace in his immortal embryo, he extracted the coffin with the god of pain sealed inside. When he put the coffin down in front of him, fluctuations rolled out. Without any hesitation, he reached out and put his right hand down on the coffin.

The coffin trembled as Xu Qing forcefully sent his consciousness inside. Inside the coffin was the god, like a candle about to wink out in the wind. To a certain extent, Xu Qing just possessed the god.

Having accomplished that, his eyes glittered. His plan was to use the god's godly authority to weave an illusion for all of the space-time versions of himself. The illusions would vary based on their lives, experiences, and desires.

Eventually, all those versions of himself would be immersed in the illusion, and would have a hard time distinguishing reality from illusion. What he wanted was to give those space-time versions of himself an exit from their versions of space-time. And the exit would be the will of unification.

This method would meet all the requirements. It would create a will of unification in all space-time versions of himself. Illusions were limited. And illusions couldn't affect real life. They were like dreams.

But illusions... could contain reality!

1. The author uses the same character (xia) as the one from wuxia and xianxia here. It imparts a sense of chivalry and righteous heroism. Sometimes translators will call this kind of hero a "knight-errant," because the typical wuxia hero is a wanderer who fights for righteousness based on a personal code of honor/ethics. So in this case, the martial arts hero is essentially the protagonist of a typical wuxia novel. Yet again I'll remind everyone that *Beyond the Timescape* is not wuxia. ☹

2. Interestingly, this specific term has already been used with the various extremes. Check [chapters 1080](#), [1180](#), [1181](#). Incidentally, this term could also be rendered 'combine.' In past chapters, I used both depending on the context. There was one instance in the chapters related to the extremes that I previously used 'combine,' but have since gone back and changed it to 'unify' for continuity's sake. Incidentally, the characters literally mean 'return to one,' and as such, the term contains a hidden implication that the things being combined or united were already together at one point. To be clear, the dictionary definition both in Chinese and English does not mention that. But in a xianxia setting where wordplay is key, it's something to consider. Another thing to consider is that this painter only made a single stroke that caused Xu Qing to come up with the concept of unification. Except that the term in Chinese is made of two characters that have a total of five strokes (four for the character 'return' and then you add 'one' which is a single character). So... what stroke was it that prompted Xu Qing to think of unification...? ☹

Chapter 1302: Liu Xuanji

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The ancient divination texts say: *The sages must react to great signs in heaven.*[1]

It was spring in the year Heavenly Restoration in the imperial palace of the capital city of the Great Posterity Dynasty.[2]

A spring rain fell in a cobblestone alley in the southwestern part of the imperial capital.[3]

A middle-aged man named Liu Xuanji sat underneath a dark canopy just outside the alley, running his finger along the bronze divination plate in front of him.[4][5]

“Well, what’s it say, Mr. Liu?” The person who had just spoken was a young man in fancy embroidered clothing, also standing under the dark canopy, flanked by some burly attendants. He was looking eagerly at the middle-aged man in the green jerkin in front of him.

Liu Xuanji didn’t look up. His eyes were fixed on the divination needle, which was vibrating a bit but pointing directly at the Kan trigram.

This was his third divination job today. The first was for a commoner seeking real estate advice. The second was an old man whose grandson had gone missing. And now he was dealing with a young nobleman who had a jade pendant hanging from his waist, covered in dragon designs. As one might expect, the young nobleman wanted to know about his future prospects as a government official.

After a long moment passed, Liu Xuanji looked up at the young man. “Young Sir,” he said in a raspy voice, “you will end up in charge of the Crapemyrtle Palace, and—”

Before he could finish speaking, the divination needle suddenly jerked in the direction of the Li trigram. The sudden development caused Liu Xuanji to frown. The divination was indicating that this customer’s fate involved the Kan hexagram, which meant fortune, but also the Li hexagram, which meant loss.

Normally speaking, this divination result would indicate an early death. But this young nobleman was past the age when a death could be considered premature. His aura seemed more like that of a forty-year old rich person, and the dragon on his jade pendant had four claws. It was all typical of the heir apparent to an imperial prince.

Liu Xuanji was quiet. The rain fell harder. As he watched, the divination needle spun back and forth between Li and Kan.[6]

That was when he finally started to understand what he was seeing. The strange phenomenon caused his frown to deepen. The fingers of his left hand, hidden within his sleeve, began to move as he made some calculations about the heavenly stems and earthly branches. However, his calculations only caused a cold sweat to break out on his back.

How could this be...?

Three days ago when telling the fortune of a young girl who sold flowers, the divination signs had been equally strange and difficult to interpret. The girl was obviously destined to work hard her whole life, but the divination results had indicated she would end up happily married. Today, something similar was happening.

“Sir?” The young nobleman tapped on the table and looked at Liu Xuanji, who seemed to be in a daze. Finally the nobleman shook his head. According to what he’d heard, this Mr. Liu had once had a very good reputation. But about ten years ago, he went mad. After recovering, he gave up his old life and took to hiding out in the marketplace.

“What a pity,” the young man said. He left.

Shortly thereafter, a metallic flavor rose in Liu Xuanji’s throat, and he came to his senses. At some point, the divination needle had come to rest, trembling, on the Kun position. Cracks were now visible on the surface of the divination plate.

Liu Xuanji noted the cracks, then looked up at the figure of the young man disappearing into the crowd. He suddenly dissolved into a fit of coughing. He instinctively pulled out a white cloth and put it up to his mouth. When he lowered it a moment later, it was flecked with spots of crimson.

“739....” he muttered.

Finally, he stood up, closed up his vendor stall, and then made his way through the rain back toward his residence, which was a crude hut. Inside the hut, he sat at the table, looked out at the rain, and reminisced about the past.

Thirty years. At sixteen years of age, he mastered all the knowledge in the *Green Scripture Illusory World Text*, and had then spent the subsequent thirty-six years performing accurate divinations without making any mistakes. But then, ten years ago, a hexagram divination created a star chart that looked like the scribbles of a street urchin child. Lines of fate that should have been straight were in complete and baffling disorder. After that, nothing went right for him.

Time passed, and the rainy night grew dark faster than usual. Just like Liu Xuanji’s mood. Late that night, his room was illuminated by an oil lamp.

Within the lamp light, Liu Xuanji stood up. He pulled a bundle of divination books out from a dusty corner, then slowly started leafing through them. The yellowing pages were covered with star charts, the sight of which caused him to look more perplexed than ever.

These were the records of all of his past 738 failed divinations. Now, underneath this lamplight, he realized there was a terrifying pattern.... The lines of fate all seemed to converge on one spot, where they overlapped in a very bizarre way.

Liu Xuanji’s finger found the record from the third year of Eternal Prosperity. In that year, the star chart of an old soldier from a border garrison overlapped with that of the newest top scholar from the imperial examinations, on the first day of Awakening of Insects. In that year, the fates of an oil merchant and the revered prime minister intersected during their shared 22nd birthdate.

The clues would not make sense to most people. But the implications were appalling to Liu Xuanji.

How could this be...? It’s as if the lives of numerous people are slowly unifying over the past ten years.... And today....

Liu Xuanji thought about the divinations from earlier in the day. The thread of fate belonging to that young nobleman should have been severed in his youth. But at some point, some important

linchpin had changed.... He took out a fresh scroll. Taking all of the strange threads of fate from years past, he used his mastery of the arts of providence to start writing something new.

The sound of dripping water seemed to grow more urgent.

When the marble white of dawn crept over the horizon, Liu Xuanji had filled the new scroll with all of the threads of fate. The final thread was that of the nobleman. The ink had not yet dried on the threads of fate, which resembled a complex spider web. But they were pointing to one specific moment: 5:45 in the afternoon on the first day of Awakening of Insects.[7]

That was the exact moment ten years ago when he suddenly went mad. Liu Xuanji trembled as he looked at the scroll spread out in front of him. At that exact moment, a strong, cold wind slammed into his hut. The wind picked up the scroll, causing it to spin and dance in the air. The 739 threads of fate seemed to come alive, float up, and turn into birthdate characters.

Liu Xuanji looked on incredulously as all of the birthdate characters of his past customers swirled, overlapped, and then... pieced together to form his own birthdate characters!

All of them were the same! It was as if all the threads of fate were symbolic, and that there was a different life hidden within them!

The bronze divination plate next to him suddenly buzzed loudly. The seventy-two divination symbols all started glowing with green light, all while the jade divination needle started spinning, and the plate began to crumble. A jasper cicada flew out from the rubble of the divination plate. It was the very same precious object his Master had pressed into his hand before passing away.

Within the green light, the cicada spread its wings. Astonishingly, on the belly of the cicada was a character that Liu Xuanji himself had written when he was practicing writing as a child. It was the character “one.” [8]

“So that’s it...” Liu Xuanji said. He suddenly started laughing madly. Grabbing the scroll, he rushed out the door.

The dawn bells tolled, clearing the morning mist. Outside the cobblestone alley in the southwest of the capital, there was quite a buzz of activity. Everybody was talking. And the subject of their discussion was Liu Xuanji.

Liu Xuanji’s eyes were bloodshot as he stood barefoot in front of his vendor stall, a torch in his hand. His vicious expression was illuminated by the light as he ignited the scroll with the threads of fate inked on it. The fire soon spread to his own clothes. As the fire spread through the threads of fate and crumbled into ash, 739 threads were revealed, all of which were exactly the same.

Liu Xuanji cackled madly as the fire spread over him. The onlookers screamed and backed up. No one stepped forward to help.

After the fire had completely engulfed Liu Xuanji, his expression suddenly became completely tranquil. Looking around at the horrified crowd, he softly said, “This life doesn’t exist. All of your fates are the same fate. Mine.”

He toppled over onto the ground. No one saw the jasper cicada in the fire. It perched on the burned corpse, its wings flapping. And the star chart on the wings almost looked like the face of the pain god.

1. This saying comes from *The Book of Changes*. ㊦

2. The actual characters used for the imperial palace in this case are the same characters for the Kyoto Imperial Palace in Japan. However, this is just a coincidence, as the specific characters used are not that unique, and can also just be interpreted as “imperial palace in the capital city.” ㊦

3. If you do a google search for the specific characters used to describe this cobblestone alley, you will find some very typical Chinese alleyways, the likes of which I have walked a many over the years. Here are some pictures. ㊦

4. Liu Xuanji. Liu is a surname that also means “willow tree.” It is not listed in the 100 most common surnames list that I’ve been using, but it does come up on a different list (the top 400 names, different compilation) at number 136. Xuan means “profound, mysterious, dark” and Ji means many things, including “machine, operation, opportunity” and things similar to that. The Xuan character is the same character that I have generally been rendering as “dark” as in Plumdark, Dark Serenity, etc. When you combine Xuan and Ji into the word “xuanji” it is a unique term common in Daoism and Buddhism which means, “Arcane truth, abstruse secret, profound theory, mysteries of fate or of the universe.” From that alone you can probably tell that this is supposed to sound like a profound/mysterious name. Madam Deathblade said as much. ㊦

5. Subsequent descriptions make it clear that this divination plate has positions for the 64 trigrams and the 8 hexagrams, as well as a needle that will spin to point to the different trigrams and hexagrams to provide a fortune. ㊦

6. Normally speaking, Li and Kan are opposite of each other on a trigram diagram. This would certainly make for an interesting spectacle, as presumably, the needle would be spinning like crazy. ㊦

7. The units of time here are ancient time measurements, but when you convert them, they align to about 5:45. Specifically, it’s the “you” time period, which covers from 5-7, and 3 “ke” into that. Each “ke” is slightly more than 14 minutes (usually), so by doing a bit of rounding, I think 5:45 is the best option for rendering this time in a way that Western readers can easily understand. ㊦

8. Remember that “unification” is made up of the characters for “return” and “one.” ㊦

Chapter 1303: Historian Chen Mo

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Space-time transformed as the jasper cicada’s wings fluttered.

Within one of the other glittering motes of light was another space-time, where there was a vast continent called Heavensign. In the Great Spirit imperial dynasty, it was autumn, and the night was deep.

Outside of the Office of Historians, Chen Mo held an ink pen above a bamboo slip. On the ink stone, the pooled ink rippled as if with waves. Outside the window, the autumn cicadas buzzed. At the end of the desk was a bronze lamp that illuminated piles of ancient records everywhere, as yellow as old tea soaked in time itself.[1]

Chen Mo looked down at the Record of Rivers and Canals which he had just received. He was currently making some annotations for that book, but his pen had stopped atop a certain line.

“In the 9th year of Original Light, Levee Overseer Wang Yan recruited commoners to fill a bottleneck in the river....”

A drop of ink slipped off Chen Mo’s brush, landing on the bamboo slip. It created a big black spot. Chen Mo’s thoughts were equally unclear. This was the thirty-fifth time in recent years that he had found something suspicious in the records.

The bamboo slip clearly said, *“In the 9th year of Original Light, Levee Overseer Wang Yan recruited commoners to fill a bottleneck in the river.”* And yet, just a year ago, Chen Mo had personally made an etching of a monument erected by the commoners. And that monument said, *“In the 9th year of Original Light, River Management Officer Li Ping dug a canal to guide the flow of the river.”*

The two names had appeared so closely connected in two different historical records that they were like foam piling up on the surface of a river. It was so frustrating that Chen Mo felt a headache building behind his eyes.

Even stranger were the water level records of the Spirit River back in the third year of Original Light. In *Documents of the Grand Historian* and *Old Rituals of the Han*, there was a water level discrepancy of about three feet. It was as if one river had been split into two completely different rivers in the historical record.

“Sir, are you back to critiquing the water records?” One of the clerks on night duty entered with a pile of new bamboo slips. The smudges of ink on the cuffs of his sleeves were clearly visible in the light of the lamp. “Just yesterday the Minister of the Household said that the Department of Water Management is in charge of rivers and canals, and that we historians should focus on keeping records of court documents.”

Chen Mo didn’t look up. He just reached down and rubbed the bamboo slip as if lost in thought.

Chuckling, the clerk put down the records and left.

Chen Mo watched him leave. And then... he prepared to continue with his work, only to find that he just couldn’t start writing. He finally sighed. Turning to a mountainous pile of historical records, he found a specific roll of parchment.

It was *Treatise of Great Spiritual Disasters*. Chen Mo unrolled the parchment and examined the arcing lines of written text, until he found a specific passage written in cinnabar-colored ink.

“In the 79th year of Spirit Mansion, the Sparkling Deluder remained introverted, and the crimson star fell to the earth.”[7]

Chen Mo stared at the passage. This was another of the recent anomalies he had discovered in the historical records. The 79th year of Spirit Mansion was more than 500 years in the past. However, after examining other historical books, he had confirmed that no such event occurred in that year.

The parchment smelled faintly of mold and ink. At the same time, the ticking of the copper clocks in the Office of Historians made it seem to Chen Mo like time itself was crumbling. He suddenly found himself thinking back to the very first anomaly he had encountered, over in the Scripture Pavilion. He had been compiling a copy of *The Legend of King Mu of Zhou*, but had found a scrap of silk stuck between the bamboo slips which dated back to the Summer Winter period. Written upon it in tadpole script was the line: “*In the year of Quail Fire, the rivers dried up and the mountains crumbled, and the ancestors were buried by heaven and earth.*”[2][3]

In an even older tortoise shell inscription, *Records of the Lingluo Clan*, the same disaster was mentioned nine different times. It was like the lyrics of a song passed down through multiple generations, in which the lyrics slowly changed over time.

And yet, there was definitely a link among those different historical records, all of them mentioning a disaster that never occurred. It almost seemed like the ancients were trying to pull a prank on their descendants.

Chen Mo’s thoughts wandered. Eventually, he kneaded the bridge of his nose as he walked over to the window. Looking out at the snow beginning to fall, he murmured, “What is the truth about history?”

In the blink of an eye, ten years passed. During that time, Chen Mo continued his work as a historian. Though he wasn’t actually very old, his hair was much whiter than his colleagues of the same age, and he had a lot more wrinkles. The reason was that, in the decade that had passed, he had been constantly searching through the vast library of historical records, hoping to find an answer to his question.

Eventually, in *Secrets of the Mortal Warrior*, he found a passage that read, “*The Imperial Mother gifted a longevity elixir made from a fantastic plant that blooms once every 3,300 years.*” And then, in *Geographical Chronicles of the Peaceful Jin Era* the same story was recounted, except it was changed slightly to “*King Father of the East taught a longevity incantation that took five hundred years to bear fruit.*”[4]

In *Commentary on the Water Classic* from the Southeastern Dynasties as well as *Description Encompassing Earth* from the Nineteen Generations of Earth and Heaven, a mountain was mentioned. However, there was a discrepancy of 500 kilometers in its specific location between the two texts. And yet, both texts mention that, buried deep beneath the mountain was a stone box containing inscriptions with 10,000 years of history.[5]

What shocked him most was his discovery that, when he analyzed the collapse of successive dynasties based on the sixty-year-cycle, he found that every 1,800 years, “*the five planets would align, and the imperial aura would end in demise.*” He informed his colleagues about this, but when he did, they reacted as if they had been possessed by evil spirits, and then accused *him* of being possessed.

The dean of the Office of Historians even angrily pointed at the historical chart he had created and shouted, “Historical records are designed to give insights into the past! How dare you frighten people with your fear-mongering nonsense!”

Late that night, when his wife was adjusting his clothing to keep him warm, she looked at the documents piled on his desk and whispered, “I saw that oracle bone you found in that abandoned courtyard. The crack marks are exactly the same as those on the jade ornament we saw in the imperial mausoleum last year. Maybe the stories about our world are just old stories being told again. I understand what you’re trying to do. Don’t give up. I support you.”

Her words made him think back to the wooden hairpin she had been wearing when they met. The pattern in that hairpin was exactly the same as the growth rings in an old tree he had seen as a youth.

Chen Mo just kept getting more confused. Even he was starting to think that he was crazy.

In the deep night, Chen Mo lay on his bed, unable to sleep, looking up at the dark ceiling. In his mind, he was thinking about what his teacher had told him twenty years ago when he was first accepted into the Office of Historians.

“The brush of the historian is like a lamp on a river, illuminating the rocks sticking out of the mud.”

Back then, he didn’t understand. But now, as he thought about all the contradictions in the ancient records, he realized that underneath those rocks in the water were layer upon layer of water plants that got tangled up in the light of the lamp.

At the end of the year, Chen Mo resigned from his post. Packing up a case of rubbings from various tablets, he started traveling the world. It was something he had been wanting to do for years.

Years of suspicions, the advice from his teacher, and the support of his wife finally ended with him making a decision. Ancient history was like a song that seemed to circle around on itself over and over.

As that song played, Chen Mo found a crumbling fresco on the wall of a cave in Mount Kunlun. It depicted an image of a great flood, which perfectly matched the description of Emperor Spiritsage controlling the flood waters in *Later Records*.^[6]

In the genealogies of a fishing village on the North Sea, he found a legend of a time when the eye of the sea became inverted, and the ancestor escaped on a huge boat. However, that event occurred 3,000 years after the same event as recorded in *Classic of the Great Spirit*. Legends of catastrophes, rebirth, and destruction, though incomplete, all seem connected in various ways. And Chen Mo kept clear records of all of them.

In the shifted sands of the south, he uncovered half of a stone stele. After translating the text, he realized that it was almost exactly the same as the common prayer used in sacrifices to the Great Spirit. That was when Chen Mo suddenly realized something.

If different civilizations were destroyed at the same time, and under the same starry sky, then they would all have similar songs about the past.

After traveling the world for thirteen years, Chen Mo decided to go home. Unfortunately, he had long begun to age more rapidly than was normal, and on the way back, he fell ill. It didn't seem he would be able to make it back to the capital city.

At a hostel on the road, he lay on a simple wooden cot coughing up blood and glancing weakly at the book he had written on his journeys.

The Cycle of Civilization.

1. Chen Mo: Chen is #5 on the list of top 100 surnames and Mo means “ink.” In this very paragraph, when it talks about the ink on the brush, it uses the same character as his name. Madam Deathblade said it sounds like a “hard worker.” ￼

2. King Mu of Zhou was a real historical figure who is also a character in certain mythological/legendary stories. For the [real version](#), check this wiki entry, and for the [fantasy version](#), check this one. ￼

3. Tadpole script is a variety of ancient Chinese seal script. The name comes from the way the script resembles tadpoles. Here are a [few examples](#) of what it looks like. ￼

4. The King Father of the East is a “real” figure from Daoist mythology. More info [here](#). ￼

5. The two texts mentioned here, [Commentary on the Water Classic](#) and [Description Encompassing Earth](#) are both real-life texts from ancient times. Obviously, the versions here are fictional. ￼

6. [Kunlun](#) is a very important place in Chinese mythology. It has been mentioned before in previous Er Gen works, but this is not supposed to be a connection point. It's mentioned here because of its common use in Chinese mythology stories. ￼

7. The Sparkling Deluder is a poetic name for Mars. ￼

Chapter 1304: The One and Only State!

Chapter 1304: The One and Only State!

The wind blowing in through the window caused the candle to flicker. The pages of the *Cycle of Civilization* flipped gently. The book cataloged the rise and fall of the successive dynasties. And in the end, Chen Mo had organized it in a way that revealed a closed cycle, like the path of a bright moon on a long night. That cycle caused him to realize that every word of history, the name of every era, and all other things were just evidence of the turning of the wheel. And that wheel never stopped moving.

Despite being weak and sick, Chen Mo used the last of his strength to carve his insights on to twelve bronze slips. Because the details were put onto bronze slips, they would be able to stand up to the corrosive power of time. Chen Mo knew that his enlightenment would be nothing but a tiny ripple in the great river of reincarnation. Even still, he persisted.

The imperial historians used some unknown power to obscure the way time overlapped. They used myths to cover the truth about destruction. They used different words to hide prophecies. But Chen Mo was now carving the truth into the bronze slips.

The last line he wrote was, *"The reincarnation of all things ends in the unification of silence."*

Thunder boomed outside! Rain fell steadily onto the roof over his head. The rhythm of the sound caused Chen Mo to slip into something of a daze. Suddenly, he found himself thinking about a thousand-year-old document *Sealed Tributes*, which mentioned a rain of destruction that had a similar rhythm.

"I'm about to depart..." Chen Mo murmured. His life force was about to go out, and his vision was blurring. He had lived a life that felt like being trapped in a boat on the open sea. Nobody understood him. But at least he left behind something.

"I still have some regrets..." he whispered. As he lay there waiting to die, he eventually struggled to lift his head and look out the window at the storm.

Perhaps it was his regret that caused it, or perhaps his blurred vision, but the next time the lightning struck he noticed that his shadow on the wall seemed to overlap perfectly with the bronze slips, the Spirit Empress' nine revelations hexagrams, the inscriptions on the ancient oracle bones, and the coiling dragon carving on the golden imperial edict of the reigning dynasty.

Chen Mo was stunned momentarily. Then his eyes began to shine brightly.

Whenever someone tries to grasp the trajectory of history, they actually become that trajectory.

He laughed softly. Rain blew in through the window and ran down the wrinkles on his face. He let it. He suddenly didn't feel like he was trapped on a boat in the sea. Instead, he felt like a lamp being held by the boatman.

Maybe that lamp couldn't penetrate all the way through the eternal fog ahead, but at least those who came after him would realize that there was someone who lifted that lamp, and then carved some clues to be left behind in the great river of time. Maybe a thousand years from now, another historian would be organizing ancient records on an autumn night, and they would notice a clue, and would understand about that lamp in space-time.

And then, just like Chen Mo himself, that person would understand that it was a clue about the endless cycle of civilization's cycle of destruction and rebirth. Such people would be alternate versions of himself, who would befriend a certain person in the future.

"It is done!"

His enlightenment didn't bring rapturous joy. Rather, it was silent, like the first melting of ice in spring. Chen Mo knew that each word of history was just a part of reincarnation. The truth he had been seeking his whole life wasn't about making all civilizations conform to the same explanation.

Rather, the explanation was that everything was a flowing cycle. That was unification.

The candle in the hostel was flickering, casting shadows that seemed to represent numerous dynasties and countless overlapping versions of reincarnation. Candle light and starlight glittered and intersected. It was like the fluttering wings of a jasper cicada.

Chen Mo smiled and closed his eyes.

The cicadas buzzed just like before.

The cicadas' wings fluttered.

The scenes, the motes of light, the shafts of brightness, all illuminated different space-times. They had the same source, but different trajectories, and thus, they resulted in vast and diverse lives. They were all colorful in their own way, but they all contained thoughts of unification.

Those thoughts rose through space-time, returning to Xu Qing's consciousness, bolstering it. The experiences of many lives caused his aura to create a shapeless hand that plucked the strings of canon like a musical instrument.

More and more notes were added, weaving together to ultimately produce an exceptional sound called 'statute.' But... though that sound grew, the music never played. It was because....

"I'm missing one of them." Xu Qing opened his eyes and looked out into the void.

There was one final version of himself in space-time who had not yet thought of unification. Not even the authority of the god of pain could control his thoughts.

He was a painter. At some point in the past, he had burned all of his paintings. Then he took out a sheaf of fine paper and put down a single brush stroke. It was the character 一, which meant 'one.'

Right now, he was adding five more brush strokes. In that manner he changed 一 into 来, which meant 'come.'

As it turned out, that first brush stroke was actually the first part of the character he later intended to complete. It was an invitation across space-time.

Xu Qing looked at it for a while, then stood up and took a step forward. That step took him into space-time and into parallelism. A moment later, he appeared in the studio with the old painter.

The old man's brush hovered above the canvas as he looked up. A smile broke out on his wrinkled face as he looked at Xu Qing.

"I've been waiting a long time to write this for you. There's no need for you to say anything. Just let me speak.

“I started studying painting when I was young. Eventually, I became a master. I used painting to understand the world, and as I grew old, I came to understand how heaven and earth operated....

“Within my paintings I saw living beings and inanimate objects. I saw anything and everything. For example, there was Liu Xuanji, and Chen Mo, and I even saw you.... Eventually I burned them all, and then I sat down here. It was because I understood that I and the world I live in probably didn’t exist before. We came to exist because you needed us to exist. As for why you need us, I actually saw it in a painting twenty years ago.”

The painter pulled out a fresh sheaf of fine paper, took a deep breath, and ground some fresh ink. Then he picked up his brush, dipped it into the ink, and started painting. It was not some masterwork. Instead, he put down only a few simple brushstrokes to create a grid pattern.

After, the painter dipped the brush into the ink before drawing a single line! That line connected all parts of the grid!

He put all of his remaining energy into the brush stroke. Afterward, his aura began to fade, and he quickly grew so weak he couldn’t hold the brush. At that point, he spoke in a faint, raspy voice and said, “Unification isn’t just about space. It’s also about time. Time is a line, but it doesn’t have just present, past, and future. Space is made of a grid. But the parts of the grid are not static. When the timeline connects them, they move.

“It’s like this painting. The parts of the grid are all of our lives, from beginning to end. The one timeline connects all the parts of the grid. And that is the complete life of space-time parallelism.

“Our path is to take the timeline, extract it, absorb it, and make it ours. The next step is to absorb all of the static parts of the grid. Having accomplished all that, it will lead to the unification of parallelism. You will become the only one. That state of being the one and only will be named by me. It is... ontology! And that is our tenth extreme!”[1]

The painter closed his eyes.

As Xu Qing took a step forward in the study to look at the painting, the world around him... began to collapse!

1. There is a bit of wordplay here that cannot be conveyed in English. First, “parallelism” has the character for “one” in it. The author takes the character “one” and adds a character to it that creates the phrase “one and only.” Then he drops “one,” leaving behind that added character. Then he picks another character with the exact pronunciation that means “ontology.” So there is a unified linguistic element connecting them all. The author loves to do this kind of wordplay. Now, what does “ontology” mean, and why did I select it? Well, the specific character the author uses has a lot of meanings. In modern times, that character is often used to mean “dimension.” For example, it’s commonly used in the Chinese term for 3D or “three dimensional.” It also has other dictionary definitions. The meaning of the character in this novel is more profound, and will be explained later. The main explanation doesn’t have to do with “dimension.” Unfortunately, due to the character having that meaning, the author is able to do some wordplay based on the “dimension” definition. However, the primary definition is NOT anything to do with dimension. There will be a detailed explanation later. In the meantime, I’ll save you a google search by providing you with a [link to the Wikipedia page for ontology](#), which might give a clue as to why I picked it. Just be aware that neither the dictionary definition of the Chinese term nor the

Wikipedia page for the English version will provide you with the exact meaning the author is assigning to this character. It is a unique meaning for use in a xianxia setting. So... stay tuned for further details. ￼

Chapter 1305: Today I Become a Summer Immortal!

Chapter 1305: Today I Become a Summer Immortal!

Liu Xuanji, the fortune teller, burned his scroll of fate. The moment his life burned out, he managed to divine the heavenly dao of the world he lived in.

“All fates are the same fate!”

Chen Mo, the historian, worked hard for his whole life to investigate the truth. And in that moment when starlight and candlelight intermixed, he came to understand everything. He realized that history as a whole was really just an endless cycle, like reincarnation.

Whenever someone tries to grasp the trajectory of history, they actually become that trajectory.

He wasn't the only one. Xu Qing was making full use of the illusion provided by the god of pain. There were scholar versions of himself, as well as government officials, commoners, and beggars. He lived many, many types of lives. And eventually, all of those different lives would reach a certain point in which, by various methods and destined opportunities, they would reach the same type of enlightenment. Ultimately, it was that very unique painter version of himself who sighed with emotion as he gave voice to the complete explanation....

“Unification is not just about space. It's also about time.”

He finally saw another space-time version of himself. He gained enlightenment of everything, and then used space-time itself to inform himself of the result.

All of them were Xu Qing. All sought dao enlightenment, and no matter how they floated along, they seemed to follow the same route.

But after Xu Qing's canon reached the ultimate height, dao enlightenment became circular. The future. The past. The present. Different space-time versions of himself. All of them became his teachers. As the painter smiled, and the surrounding world crumbled, Xu Qing looked at the painting, and his mind thrummed with the sound of a great dao. That sound seemed to be a combination of all of the different versions of space-time, which in turn gave birth to the dao!

Xu Qing stepped forward, and it took him out of the crumbling world of the painter. When he reappeared, he was back to the original chaotic flow of space-time. This place was his anchor, and it was also the very center of all of the parallels.

In that spot, Xu Qing sat down cross-legged.

Shortly after, he closed his eyes and softly said, “Unify!”

The moment he uttered the words, space-time rumbled, and the consciousnesses from all the parallels vibrated. A tempest erupted!

Xu Qing could sense the auras of all of the various parallel versions of himself that had scattered about. Now, he was summoning them back. Like birds returning home, they flew toward him, swirled around him, and fused into him. The unification was officially beginning!

Time murmured like water as the consciousnesses from the various space-times returned.

At the moment, time held little meaning to Xu Qing. But he still floated gently through the River of Time, sending out strange space-time ripples around him. The numerous parallel worlds he had created with his canon were motes of light that stretched out, becoming threads that interweaved and merged together. And in the end, they fused with Xu Qing’s true body in the chaotic flow.

The majestic space-time transformations also caused all of the living beings in the endless parallels of Xu Qing’s canon to similarly experience heaven-shaking, earth-toppling transformations. Mountains and rivers in the countless space-times were molded as if by a pair of massive, invisible hands.

Of the peaks that existed high in the clouds, some rose sharply to higher heights, while others shrank and became rolling hills. Rivers and seas no longer followed their previous flows and currents. Some dried up and became deserts, while others overflowed to create new marshes and swamps.

Something special happened to birds and animals alike. They evolved. Some sprouted wings and flew to the highest heights, while others began to speak human languages and develop higher intelligence. As for all of the people in those worlds, they experienced transformations both to their souls and their physical shells. Some gained glittering bits of light on their foreheads, while others developed mysterious and amazing powers.

Unfathomable transformations occurred because of Xu Qing’s thoughts and his parallelism.

As for Xu Qing, he sat cross-legged in the chaotic flow in the void, his mind clearer than ever. He did not feel joy or sorrow. His cultivation base and his level were both climbing in a way they never had before! Put most precisely, it wasn’t that they were climbing. Rather, they were experiencing a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering metamorphosis!

His skin grew more lustrous. His bones developed silver striations. His hair grew longer. He became more like an illusion, but at the same time, he had a profundity about him that only immortals could have, flowing constantly from his soul! It caused the void around him to become magnificent!

This was the birth of an immortal!

As the immortal profundity appeared, a magnificent consciousness was made manifest. It was immortal sense, and at the same time, it was the statute born from Xu Qing’s canon. It was more

tenacious than divine sense, being on a completely different level. It could pierce through space-time, and like a vast and magnificent web, it could tightly connect all aspects of Xu Qing's canon. As those parts connected, Xu Qing's unprecedented transformation was instantly completed!

He had completely upgraded himself to a higher level of life! His eyes opened, and the chaotic flow of space-time rumbled loudly. Darkness was ripped apart, and the chaos was instantly adjusted. Xu Qing merely opening his eyes caused all things to come under his control!

His immortal sense stretched out, piercing from ancient to modern, and causing heaven and earth to shake violently! And that immortal sense was formed from all of the parallel space-time versions of himself! Every version was a singularity that poured his personal power into the immortal sense.

With himself as the source, Xu Qing could clearly sense every shift of thought in the versions of himself from the parallel worlds. It didn't matter how different they were from him, or what different things they had experienced. They would follow his actions! The versions of him in the parallel space-times seemed like singularities, but once connected with immortal sense, they became complete, and seemed to contain the secrets of the universe!

They were made of infinite possibilities, innumerable worlds, and unending stories. It became the source of all sources, containing all space-times and all karmas.

Theoretically speaking, that source represented unbounded time and unending space. It was as if standing there, it was possible to span from ancient to modern, and pierce through the borders of the universe.

This was Xu Qing's tenth extreme.... And the painter version of himself had given it the name... ontology!

Xu Qing had reached the breakthrough he had long dreamed of. He had become a Summer Immortal! He had transcended the shackles of mortality. He had stepped into the extraordinary domain of the immortals.

When he opened his eyes, the chaotic flow of space-time rotated around him in an astonishing fashion. Within it were numerous lively fragments of chaos that were like loyal officials bowing to their ruler.

On the outside, everything shook. In the Fourth Star Ring, time transformed. Living things all seemed to suddenly lose a fragment of time, except that it returned an instant later. It happened so quickly that few people even detected it.

Only cultivators and gods who cultivate the power of time were suddenly dazed to realize that the path they were walking... now featured a huge mountain blocking their way! It was because, at that moment, Xu Qing's canon of space-time... had reached the ultimate peak!

In the past, gods and cultivators alike could walk that path, yet none had ever advanced as far as Xu Qing had.

As of now, there was nothing in front of him. He... was one of the most advanced among all who cultivated the godly authority or canon and statute of space-time!

The reason for saying he was “among” those who cultivated it was that, the moment he formed his tenth extreme, he could sense that there were five others who were in a similar position to him in the thirty-six star rings.

Of those five, none were cultivators. They were all gods. They were all at the God Lord level, and all were exploring the concept of space-time, and were on the verge of taking the next step. Based on Xu Qing’s senses, he could tell that in the Seventh, Thirteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-Sixth, and Thirty-Fifth Star Rings, there were God Lords who emitted fluctuations similar to his own.

In the Seventh Star Ring there was a God Lord named Dustrisen whose people sang songs of worship that described him as having a body made of flowing sand. His eyes were like the dividing point between dawn and dusk. Legends said that silver sand would pour from his left eye, and that it could freeze anything on the battlefield. Meanwhile, golden sand would pour from his right eye, and it contained the power to bring life and civilization. His physical body would devour all fragments of time that deviated from the trajectory of fate.

In the Thirteenth Star Ring Xu Qing sensed a god with human shape, who looked like a woman. In fact, she was currently walking through the star ring there. She wore a robe as pale as the moon, with a hem as dark as the eternal night. As she walked, she left behind flaming footprints in time that affected the starry river around her. Her long, silver hair, which was interspersed with nebulae, also contained broken gears. She was the Mother of Orbits.

Then there was Lotusbud from the Nineteenth Star Ring who had come to be called the Weaving Mother. Within her god kingdom, her main form was that of a flower blooming at the end of a host of jadeite vines wrapped around an antler. Four threads, each of a different color, were intertwined with the flower. The green thread of spring could breathe life into withered bones. The crimson thread of summer could smelt heavenly bodies. The golden thread of autumn could weave fate. And the silver thread of winter could freeze the soul. When she weaved, space-time transformed.

The two gods from the Twenty-Sixth and Thirty-Fifth Star Rings had equally astonishing personhood.

One was the pupil of an eye! He had no physical form, but instead, was made of innumerable overlapping instants. His body would be different based on who observed him. Upon appearing in his god kingdom, he looked like a mirror covered with scales. And every single scale contained a reflection of Xu Qing. The reflections included all possible space-time linchpins of the future. But then, an instant later, all of those possibilities were destroyed. He could not sense them anymore!

The other god was the Lord of Ruins. He was an enormous snake that was wrapped around the time of the Thirty-Fifth Star Ring. His scales were made from darkness and gloom, and every time he breathed, he would exhale a black sand that devoured memories. And his tail was wrapped around a rusty, mottled geomantic compass.

In that star ring, there were many legends about the Lord of Ruins. One such legend described how, when he stretched out his bony wings, the leathery membrane of the wings would reveal the memories of lost civilizations. In fact, he was currently stretching those wings, and Xu Qing’s name appeared everywhere on them. But then, shortly after, those names disappeared.

That was because Xu Qing had the same canon as them.... It was the statute of an Immortal Lord!

Chapter 1306: Shall We Go Home, Little Ah Qing?

Chapter 1306: Shall We Go Home, Little Ah Qing?

The statute of an Immortal Lord.... The tenth extreme.... My canon of ontology is also a singularity.

Within the chaotic flow of space-time, countless fragments offered worship to Xu Qing.

Within those singularities, ontology is the ultimate expression of space-time. The other God Lords have different godly authority. In some respects, they are just taking different directions in this same level....

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. His long hair flowed down behind him, as if to fill the chaos around him. Clad in a simple white robe, he seemed to be full of the most profound mysteries of space-time. The pupils of his eyes seemed to glitter with flowing light that represented the transformations of space-time. When he spoke, the words were not within time itself.

He also had the omniscience that the gods had. For example, at the moment, his thoughts caused a fragment to drift out of the void to him.

It was a piece of the bronze coffin belonging to that old God Paragon. It had exploded when Xu Qing entered the chaotic flow of space-time; it had been stabbed into him at the time, and thus came along for the ride. Because he had transformed, the item, while still present, had been peacefully extruded from him. Before, he had been fully focused on seeking enlightenment, and thus hadn't examined it. But with his canon and statute, he now realized that the fragment of the coffin was very meaningful.

This must be the destined opportunity Teacher told me about.

After shedding its illusory husk, the item in front of Xu Qing was revealed to be something like a kaleidoscope. By viewing it from the right angle, it was possible to see a host of images. Viewing it from the side, however, would reveal only a single image.

It was obviously a demonstration for his sake. Except, Xu Qing didn't need such a demonstration.

I suppose it's about time to leave.

He looked up. With his canon of ontology he could tell that more than fifty years had passed within the chaotic flow of space-time. But not as much time had passed on the outside.

About seven years....

Xu Qing stood and prepared to leave. Of course, he had to get his Eldest Brother first. Before developing his tenth extreme, it would have been very difficult to track down his Eldest Brother. But now... all it took was a glance.

That said, the image which appeared to him was like a stiff wind slamming into his heart. He immediately stepped forward.

An instant later, he was in a world fragment in the chaotic flow of space-time. The moment he entered, he detected an aura of silence filled with grief. It was gloomy, as if the sky itself had been filled with a hazy gauze that was impossible for the sunshine of history to penetrate. There were only a few shafts of evening light that shone down, bringing immense pressure with them.

Looking at the surrounding world, Xu Qing sighed and started walking. The ground beneath his feet was hard. Every step he took left slight footprints that would get filled in with sand from the wind. It seemed to be telling an unspeakable story.

Off in the distance were a few withered trees that looked like they had struggled to climb into the sky, only to end in despair. It should have been springtime, but the only thing present were these dried-up trees with their yellow leaves rustling in the wind. That sound seemed to tell a sad story of someone who had been unburdened in this very spot, and thus affected the operations of the entire surrounding world.

Xu Qing strode through the haze and past the trees. That was when he saw the crumbling remnants of a wall. There had been a town here in the past. Crumbling white walls were all that remained of the structures there, and they were choked with dark green vines. Shriveled flowers hung from the vines, as if to demonstrate how this place had once flourished with life, but had now sunk into decay.

Occasionally, a few black birds would glide through the sky above and issue harsh cries that broke the silence and made everything seem more dismal.

Xu Qing stood in front of the ruins and looked in one specific direction. A moment passed, and then he walked in that direction. Finally, he spotted someone huddled in a corner.

It was Erniu. His arms were wrapped around his legs, and his head was buried in the crook of his arm. He was trembling like a lost child, and was even whimpering. The sound of his weeping echoed in the silent little world, full of anxiety, as if he wanted to vent all of his sorrow.

It was a side of Erniu that Xu Qing had never seen before. He had seen his Eldest Brother go crazy. He had seen him act deranged, pleased, careless. But... he had never seen his Eldest Brother crying. It really shook him down to the core.

“Eldest Brother...” he said, squatting down in front of him.

Erniu looked up. His cheeks were stained with tears and his eyes were red. Instead of his usual arrogant expression, he seemed profoundly distressed.

His lips quivered, and then, seemingly with infinite effort, he said, “Little Ah Qing. I saw the memories of my first two lives....”

Erniu never explained what those memories were.

As Xu Qing accompanied him, he cried for a very long time. Finally, he said, “I miss Revered Ancient, little Ah Qing. I miss Master....”

“Let’s go home,” Xu Qing said softly.

The words caused Erniu to grin. However, from what Xu Qing could tell, the sorrow in his eyes was something that would be there for all eternity.

Finally, he blurred into the form of a blue worm that nestled in Xu Qing’s hair. “Alright, little Ah Qing. Let’s go....”

The next day, Grandmaster Bai was seated outside that rift in the void that Eminent Desolation had looked at. He had been waiting for seven years. Suddenly, his eyes opened.

Out of the rift emerged a figure. The moment he appeared, the time in the Fourth Star Ring seemed to become a material thing, turning into dream threads that sent fluctuations out in all directions. Space was affected as well. The entire star ring became like the surface of a sea, and Xu Qing was a wind kicking up huge waves. This was the welcome given to an immortal!

“You’re back,” Grandmaster Bai said softly, a smile on his face.

Xu Qing looked at Grandmaster Bai and bowed deeply. “Many thanks, Teacher!”

Grandmaster Bai stood. Looking kindly at Xu Qing, he said, “Before you go home, I’d like you to take a walk with me.”

Xu Qing nodded and began to walk next to Grandmaster Bai, but slightly behind him, which was the proper way to show respect to his teacher. As they walked through the starry sky, their voices echoed through time.

“The vast majority of God Lords in the thirty-six higher star rings are just individual singularities,” Grandmaster Bai said. “And each singularity is a miniature version of the local star ring. They have different godly authorities to spread within the singularity, except no matter how they spread, they cannot become the singularity. There is only one thing that can become the singularity, and that is the level above God Paragon! And that is the next step you need to take....”

“What’s above God Paragon?” Xu Qing asked.

“It’s Living God,” Grandmaster Bai said softly. “Or as I like to call it, the Beyond.”

Chapter 1307: Leaving the Star Ring, Returning to Revered Ancient

Chapter 1307: Leaving the Star Ring, Returning to Revered Ancient

Xu Qing strolled along with Grandmaster Bai through the starry sky and within time itself. Ordinary cultivators could not see or sense them. Only a Summer Immortal would be able to catch a blurry glimpse.

As they walked, they chatted more. They talked about old stories, about current events, and about future possibilities. Eventually, when they reached the border of the Fourth Star Ring, it was time for Grandmaster Bai to leave.

Before they parted, Xu Qing's teacher gave him two things. The first was a seed.

"Xu Qing, after you get back to Revered Ancient, see if Chen Feiyuan and Tingyu are still around. If so, I'd like you to ask them on my behalf if they'd be willing to join me here. If they do, then I'd like to ask a favor. Please plant this seed. On the day it blooms, they can use the fragrance of the flower as a guide to come to me." [1]

"What if they've already passed?" Xu Qing asked quietly.

"Then please plant the flower at their graves," Grandmaster Bai replied, his voice hoarse.

Then he gave Xu Qing the second item, which was a lamp. Its frame was made from a special type of clay covered with strange patterns. It almost looked like it had been *grown*, and the patterns seemed like ancient magical symbols that pulsed with a mysterious power. The material seemed very similar to Grandmaster Bai's medicinal decocting pot.

The lampshade was weaved from spirit threads that gave it a faint, seven-colored glow. The light flickered and flowed like dreams or illusions, making it seem like the lamp contained the glory of the many heavens and the myriad worlds.

The exquisite weaving of the spirit threads created an amazing and mysterious image. Sometimes that image was of an immortal mountain surrounded by swirling clouds, and other times it was a starry river filled with dazzling heavenly bodies. It was almost as if the lampshade contained numerous miniature universes, all of which hid endless mysteries.

But most fantastic of all was the wick inside the lamp! Astonishingly, it was an eye! It had been refined many, many times, but it still contained some of its godly grace. Its majesty and mystery was so great that no person would seek to look at it. And within the veins of blood on the eye was a terrifying will. It was as if one glance from this eye would cause all things in the world to tremble.

Grandmaster Bai explained that the eye came from the God Paragon of the Fifth Star Ring! Grandmaster Bai had created this lamp using very special methods relating to plants and vegetation, which allowed it to contain some of the God Paragon's godly authority.

"The God Paragon of the Fifth Star Ring had the godly authority of entropy! Entropy is the process all things go through, a transformation from order into chaos. Back in his prime... he could increase or decrease it to change the structure of anything.

"I created the lamp using one of the principal truths of the dao of plants and vegetation. You are my apprentice, and thus... I'm imparting this technique to you. I hope that you can study it and eventually reproduce it."

Grandmaster Bai left. He had waited for Xu Qing for seven years outside of that rift, and during that time, had made up his mind about what to do next.

As Xu Qing hovered on the edge of the Fourth Star Ring, he bowed deeply to Grandmaster Bai as he disappeared into the distance. Sometime later, he looked at the lamp.

The lamp swayed as it hovered in the starry sky, as if some invisible wind were touching it. An ethereal immortal sound drifted with that wind. Any who heard it would feel intoxicated, but if they listened long enough, they would realize that the immortal sound actually contained the chanting of gods.

Xu Qing listened to the chanting for a short time before putting the lamp away. He turned to gaze at the Fourth Star Ring. A faint smile appeared on his face.

The moment that smile appeared, a carefree laughter echoed in the Fourth Star Ring. It came out of nowhere, along with an arcing light that turned into an illusory mirror. Inside the mirror was Immortal Lord Mi Ming and his daoist partner Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix.

“I know you’re on your way home, lil’ bro. Unfortunately, I don’t dare go to that Ninth Star Ring of yours. Other than Ninth Star Ring natives, no God Lord or God Paragon would ever think of going there. That’s especially true considering that Eminent Desolation just woke up recently.... And that means I won’t be able to help you out on your return journey.”

Xu Qing nodded. He had realized years ago that this would be the case, and after becoming a Summer Immortal, he had come to understand that point even more deeply. Even the Immortal Paragon had not dared to go further than the outer sea using the power of a golden rat, and had stayed inside the belly of a fish. And even then, he had only stayed for a short time before leaving.

“That said, though I can’t go there with you, I did prepare a gift for you!”

Smiling, Mi Ming waved his hand, which caused the mirror to shrink down into a shard that floated toward Xu Qing.

“This is my canon and statute! Years ago, you took my identity and played my role. Though my canon was sealed back then, you were at least able to sense the true canon of the mirror. Given that, you shouldn’t have any trouble using it. What’s more, I’m not comfortable with the idea of you going back alone, so I’m going to send your subordinates with you.”

Mi Ming waved his hand again.

The starry sky rippled as... Sir Star Ring, Zhou Zhengli, Sir Vilespirit, Li Mengtu, Yuanshan Su and all the others appeared. Hordeslayer and Rampart were among them, and they were both scowling on the verge of tears. In total, there were eleven!

When they were all present, Mi Ming spoke, his words like an imperial decree that echoed within them.

“I hereby order all of you to accompany True Monarch Green Aurora for 3,000 years. Protect him with your life! When those 3,000 years are over, come back here and be ranked as an immortal!”

Among the group, Zhou Zhengli and Sir Star Ring actually weren't very concerned about reaching immortal ascension. As far as they were concerned, simply being able to accompany Xu Qing would be enough, as the benefits would be astounding. Besides, both were confident in being able to become immortals on their own.

But all of the others were visibly moved. When the Immortal Lord talked about being 'ranked as an immortal,' it meant that he would give them destined opportunities that could lead to becoming a Summer Immortal! That was obviously an immense good fortune for them. After all, few people were like Xu Qing, and could step into the Summer Immortal level on their own. Every one of them bowed deeply at the waist.

“The Immortal Lord's orders are understood and will be followed!”

Xu Qing's subordinates all looked at him instinctively. They could sense from his astounding aura that he... was now a Summer Immortal! What was more, he was different from other Summer Immortals they had encountered.

Xu Qing... is as mighty as an Immortal Lord!

Sir Star Ring was shaken to the core.

Mi Ming was also looking at Xu Qing with a smile on his face. He spoke no further.

Xu Qing looked at the mirror shard with warmth in his heart. Thinking back to everything that had happened, he finally gave a deep bow to Mi Ming.

Mi Ming's smile grew fonder.

Then Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix softly said, “Stay safe, Xu Qing. Always.”

And with that blessing, the two of them began fading away. Just before they disappeared, Mi Ming flicked his sleeve and sent a stream of light toward Xu Qing.

“By the way,” he said in a joking tone, “I did promise you three goddesses. Here you go.”

In the stream of light was a pearl, and inside the pearl were three sleeping goddesses. A strange look appeared on Xu Qing's face as he caught the pearl and put it away.

Sir Star Ring and all the others watched this play out and took it in stride.

But Zhou Zhengli looked thoughtful. *I had no idea the Young Lord was into that kind of thing.*

Before Zhou Zhengli could put much more thought into it, Xu Qing lifted his hand and pointed in the direction of the Fifth Star Ring. An instant later, fluctuations of canon and statute caused the starry sky to ripple. A bronze pagoda flew toward him at top speed. It was the very same Sageheaven Pagoda that he had originally used to traverse the Primeval Sea. The sageheaven god

vine was wrapped around it. The vine had long since woken up, and now it sent genial fluctuations out to Xu Qing.

“Time to go home....” Xu Qing was just about to enter the pagoda... but instead, he stopped in place. A huge bubble had suddenly appeared out of nowhere, covering the entire surrounding universe and cutting it off from everything else. Sir Star Ring and the others didn’t detect what was happening.

Off in the distance, an old man appeared clad in hemp sandals. His clothing was equally utilitarian, being made from hemp. Perched on his shoulder was a golden rat.

“Well met, Immortal Paragon,” Xu Qing said calmly.

He strode up to Xu Qing, looked him up and down, and then cleared his throat. “Long time no see, ya little punk.”

Xu Qing said nothing. He had been used as a pawn over and over again, and though it had benefited him in the end, there was no denying it was all just like a business transaction. There was nothing the two of them could simply chat about.

The Immortal Paragon was fully aware of that. Smiling, he took out a small bronze cauldron. “This contains a single attack backed by my power. Take it to keep yourself safe. And also... there’s something I want to tell you before you leave. Because Eminent Desolation woke up seven years ago in the Ninth Star Ring, the trajectory of Revered Ancient’s fate has shifted.... I think you should get back as quickly as you can.”

Xu Qing’s gaze hardened. Without any hesitation, he flew into the Sageheaven Pagoda, flicking his sleeve to bring Sir Star Ring and the others with him.

The bronze pagoda vibrated. The void beneath it rippled as a huge vortex appeared, out of which poured the aura of the Primeval Sea.

All star rings had the Primeval Sea, as that sea was what linked all of the thirty-six higher star rings together.... When the Primeval Sea appeared, the Sageheaven Pagoda surged with a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering force. It was the power of Xu Qing’s canon and statute.

Tapping into ontology, he sent the pagoda down. It entered the Primeval Sea and disappeared into the waves. And then... the Primeval Sea disappeared. Everything went back to normal. It was as if the sea had never been there to begin with. The only thing left behind was a bit of its aura, which then dissipated into the starry sky.

The Immortal Paragon watched that happen, then looked in the direction of the Ninth Star Ring.

I still don’t get it. Why does Eminent Desolation stay in the Ninth Star Ring, above that little continent called Revered Ancient, which was once called Brilliant Heaven...? What is hē looking for, or waiting for? Is hē striding toward death, or... waiting for a new life?

Shaking his head, he turned and left. But his thoughts were still abuzz.

Does the Living God Umbilical Cord really transcend all other paths? From ancient times until now, has there ever been a god who actually succeeded with the Living God Umbilical Cord? The Beyond.... What really is waiting for us?

1. Chen Feiyuan and Tingyu last appeared in [chapter 546.1](#) 

Chapter 1308: It's Been So Long, Revered Ancient

Chapter 1308: It's Been So Long, Revered Ancient

The Revered Ancient mainland was quiet and lonely. A bleak wind blew. It didn't come from the sea. Rather, the sustained pressure on heaven and earth caused the wind to spring up from other parts. The wind was building up, blowing from all directions before converging on Revered Ancient, whimpering like a sorrowful dirge to the dead.

Within that wind were towering mountain ranges that looked like reclining dragons. But the spines of those dragons did not feature green scales, but rather, were covered with brown husks of earth. Plants and vegetation could not grow easily anymore. Lava oozed out of cracks in the mountains, scorching the mountain regions until they were like corpses.

It was the year 31 in the Summer Departure calendar of humankind. It had been twenty-seven years since Grand Emperor Swordsage unleashed his sword. Things had been difficult in Revered Ancient for those twenty-seven years.

Rumbling sounds echoed down from the canopy of heaven, like a countdown timer weighing onto all of the living beings in Revered Ancient. The sounds seem to be hastening them toward their demise. All the people could do was wait to die. Despair didn't just fill heaven and earth. It grew in the hearts of the people. And it had been going on for twenty-seven years.

And thus... though Frost Descent had not yet arrived, heaven and earth were filled with a somber and desolate feeling.[1]

In Revered Ancient, the mountains became like corpses. The plants and vegetation withered. Mutagen levels rose. Leaden clouds clung to the sky, only to be occasionally pierced by scattered bits of blood-red sunlight. The spots below where the light hit looked like crisscrossed blade wounds.

It became harder and harder to stay alive. The north had been sparsely populated to begin with. On the ice plains, groaning sounds echoed out as mysterious glaciers which had been around for thousands of years now started to crack and crumble. Sealed within the fragments of ice was grief from antiquity, and as the cold wind blew, the withered weeds bent down to cover the corpses on the ground.

The despair was worse in the south. Different species began to fight over supplies, until the entire place devolved into war. As the countdown to death continued, better supplies could lead to better

gifts of tribute, and that became the hope of many species. Seven years ago, a decree had descended from the holy lands beyond the dome of heaven.

“When we arrive, the five species who offer the best tribute will be spared from annihilation.”

War became increasingly common.

However, about a year before, something dramatic happened in the sky, and the wars became less common. But the corpses on the battlefield, and the wind-dried blood bore testament to the chaos that had ensued.

No matter how the wind scraped across the battlefield, it couldn't take away the stench of gore. All it did was make the prayer flags and battle banners on the broken weapons flap a bit harder. That created a sound like the whimper that precedes death, which became a part of the wind. All of the Revered Ancient mainland felt immense pressure.

It was no different out on the Forbidden Sea. The once mighty waves had solidified into huge black walls of water. The entire Forbidden Sea... had become a sea of ice! The ice would occasionally crack, and the designs that resulted were like an astonishing prophecy depicting the destruction of Revered Ancient. Or perhaps it was a warning left behind by the noble spirit of Grand Emperor Swordsage.

And today... the crumbling picture received the final brush stroke. Cracking sounds were emanating from the depths of the ice sheets. The sound grew louder and louder. Similarly, the hearts of all the species in Revered Ancient beat faster and faster.

That included Sea-Sealing County, which contained the combined power of the Holytide Region and the Nightspirit Region. It had Seven Blood Eyes, as well as Xu Qing's old friends and those among the Nightshades who worshiped him. All of them felt weary. The twenty-seven years that had passed had been difficult. But now... All of their eyes contained iron-willed strength, unswerving determination, and... a will of death!

Wu Jianwu, Kong Xianglong, and Zhang San were all there. All of the forces of Sea-Sealing County were being led by Marquis Yao to power a grand spell formation, the power of which was concentrated on the sky overhead.

In the immortal palace beneath Sea-Sealing County, Xu Qing's god clone sat cross-legged in meditation. Behind the clone in the phoenix palace, Plumdark opened her eyes.

Things weren't just happening in Sea-Sealing County. That sound like the beating of a heart echoed loudly in the Moonrite Region! The Heir Apparent, Grandpa Ninth, Grandpa Eighth, Princess Brightblossom, and everyone else was in the Green Spirit Pharmacy in the Bitter Life Mountains. All looked up into the sky with very serious expressions. Ling'er stood behind them. She had grown up. She was slender and elegant, and was entwined with a dragon and a snake. Her expression was resolute.

It was all the result of the operation of the Moonrebel Congregation's precious treasure that Grandma Fifth had entered.

Similar scenes were playing out all over Revered Ancient.

In the west, in the ancestral palace of the Netherbones, there was a throne made from millions upon millions of bones. Atop it sat their king, who was looking into a bone mirror he held in his hand. The mirror didn't reflect his face. Rather, it showed the dramatic changes occurring in the sky.

In the eastern parts of Revered Ancient were the Heavenjoints, the strongest species in those parts. In the lands of that species, numerous mothernests were wriggling madly. Within the nests were huge cocoons covered with patterns that looked like eyes, all of which were oozing green liquid.

In the middle of the biggest of the mothernests was the larvaqueen of the species, who sat cross-legged, her twelve tentacles spasming. Three of the tentacles then snapped, and sticky ichor flowed from the severed stumps. She was trying to deduce a way for her species to survive!

In the south was the Totemspirit species. In recent years, they had cannibalized other smaller species to become bigger and stronger. They used their own ancestors as totems, but at the moment something dramatic happened in their grand totem plaza. Of the twelve totem poles they had there, nine shattered! Their chieftain's four eyes oozed with blood as he looked up into the sky with vicious madness.

All species who did not worship gods were behaving similarly. All of them waited in combat readiness, full of anxiety and despair as they bitterly waited for the terror to come.

It was something they had no choice but to face. All looked up into the dome of heaven. That was especially true... of humankind!

In the middle of Revered Ancient, in the great region controlled by the humans, Empress Summer Departure stood on the Phoenix Perching Terrace! Shē wore an imperial gown of brocade gold, and hēr hair was bound with an imperial crown. The twelve tassels of pure gold hanging from the crown did not sway in the wind. They were as resolute as hēr heart.

At the end of each tassel was a phoenix marrow pearl that had been refined with godfire. And that... made the blood-red god striations on Empress Summer Departure's brow even more enchanting. At the same time, they reflected the endless black snow falling outside of the imperial capital.

Put precisely, it wasn't actually snow. The sword energy which had protected Revered Ancient for the last twenty-seven years was crumbling, and bits of sword energy were falling down. When they landed on the ground, or in the mountains, or in the rivers, they made sharp chiming sounds.

Someone approached the empress from behind. He was a young man whose robe was decorated with a four-clawed dragon. He had long hair and a thin face, and he seemed like someone very capable and experienced. He was none other than Ningyan. He was no longer the pudgy kid that

Erniu had used as a shield. He had shed his youthfulness, and now had an expression of unswerving determination. What was more, he now pulsed with the majesty of a crown prince.

After coming to a stop behind his mother, he looked out at the lands surrounding the imperial capital.

“Mother,” he said, “the Firemoon Darkheavens have sent back our emissary. They publicly announced that they will go into seclusion in the coming days and will not allow any visitors. It’s a very clear message that they don’t want to participate in our conflict with the holy lands.

“The Firemoons aren’t the only ones. The Northfate Kings in the north, the Redland Nobleplexuses in the west, the Netherworld Chasmcorpses in the south, as well as the Godgazers in central Revered Ancient, are all isolating themselves from the outside. All species in Revered Ancient who offer sacrifices to gods are doing the same.”

The empress said nothing. Shē had predicted this outcome long ago. But Ningyan hadn’t been willing to accept it, and had sent an emissary to the Firemoons anyway. The gods were apathetic. It made sense that gods would simply watch things play out.

The empress looked up into the sky. The canopy of heaven seemed to be flowing into the shape of a massive vortex. The size of it was shocking. As it turned, heaven seemed to become an eye that leaked tears of blood. More and more sword energy fell.

In the middle of the vortex was something that only someone on the level of an Altar God could see. Either that, or one of the extremely rare human cultivators who had reached the Quasi-Immortal level.... In the middle of the vortex was a bloody wound that was slowly opening up!

Grand Emperor Swordsage’s sword had created a sword energy that covered the sky. It had been intended to last for half of a sixty-year-cycle, to prevent that ancient immortal and the holy lands from invading.... But now it was collapsing. Seven years ago, the process had sped up, and now it was almost over. It was happening three years early!

The empress looked at the wound, and could see that beyond the sword energy were the numerous majestic holy lands.

Cultivators were emerging from those holy lands. And among them... were Quasi-Immortals!

Revered Ancient’s last Quasi-Immortal had been Swordsage. But in the holy land... the legacy of the immortals had not been severed!

And behind the holy lands, the empress saw an even more majestic figure. He was... the very same ancient immortal who had put the species of Revered Ancient under such pressure for the past twenty-seven years!

Though the empress was only seeing him through that opening, it caused hēr heart to pound. Shē could sense how terrifying he was. Though shē had a special type of godly authority, the aura coming off of this immortal caused hēr to pale in comparison. How could mere Quasi-Immortals fight a Summer Immortal?

Thus, shē could imagine how this would play out. When the last of the sword energy crumbled, Revered Ancient would experience a great catastrophe.

Unless... we make a sacrifice!

The empress' hand gripped the balustrade of white jade in front of hēr as shē slowly looked in the direction of the continent of South Phoenix!

1. Frost Descent is one of the solar terms. Here's [the link](#). As you can probably guess from the name and the context, it's the period of time when things start to get cold. ☁

Chapter 1309: The Holy Lands Descend

Chapter 1309: The Holy Lands Descend

In the continent of South Phoenix, deep in Forbidden by the Phoenix, a sharp cry rang out as the South Phoenix himself flew out, his massive wings creating a tempest of wind as he rose into the sky.

His massive frame pulsed with incredible pressure as he flew toward the harbor of Seven Blood Eyes. Upon nearing, he glided in circles above the sect.

On his back was Xu Qing's Second Elder Sister, who was looking anxiously in the direction of her Master's secluded meditation facilities.

“Master still hasn't come out....” Her anxiety had been building in recent years.

When Huang Yan saw it in her eyes, he grew increasingly worried. He transmitted a message of comfort to her, but she just shook her head bitterly.

“How could I calm down...?” she said. “Eldest Brother vanished. Before he left, he said he was going to the old Brilliant Heaven. But he hasn't sent any words since then. Third Sib has been at the Ghost Emperor mountain for years. His aura is still present, but he won't answer any calls.... Little Junior Brother went missing. We have no idea where he went, and for all we know, he might be dead....”

“I'm the only one left from the Seventh Peak in Seven Blood Eyes. The holy lands are on the verge of arriving, and Master... was clearly thinking about dying the last time I saw him.”

Huang Yan was about to respond. But then his expression flickered, and he looked up. Something dramatic was happening in the sky.

A shocking sound filled all of the Revered Ancient mainland, exploding down from the sky with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force.

Heaven collapsed.

Everyone looking up into the sky, regardless of where they were, could clearly see an endless expanse of blackish violet lightning bolts, spreading like a web in all directions! Wherever they passed, they ripped apart the void. Astonishingly, thick, turbid blood poured out of the openings, to fall down into the world of mortals.

At the same time, discordant chiming sounds descended from the clouds to the entirety of Revered Ancient. That sound was like a death knell ringing into the hearts of the species below.

The sword energy that had protected Revered Ancient for twenty-seven years was collapsing. It turned into millions upon millions of gusts of winds that battered the lands. That wind was extremely weighty, as it came from the power of the holy lands beyond heaven.

That was not Imperial Sovereign power. It was Quasi-Immortal power! And it was peak Quasi-Immortal at that.

Even more terrifying was that, within that power, there was a bit of the might of canon! Though there wasn't much, and it couldn't have compared to Grand Emperor Swordsage's canon in his sword energy, right now... Swordsage had long since perished, and his sword energy was collapsing. As such, this scrap of canon from beyond heaven was shaking every part of Revered Ancient!

This canon was that of stone! Because of the addition of this canon, the fragments of sword energy became like endless flaming meteors falling down. The lands shook violently as craters opened up everywhere, like a piece of cloth being ripped apart by a giant.

Earth shattered!

In Sea-Sealing County, great crevices opened in the land, and mountain ranges shattered. In the continent of South Phoenix, Forbidden by the Phoenix burned, creating a crimson conflagration tens of thousands of meters high.

In the Forbidden Sea, gigantic creatures in the depths howled in anguish. The icy surface of the sea shattered, and the water boiled. Ancient altars that hadn't been seen for tens of thousands of years were revealed. Temples made from coral, or pearls, or corpses were melting and turning into poisonous bubbles that spread death to fleeing sea creatures. The creatures who didn't flee fast enough were incinerated by the power from beyond heaven.

Dramatic things were happening in the Moonrite Region, as well as the human imperial capital. The lands surrounding the capital rippled like wax. Ponds evaporated, and black liquid seeped out of the cracks of the buildings in the city.

But there was more. A calm voice spoke from beyond heaven... and things got even more dramatic.

"Those heavenly daos should not exist!"

All of a sudden, heavenly daos began to appear in the sky over Revered Ancient. They howled in agony, they roared in rage, and they fell.... The heavenly daos that the first cultivators in Revered Ancient had created to protect the mainland fell to the ground in streaming streaks of flame.

With the exception of some of the most ancient of the group, their personhood was being stripped away.

The heavenly daos had strange appearances. There were dragon-shaped spirits, heroic humanoids, and strange nonhumans. But all were mutating into freakish entities. Stinking blood rained down from them, which corroded the land it splashed onto. One of the heavenly daos looked like an infant. As his skin corroded, he wailed and tumbled in the direction of Sea-Sealing County.

The catastrophe had come.

Heaven and earth were being ripped to shreds, and all the living beings were like nothing more than dust on the surface of a leather sack. The barriers and borders that had previously demarcated the lands of various species now became signs of doomsday.

The wind from beyond heaven pierced into the world of mortals, bringing with it the desolate and barbaric aura of primal-chaos, except even colder than anything from before, as if it were urging all living beings to write their own epitaphs.

Within the roiling chaos in the sky, holy lands appeared. Within them were figures who looked down coldly at the lands which would soon descend into utter destruction. To the people below, their gazes were fear-inspiring. This was just like what happened twenty-seven years before!

At that moment of crisis, as the calamity descended, a bugle call rang out from the heart of the human imperial capital. The sound of that horn was the call to unleash twenty-seven years of preparation!

Inside Sea-Sealing County, hosts of cultivator-made spell formations activated, and glowing figures rose from within them.

In the Moonrite Region, the Moonrebel Congregation opened up, and hosts of cultivators poured out. Leading them was Grandpa Ninth, flanked by the Heir Apparent and the other siblings, all of them unleashing full power.

Countless other species did the same.

Among the Netherbones, millions upon millions of skeletal warriors marched forth with bone blades, their eyes burning with flicking soul fire. Their chieftain led the march, rubbing a crack in his ribs. He suddenly laughed, and it sounded like bones grating together, filled with madness and ferocity.

“What if our tribute turns out to be your bones?”

In the central mothernest of the Heavenjoints, the larvaqueen’s tentacles slowly wrapped around her own head. The deduction result she longed for was the last glimmer of hope, but it could not bring light to the darkness of the nest, so she gave up. She sensed that death was coming, but wasn’t ready to give up.

She suddenly looked up into the sky and howled. That cry caused all of the mothernests to explode, sending members of her species out on the warpath.

The Totemspirits' totems had collapsed. Catastrophe was imminent. But their chieftain smiled. He lifted his broken cudgel to the sky and let loose a deranged howl. Though it did not contain the same heroism as before, but instead only endless grief and despair, it also contained... defiance!

Such things were happening among all species! Since they were doomed to die, they would not act weak. All of them felt their blood burning. They were about to be ripped to shreds, but if they could take some enemies with them, then... their deaths would be worth it!

There was no shortage of bravery among humans! In the imperial capital, Empress Summer Departure issued an imperial decree that shook the city. All of the grand spell formations lit up, their light spreading to connect with each other. At the same time, domain treasures from numerous species rose into the sky!

There was an ancient ship bigger than entire counties, filled with destructive power that could shake heaven and earth. There was a copper sword, utilitarian and ancient, which emitted a sword thrum that could shatter the air. There was a mysterious broken log that created the projected image of a massive, ancient tree that could create the canopy of heaven.

All sorts of treasures erupted.

Humans joined in as well. Numerous Dawning Suns shone with dazzling light as they shot up into the sky.

This was going to be a battle to the death! Countless cultivators, endless spell formations, numerous domain treasures. All of them became a river of force that shot toward the holy lands above.

That was when a hoarse voice echoed out from within the holy lands.

“Sir Primestone.”

Instantly, a figure stepped forth from the numerous individuals in the holy lands. It was the very same Quasi-Immortal who had tampered with the wind of sword energy from earlier.

He was not human. He was Stonefolk, with a body like a mountain, whose mere first step took him out in front of all the other holy lands. Hovering there, he looked coolly at the lands below. He lifted his hand of stone. He pushed down!

The movement of that palm unleashed his peak Quasi-Immortal cultivation base, and caused wild colors to flash. Terrifying pressure weighed down on Revered Ancient.

That pressure caused Empress Summer Departure to tremble. Shē could hardly stand in place. If that was how shē reacted, there was little need to mention other cultivators. The gods who remained in hiding detected what was happening, and they looked on with deep concern.

A peak Quasi-Immortal was the same as a peak Altar God. None of the species in Revered Ancient could resist power like that!

As the palm descended, all domain treasures ceased to function. All of them were being turned into stone. The light of the spell formations was covered over, and... they went dark.

The cultivation bases of cultivators among numerous species were thrown into turmoil, making it impossible for them to fight back. Those who possessed canon were on a higher level, and could crush those below them, even if they were like this individual who had only just started to gain enlightenment of canon. But in the end, his cultivation base could be considered the stuff of legends in Revered Ancient.

It was the same among the sickly Quasi-Immortals of the holy lands.

He was the only peak Quasi-Immortal. And thus, his simple move struck despair into the hearts of all the species.

“Weak,” Sir Primestone said, shaking his head.

Right then, the blowing wind contained the same sigh released by Grand Emperor Swordsage years ago. He sighed because of Revered Ancient’s weakness. He sighed because of the helplessness of fate. He sighed because, when he died, he had felt powerless.

Revered Ancient... just couldn’t fight the holy lands!

Chapter 1310: A Goddess? Oh, Alright.

Chapter 1310: A Goddess? Oh, Alright.

“Revered Ancient,” said Sir Primestone, “and all of the humans in it, have regressed through the generations.”

His voice spread just like his divine will to fill Revered Ancient.

“Grand Emperor Swordsage was the only exception.... What exactly was the point of him protecting all of you?” Sir Primestone shook his head.

As far as he was concerned, the Revered Ancient mainland was worthless. In fact, he wasn’t even sure why his patriarch, the ancient immortal, was so obsessed with this place, or why he believed that thing he needed for his breakthrough was here. Much less did he understand the crazy decree his patriarch had issued.[1]

But though he harbored such thoughts, Sir Primestone also knew that his ancient immortal patriarch feared the broken face, and thus didn't dare to come here personally. That was why Sir Primestone had been gifted with a scrap of his patriarch's terrifying power!

This kind of power is called canon, huh?

Upon thinking back to when he absorbed that scrap of power, Sir Primestone's heart raced, as he knew that it was key to him breaking out of Quasi-Immortal! Regardless, he had to accomplish the task he had been assigned. Only then would the patriarch impart to him the technique he needed. Looking around at the despairing people of Revered Ancient, he lifted his right hand, which caused a deafening rumbling to fill the canopy of heaven.

"All holy lands will now descend." As his voice echoed out, the rumbling grew more intense as the holy lands came from beyond heaven, like stars breaking through all barriers to descend to Revered Ancient!

First came the terrestrial-level holy lands, of which there were dozens. Out from them flew their leaders, who all had Imperial Sovereign cultivation bases.

Next came the celestial-level holy lands. The cultivators that emerged from those weren't just Imperial Sovereigns. There were also six Quasi-Immortals amongst them. Their mere presence caused heaven and earth to tremble. Their Quasi-Immortal auras spread wide, causing the people of Revered Ancient to tremble in the deepest despair.

Yet that wasn't the full power of the holy lands. Next... came the earthly- and heavenly-level holy lands, none of which had come to Revered Ancient before!

Among them were eleven Quasi-Immortals! Four of them were human! When you added in Sir Primestone, the holy lands had a force of eighteen Quasi-Immortals! This was the full strength the holy lands had to offer, with the exception of the ancient immortal on the outside!

As they hovered in midair, pulsing with immense pressure, all of the species and people in the Revered Ancient mainland trembled instinctively. It didn't matter that only one of the Quasi-Immortals, Sir Primestone, had a bit of canon.

Based on what the people of Revered Ancient understood, the human empress was the only person besides all the other gods who was in a similar level! In fact, most of the people from the holy lands were stronger than the empress. This was a pure nightmare to the species of Revered Ancient.

How could they fight back...?

The feeling of despair weighed down on them, overwhelming their hearts and minds like massive waves.

We... have no options....

That was what everyone was thinking. They had no faith. No hope. The world seemed to lose all color and become deathly white.

Sir Primestone could sense what they were thinking, not that he cared. Looking at the other holy lands cultivators, he said, “I’m going to give you two hours to get control of all the species here who are associated with the gods. Find the thing the patriarch is looking for! As for me....”

Sir Primestone’s eyes pierced through the void to lock onto Empress Summer Departure in the human imperial capital.

“I need a new servant,” he said. “You should do nicely.”

He blurred, disappeared, and then reappeared right above human lands. Ignoring the spell formations and all the human cultivators, he reached out to grab the empress. The motion of his hand caused the entire imperial capital to shake.

It seemed that all this peak Quasi-Immortal would have to do was exercise a bit of force, and he could crush the entire region into dust!

The empress’ eyes flashed with determination. Shē knew that shē was no match for this opponent, yet god power still surged within hēr. Around hēr, the past human emperors suddenly appeared as zombie gods.

“Weak,” Sir Primestone said coolly. Then he lifted his hand slightly, causing canon to spread.

The zombie gods around the empress trembled and started to turn into stone. The empress’ heart pounded as shē sensed her god power being affected. All around her in the air, a network of stone veins was forming. It was as if the surroundings were being turned into stone, even the air itself.

The other holy lands cultivators saw what was happening. Some didn’t care. Some shook their heads. All of them scattered to work on their mission.

In all regions, massive pressure weighed down. All of Revered Ancient was like a fish on the chopping block, about to be sliced to pieces! Despair. Grief. Death. Madness. That was what people felt everywhere!

It was even the case in the Moonrite Region and Sea-Sealing County.

The empress was in the greatest danger. It looked like shē was just about to be ripped off hēr feet, when all of a sudden, godfire flared in hēr eyes. An instant later, the power of hēr godly authority raged. Heaven and earth went dark in all directions!

It wasn’t just in human regions. All of the Revered Ancient mainland suddenly went pitch black. All light had been seized, summoned, and controlled.

It raced toward the empress! This was the empress’ godly authority... and it could call out to all the light in the world! Boundless light converged on hēr, making it so that Empress Summer Departure was the only light in all heaven and earth.

And then that light shot toward Sir Primestone’s hand.

“What a very unique godly authority!” Sir Primestone said, looking visibly moved. Tapping into his cultivation base, he shot backward without hesitation.

The empress broke free. Flying up into the sky with golden blood dribbling out of hēr mouth, shē spoke in a decisive voice that filled Revered Ancient.

“People of Revered Ancient, instead of just being wiped out, why not... offer a sacrifice to the broken face. If the broken face’s eyes open, then... we can end things in mutual destruction with the holy lands!”

This was hēr trump card!

The ancient immortal beyond heaven looked down, his eyes narrowing. The other holy lands cultivators were all visibly surprised. However, Sir Primestone just flashed an enigmatic smile. “How amusing. How did you realize that my mission involves sacrificing all of you?”

The empress’ pupils constricted.

Then Sir Primestone vanished. Shocked, the empress made to retreat, but shē was too slow.

Sir Primestone materialized right in front of hēr. Then his right hand shot out with unstoppable force. Completely disregarding hēr every effort to fight back... he grabbed hēr by the throat!

He opened his mouth to speak.

Before he could, he suddenly sensed something, and looked out beyond heaven.

The ancient immortal hovering in the starry sky there had shifted his gaze. He was now looking... at the continent of South Phoenix!

In Seven Blood Eyes, Master Seventh’s eyes opened. His expression was one of bitterness as he looked up into the sky at the ancient immortal. Their gazes locked.

“You’re not my Master...” he murmured. Then he stood. Eyes flashing with decisiveness, he prepared to step out into the open. But then, his expression of bitterness turned into surprise. Turning to look at the Imperial Region, his eyes flashed with incredulity.

He wasn’t the only one to look surprised. So did the ancient immortal. The ancient immortal actually reacted even more quickly than Master Seventh. His gaze... immediately locked onto a spot in the air above human lands.

All of this takes a bit of time to describe, but happened in the swiftest of moments. Almost exactly as the ancient immortal and Master Seventh looked toward the Imperial Region....

A massive vortex appeared right in that spot! Appearing without warning, it spread to cover the entire region. In fact, it even spread beyond that area. Astonishingly, the aura of the Primeval Sea surged out from the vortex to fill Revered Ancient. The holy lands Quasi-Immortals tasked with suppressing all the species suddenly felt very uneasy.

The one who felt the most uneasy, of course, was Sir Primestone, who was right underneath the vortex! Keeping his grip on the empress’ throat, he looked up.

The vortex blocked his view of the ancient immortal beyond heaven, and it caused his pupils to shrink to dots.

“Is that...?”

As his unease built, he unhesitatingly tapped into every scrap of power he had available, using the scrap of canon to erect a defense all around himself. Even as his cultivation base surged, he saw something coming out of the vortex. It was a chain!

The sight of the chain caused Sir Primestone’s face to fall.

“Could it be...?”

He was already shivering from head to toe. Considering that he had access to canon, it was only natural that he could clearly sense the incomparably powerful canon in that chain. It surpassed his own to a vast degree. In fact, it almost seemed like the chain was made of pure canon!

His heart seized. “That’s not possible!”

But what happened next left him even more dumbstruck. The chain of unimaginable canon emerged and shot right toward him!

Sir Primestone’s scalp tingled as a sensation of deadly crisis filled every fiber of his being. In fact, that sensation was almost screaming at him. It was absolutely terrifying. Holding back nothing, he threw the empress at the chain, and then began burning himself to gain speed to escape.

He shot backward. He reacted quickly, except... the chain just sped up!

It almost seemed to teleport through the air. Appearing right above him, it dropped down softly onto his head.

When that happened, Sir Primestone’s cultivation base became completely ineffective. It was just like what the people of Revered Ancient had experienced only moments before. He could not dodge. He could not fight back. The canon of that chain was the canon of order! And it had heaven’s principle! Running away was pointless in the face of heaven’s principle!

Sir Primestone fought back with everything he could think of, but it was pointless. His canon lasted for hardly a moment before collapsing.

The chain fell.... When it hit him, he screamed shrilly. Then he shook briefly before his fleshly body exploded. His soul screamed in agony as it collapsed.

The entire process took three breaths of time. When it ended, he was killed in body and soul! His magical treasures and all of his other assets were exactly like the word he had just uttered twice.

WEAK!

The difference between these two Quasi-Immortals was like the vast difference between a chosen cultivator and a mediocre one!

It all happened so quickly that neither the humans, nor the empress, nor the experts from various species in Revered Ancient had time to react. They just saw that chain whip out, and then Sir Primestone, who was so powerful he could be considered a legend, simply collapsed into ashes. It almost didn't seem real.

And then, as everyone looked on, completely flabbergasted, the chain that had easily wiped Sir Primestone out of existence flickered and turned into a person! He was a young man with a long robe decorated with a starry sky. He had a ruthless look to him and he somehow seemed to find everything in the world slightly annoying.

He was none other than Sir Star Ring!

He looked around, frowned and said, "Is this the Revered Ancient mainland?"

Empress Summer Departure, who was now free, took a deep breath. Shē looked at Sir Star Ring, fear pounding in hēr heart as shē wondered who this person was. After all, his aura was completely terrifying.

"This is indeed Revered Ancient. Sire, might I ask who you are?"

At first, Sir Star Ring wasn't inclined to pay any attention to the empress. But then he glanced over and realized, to his shock, that shē was actually a god. And then he thought about Xu Qing's favored indulgence....

He nodded.

Then he waved in the direction of the vortex. The vortex rumbled, and more auras drifted out from it. That was when a scene played out that was more astonishing than anything that had happened to Revered Ancient or the holy lands for tens of thousands of years.

1. Back in the illusion of the god of pain, we were told a story that seems similar to this, and it contained a potential explanation of what "thing" he needed. That was in [chapter 1227](#). Don't forget that not everything in that illusion was true. ٩٦١