

## Timescape 181

### Chapter 181: Incisive

On the lead warship, Third Princess' wide eyes stung with pain. However, despite the tears that welled up in them, she refused to look away from what was happening. She seemed stunned, as if she were looking at the most beautiful thing in the entire world.

Next to her, the white-robed Seazombie was staring at Xu Qing, a feeling of deep foreboding welling up within him. Dangit... the brat's even stronger! The golden crow...? Don't tell me he got that freaking imperial-class technique that's been floating around the Forbidden Sea?

With such thoughts on his mind, he edged over to Third Princess, lowered his voice, and said, "Princess, this fellow cultivates a very nefarious technique. I read about it in an ancient record I read once. It's called the Yin-Naming Life-Maiming Incantation. It's very, very formidable. Once he finds out the name of his enemy, he can use that technique to take their life in an instant. Therefore, you absolutely, positively must not say my name. Just call me Big Bro, okay?"

Meanwhile, screams rang out from the ship Xu Qing was on. As the golden crow circled around him, it swished its tail, and the black sea of flames rumbled out, becoming chains of fire that whipped toward the surrounding Seazombie cultivators like fiery snakes. Wrapping around them, the fire lifted them into the air.

Given the cultivation base disparity at play, the Seazombie cultivators were powerless to fight back. From a distance, it looked almost like the golden crow was fanning its tail!

Meanwhile, the Seazombies let loose bloodcurdling screams, and withered rapidly as their energy and blood was sucked out of their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths.

Xu Qing's expression remained the same as ever as he took a single step forward, sending terrifying fleshly body power along with the might of his life lamp into the warship. Instantly, the ship exploded.

Xu Qing remained hovering in the air, his violet daoist robe rippling in the wind and his long black hair whipping around him, the golden crow circling behind him amidst black flames. The desiccated corpses attached to the fiery chains on its tail made the image even more ghastly. Given Xu Qing's bewitching facial features, anyone who looked at him in that moment would think they were looking at a demon or devil.

Third Princess' eyes shone even more brightly than before; she had never seen anyone like this before.

Of course, Xu Qing wasn't paying any attention at all to Third Princess considering she was only in the great circle of Qi Condensation. Instead, his eyes were locked on the white-robed Seazombie standing next to her.

The white-robed Seazombie was currently contending with the bluegreen dragon, while simultaneously keeping his eyes on Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked at him silently.

He looked back at Xu Qing, seemingly a bit sheepish.

During that awkward moment, cackling laughter suddenly echoed out, breaking the tension. All eyes turned in the direction of that laughter.

It came from the second warship, and as Xu Qing looked over, he saw lightning shoot out from the ship and into the air. It was the black iron skewer. It was covered with crackling electricity, which would occasionally stab out into the surrounding air in shocking fashion. The lightning symbols on the skewer glittered, each of them thrumming with a dao resonance that made the skewer seem incomparably beautiful, like a precious treasure! In fact, anyone who looked at it would think it was the kind of object you would never want to part with once you laid your hands on it.

There was a bell attached to the iron skewer, which had obviously been blessed by the lightning. A host of souls were attached to that bell, all of them from Seazombies, and they howled in anguish and pain as they struggled in vain to free themselves.

Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior was obviously being very considerate. Knowing that Xu Qing needed souls, he had taken advantage of his lightning spirit body to slaughter as many enemies as possible, take their souls with the Living Spirit Bell, and then seal them with lightning. His consideration was on full display, as was the majestic power he was capable of unleashing.

As for that cackling laughter, it was obviously not from the patriarch. Instead, it came from a figure who walked out of the ship's cabin right after the patriarch flew out into the open. It was a Seazombie with a burning life flame. He looked like a middle-aged human cultivator, very thin, with prominent necrotic patches on him. He wore a tattered daoist robe, and he had a very arrogant expression on his face as he walked out cackling.

Anyone who looked at him would feel like they were actually looking at a grue. That was because he took his steps in a very odd way, as if he had only just learned to walk. It was somewhere between a stagger and a stumble. What was even more unusual was that despite his arrogant expression, his eyes were filled with absolute terror. All of these things combined into a very odd image.

Lurching out onto the deck, he suddenly stood straight. Glancing contemptuously at the white-robed Seazombie and Third Princess, as well as the other Seazombies on the lead ship, he then turned to Xu Qing. Looking very somber, he dropped down to one knee and offered a formal salute.

Then he reached up with both of his hands and viciously broke his own neck with a loud pop.

The other Seazombies all stared at him in absolute astonishment.

And yet, things weren't over yet. With vicious strength, the Seazombie ripped his own head off his shoulders and tossed it to the deck, still cackling with laughter. Then he plunged his hand into his own abdomen toward his life flame... which he extinguished! More popping sounds rang out as he then detonated all of his dharma apertures, causing the rest of his body to collapse and fall to the deck. It was a very gruesome spectacle that caused the other Seazombies to gasp with horror.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing frowned slightly. He could tell that his shadow had consumed the shadow of the Seazombie cultivator, and then possessed the body. However, doing that ended up wasting a perfectly good soul. Xu Qing didn't say anything about that though. Instead, he turned and headed toward the first warship. As he neared, the Seazombies trembled, and eventually started jumping overboard.

However, the golden crow behind Xu Qing sent out flaming chains that wrapped around them. Screams rang out into the night.

Xu Qing ignored them as he stepped onto the deck of the warship. The first thing he did was lift his right hand and point at the young Seazombie woman, who despite the pain that caused her eyes to well with tears, was looking at him with morbid admiration.

Instantly, lightning crackled as the black iron skewer shot with incredible speed toward the young woman. Just when it was about to pierce through her forehead, the white-robed Seazombie sighed, reached out, and flicked the skewer. A thrumming sound could be heard as the iron skewer was sent spinning off to the side. A moment later, it returned, unharmed, but its baleful aura thrumming and more electricity crackling around it.

The white-robed Seazombie looked closely at the iron skewer, then at Xu Qing's feet, and at the golden crow. He felt a big headache coming on.

Finally he looked at Xu Qing and sighed again. "Hello, Fellow Daoist. This young woman is very important to me...."

Xu Qing looked at the white-robed Seazombie. At first glance he had come to the conclusion that the Captain was using this obviously important young Seazombie woman in one of his crazy plans. Attacking her had been little more than a test, and as expected, the Captain interfered.

Therefore, Xu Qing wasn't surprised at all by his words. Furthermore, the fact that he addressed Xu Qing as 'Fellow Daoist' seemed to reinforce the fact that he didn't want his true identity revealed. Everything confirmed Xu Qing's theory, and therefore he didn't hesitate to name his price.

"100,000 spirit stones!"

The Captain's eyes went wide in a glare, and he was about to say something when Third Princess suddenly started laughing.

"Big Bro, this sweet little thing is very cute. I think I want him to be my dao protector too!"

As the words left her mouth, she lifted her right hand, upon which was a bracelet. The bracelet shimmered, then cracking sounds emanated from it as it broke up into numerous sections that flew out, then wriggled back together to take the shape of a desiccated corpse. It was wrapped in red bandages, and emanated a powerful baleful aura. When it opened its eyes, they glowed red, and it took a step toward Xu Qing.

The moment its foot landed, rumbling sounds echoed out as two life flames flickered to life within it. Then red flames spread out to cover its entire body as it rushed toward Xu Qing. Before it could get close, the iron skewer's lightning symbols flashed brightly, and it shot with shocking speed toward the desiccated corpse.

Xu Qing's shadow also spread out surreptitiously, reaching the corpse's feet, where all of its eyes opened. As the more than hundred eyes locked onto the desiccated corpse, it froze in place. Suddenly, spots of decay appeared all over the corpse, while at the same time, massive amounts of mutagen flowed out of it. At the same time, the iron skewer stabbed through its throat, then circled around and stabbed it through the back.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing strode forward with incredible speed, his fleshly body power surging as he slapped his palm on the corpse's forehead. Winds screamed around his palm, making it seem unstoppable.

The corpse howled, its body flashing red light as it fought back against Xu Qing's attack. But Xu Qing didn't pause for a moment to bend his arm and smash his elbow into the corpse's jaw. A loud crack rang out. The desiccated corpse was able to take the first attack, but not the second. Its head exploded, revealing that though it had flesh and blood, it had no spirit power in it. It was just a puppet!

In fact, the shattered head also revealed countless slimy strings that twitched and wriggled as if to begin the process of repairing the puppet.

Eyes narrowing, Xu Qing lunged forward and smashed his knee into the corpse, sending it staggering backward, its abdomen crushed. And yet, it was still repairing itself.

Snorting coldly, Xu Qing tapped into Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits. Behind him, the golden crow let loose a cry as it swept toward the puppet. As black flames swept about everywhere, the puppet was enveloped. Even as it repaired itself, the golden crow absorbed it.

Then the crow reached out with its three claws, grabbed the devastated corpse puppet, and ripped it to pieces. As the crow stood upon the ravaged corpse, a glob of blue blood so dark it was almost black flew up and into the crow's mouth. The corpse puppet had been absorbed, and now crumbled into ash.

The crow then flew back to Xu Qing, trailing a cloak of flames that flapped in the wind. It stopped at Xu Qing's right side, where it stared back at the young woman and the white-robed Seazombie with cold eyes.

It was an absolutely stunning and beautiful scene.

"Awesome!" Third Princess exclaimed excitedly. "Thanks, sweetie, for helping me get rid of the bracelet my damned father gave me. I've tried so many ways, even provoking all sorts of enemies, but none of them could kill that thing.

"Big Bro Xu Qing, I knew all along you aren't really a Seazombie. You don't really want to become my dao protector, do you? You bad boy! And you even said that you, Xu Qing, would be struck by five bolts of heavenly lightning if you went back on your promise to be my dao protector.... You were also lying when you said that you, Xu Qing, would be my consort, weren't you?

"But that's fine. You're actually from Seven Blood Eyes, aren't you Big Bro Xu Qing? I guess that means you and this little sweetie here already know each other. And you probably want me to sneak you into Seazombie territory. Are you after precious treasures? Or do you want to destroy some top-secret area? I don't care what it is, I can help you. I know a lot of things. But there's only one requirement. You have to take me with you!"

Third Princess still looked very excited, but then she noticed the strange expression on the face of the white-robed zombie. “What’s wrong, Big Bro Xu Qing?”

Meanwhile, Xu Qing looked at the Captain, his face expressionless, and his life lamp burning hotter and hotter.

## Chapter 182: A Crazy Plan

Seeing the flames burning hotter within Xu Qing, the Captain’s expression flickered.

“Don’t kill her!” he blurted. “I need her!”

Before the words finished leaving his mouth, Xu Qing was in motion, moving with blinding speed to arrive right in front of Third Princess. As she gasped, he raised his right hand and slapped her across the side of the face.

A boom rang out, and blood sprayed from her mouth as she flopped backward like a kite with its string cut, smashing through the side of the deck and off the ship. However, before she could fall, the golden crow sent out a chain of black fire, which wrapped around her and threw her back onto the ship, where she landed in front of the Captain.

Xu Qing didn’t kill her. He could have done it with his first blow, if he wanted to. But he did take her bag of holding.

Third Princess coughed up another mouthful of blood. Half the bones in her body were broken, yet there was no fear in her eyes, only confusion. As the blood oozed down her chin, she looked at Xu Qing and curiously asked, “He used your name to do all sorts of things. Don’t you care? Shouldn’t you have it out for him? Why hit me?”

The Captain sighed, squatted next to her, and said, “Because it’s a matter between us bros. It doesn’t have anything to do with you. And since you were riling things up, who did you expect him to hit? If I was in his place, I’d have done the same thing.”

Reaching out, he picked up one of her hands to check for broken bones. He shook his head. “All broken. But at least you can talk. If you can talk, you can breathe, so that’s good.”

Third Princess, however, was still confused, and didn’t think it made sense that Xu Qing hit her. In fact, she even opened her mouth to ask some more questions, but the Captain smacked his palm onto her head, rendering her unconscious. Putting her into a special bag of holding, he turned and faced Xu Qing.

Now that they were alone, Xu Qing looked back at him and said, “You swore an oath using my name?”

“Nah, she was kidding.” the Captain blinked a few times, then shouted, “HEY! You dropped a spirit note.”

Reaching down, he shuffled his hands on the deck, then produced a spirit note worth a hundred spirit coins. Grimacing, he handed it to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing took it, but his eyes never left the Captain.

“Struck five times by heavenly lightning?”

“Hahaha. That could never happen. Little Junior Brother, I think you weren’t listening carefully. Furthermore, I have to offer you some constructive criticism. Don’t be so gullible when dealing with strangers! As your Elder Brother, and as your superior, I would absolutely, positively never do anything like you’re suggesting. It’s similar to how you have never owed me any spirit stones.”

“Consort?” Xu Qing asked.

The Captain sighed.

Xu Qing stared at him.

A long moment passed, then the Captain smacked his own forehead.

“Xu Qing,” he said conspiratorially, his eyebrows dancing up and down, “forget all that. I have some good news.... The reason I’m disguised as a Seazombie is that I’m trying to get a high-level zombie heart.

“And there’s more. My other goal is a lot more risky, so I originally was planning to keep it secret. But since we’re out here alone, I guess I can tell you.

“As you might know, the Seazombies have a lot of precious treasures and even more top-secret locations. Any one of those top-secret locations could change the whole situation with the war. Of course, that doesn’t really have anything to do with the two of us. The point is that one of those locations is the main target of my plan. I’m trying to reach one of the Seazombies’ most holy relics... one of the divine likenesses of the nine Seazombie ancestors!!

“According to the legends, the Seazombies started out as a species because of those nine statues. They’re divine likenesses made of a special, one-of-a-kind material.

“The zombification that creates Seazombies is carried out by those nine statues. They’re scattered throughout the Seazombie ancestral land, and not only are they the source of the zombification power, but also, they’re known as holy locations where Seazombies can be healed.

“Most importantly, most of the Seazombies’ top experts are out on the battlefield, meaning their defenses in their ancestral land are flimsy. Though they do have some measures in place to keep things secure, that young woman you nearly beat to death is very important in Seazombie society. She’s their Third Princess, and with her to lead the way, the Seazombies won’t be suspicious at all. And by the time they realize something’s happening, we’ll be long gone.”

The Captain had the same look in his eyes that Xu Qing remembered seeing back in the Merfolk Isles, before he did something really crazy. Upon hearing the explanation, Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed. Obviously, sneaking into the Seazombie ancestral land was an act that would take a

massive amount of daring. And it wasn't just sneaking into their ancestral land. The plan also involved finding holy relics of the Seazombies. That was something the word 'daring' couldn't even begin to cover. Even though the Seazombie ancestral land was much emptier than normal right now, it was still something that only someone who was absolutely crazy would try to do.

Xu Qing looked deeply at the Captain, musing that he was clearly just as crazy as before. Just as he was about to refuse to help, the Captain excitedly continued talking.

"Each of the nine zombie ancestor statues have shocking power, as well as incomparably strong godliness. And they're not just useful to Seazombies. Human cultivators can use them as well. They can easily open dharma apertures! I've heard people say that if you only take a small bite out of one of the statues, you can easily open dozens upon dozens!"

When Xu Qing heard that, his words of refusal stuck in his throat, and his heart started to pound. Right now he had 49 dharma apertures open, with the 50th just barely cracked, and a long way from being fully opened.

At this point, it was really getting hard to open them. Generally speaking, cultivators grouped dharma apertures into tens. In other words, going from 40 to 50 was a major upgrade. And the only way to open the next dharma aperture was going to be to kill an enemy with a life flame.

Truth be told, Xu Qing was making rapid progress. Without the Balefire Soulswallowing Scripture, and also the war, he would have been hard-pressed to progress this quickly. Normally speaking, Foundation Establishment cultivators would take ten years to start their first life flame. And in terms of the second... it wasn't unusual to spend thirty years or more. And of course, they had to deal with threats to their life, plus the challenge of purging mutagen. For that reason, there weren't very many cultivators with two life flames. As for three life flames, that usually took even longer.

50 to 60... that's going to take a lot of soul power.

Xu Qing felt like he wasn't progressing fast enough, and therefore the Captain's description of the zombie ancestor statues was very enticing. After thinking about it for a moment, he looked at the bag of holding with Third Princess in it.

"I don't trust her," he said.

"Don't worry about that, I'll handle it," the Captain said, slapping himself on the chest. "Besides, you don't know her situation. If you did, you'd feel sorry for her. Trust me."

Xu Qing shook his head. If the entire success of the plan hinged on Third Princess, then she would have to be completely and sincerely on their side. That was the only way they would be able to successfully sneak into the Seazombie ancestral land. She would have to provide cover to get them through all the defenses, inspections, and whatever else stood in their way to reach the zombie ancestor statues. Even the slightest slipup during that process would leave them damned by myriad tribulations.

The Captain blinked a few times as he saw Xu Qing hesitating. Then he chuckled. "Look, there's a simple way to solve this problem. I can just disguise you as Third Princess! I've been around her long enough to know her well, plus, I got my hands on lots of information about her. I can't claim to

know her like the back of my hand, but I can give you some tips on how to talk like her, act like her, and so-on. It wouldn't work long-term, but for our purposes, it'll be perfectly sufficient."

Raising his eyebrows, Xu Qing said, "If you know so much about her, you disguise yourself as her."

"Deputy Captain Xu, I'm your superior!" the Captain said somberly.

"Consort?" Xu Qing replied.

The Captain's expression suddenly wasn't as somber. He sighed. "Why don't we have a little bet? Whoever loses has to be Third Princess?" He looked around, then spotted a sea snake off in the distance. Apparently, it wasn't very smart, as it was glaring at their warship aggressively. "That thing. Whoever kills it wins!"

The moment the words left the Captain's mouth, he lit his life flame and simultaneously sent out a shocking frigid energy that froze everything around him, including Xu Qing. Then he burst into motion toward the snake. At the same time, an enormous hand appeared over the water, rumbling toward the sea snake.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. Behind him, the golden crow cried out, causing flames to erupt that canceled out the Captain's frigid energy. Xu Qing also burst into motion. At the same time, he summoned a huge hand which shot, not toward the sea snake, but toward the Captain's magical technique.

Rumbling echoed out as the two hands slammed into each other. Then, Xu Qing rammed into the Captain, and more deafening rumbling echoed out. At the same time, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior sent the black iron skewer shooting toward the sea snake.

However, even as lightning bolts crackled around the skewer, a frigid energy surged toward it. Cracking sounds rang out as it was sealed, leaving the patriarch shocked and unable to fight back.

Ice also built up around the sea snake, freezing it in place. But then the golden crow cried out, and fire roiled out, melting the ice.

Xu Qing lifted his hand, and the heavenly saber slashed down, backed by volcanic force. At the same time, he clenched his hand into a fist and punched out, backing his fleshly body power with Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits.

That shocking fist strike caused a vortex to spring up in front of Xu Qing. At the same time, it emanated wisps of zombie poison!

The Captain's eyes narrowed, and he performed an incantation gesture to block the move. A huge boom rang out, and the Captain staggered backward.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing accelerated.

"It hasn't been that long, and you've changed so much!" the Captain blurted. "Your fleshly body power is off the charts! Combined with your profound radiance state, you're comparable to the three-flame level! Also, what's with the zombie poison? You seem more like a Seazombie than I do! You're bullying me with that imperial-class technique!"



A crazy look appeared in the Captain's eyes. In order to ensure that Xu Qing had to become Third Princess, and also to save face for himself, his eyes suddenly shone with golden light.

Within that light was a golden magical symbol, and as it pulsed, he erupted with power that surpassed the two-flame level!

Chapter 183: Bewitchingly Charming

He was unsealing his second seal!

The Captain's true identity had always been a mystery. Xu Qing had his speculations about who he really was, and had even considered that he was the grand highness of the Seventh Peak. However, he would only consider that matter occasionally, as it wasn't really important. After all, regardless of who the Captain was, it wouldn't affect the unique relationship they had.

Seeing the Captain suddenly surging with energy, Xu Qing's eyes glowed with a fierce light. He didn't want to lose this bet either, and what was more, was very much interested in seeing the Captain transform into Third Princess.

Therefore, as soon as the Captain went all out, Xu Qing burned his life lamp even brighter. Then, the two of them clashed again.

Massive booms rang out everywhere. Having unsealed himself, the Captain's entire body glowed with golden light that, to Xu Qing, seemed similar to godliness, yet wasn't. Godliness was holy, but this sensation from the Captain seemed incredibly domineering, as if it was capable of crushing anything and everything. Surrounded by glittering light, the Captain waved his hand, creating a golden sea of light that in turn transformed into an enormous hand that crushed toward Xu Qing.

"You're going to be Third Princess!" he roared.

The sea of light slammed into Xu Qing, shoving him backward relentlessly. That light seemed both crazy and domineering, making it difficult for him to breathe, and even affecting his cultivation base, causing his life flame to flicker.

From a distance, that giant golden hand was a hundred times larger than Xu Qing, and it seemed like there was no way he could stop it from smashing him down into the water.

This level of might seemed like the level of two flames to Xu Qing. And the speed was so great he had a hard time matching it. The only way to do so... would be to have the power of three flames!

Xu Qing's pupils constricted as killing intent filled his eyes. The veins on his forehead bulged, and he threw both hands out. Instantly, the cry of a bird echoed out from behind him, and black flames surged as the golden crow swirled out. As it threw its head back and howled, it superimposed itself on Xu Qing.

The golden crow's body overlapped with his, covering his violet robe. The feathers became like an imperial robe, illusory, yet bursting with a sense of majesty. The head became like an imperial crown pulsing with a paragonic aura. The phoenix-like tail became a pendant, and the black sea of flames attached to it became a cloak.

From a distance, Xu Qing, with his delicate and even pretty face, coupled with this extraordinary outfit, made him seem like a young emperor. In fact, he actually seemed similar to the golden crow Ancient Emperor in the dragon chariot.

Even the Captain was stunned, and his eyes narrowed as Xu Qing expressionlessly clenched his right hand into a fist and punched toward the incoming hand!

The punch was a combination of his life flame, life lamp, and the berserk fleshly body power of Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits. Together, they created the most powerful attack he was currently capable of. Heaven and earth rumbled as the fist created an illusory projection that grew larger by the moment, until it was just as big as the incoming hand. And it also radiated an extremely domineering sensation!

However, the domineering sensation from Xu Qing felt like the disdain of an imperial monarch, whereas the Captain's felt like the madness of a savage.

When they hit each other, a deafening explosion occurred at the impact point.

Blood sprayed out of Xu Qing's mouth as he was sent spinning off to the side. The imperial garb created by Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits couldn't stand up to the force, and disappeared. At the same time, pain exploded into Xu Qing's right fist as his arm was dislocated.

The Captain similarly coughed up blood as he was cast backward, completely out of control. The magical symbol in his eyes flickered a few times, then faded away. His right hand also flared with pain, and a cracking sound rang out from his wrist as, apparently, it broke.

As the two of them skidded away from each other, panting for breath, Xu Qing grabbed his right arm with his left hand, and wrenched it back into place.

At the same time, the Captain waved his left hand, causing golden light to flare, instantly healing the damage to his wrist. Not showing any indication that he felt pain, he calmly said, "Not bad, punk. You already have about ten percent of the battle prowess your director can unleash. Keep working hard. Oh, by the way... you lose." With that, the Captain looked at the surface of the water.

The sea snake the two of them had been fighting over was currently being wrapped up by a tentacle that then dragged it out of the water.

The Captain looked very pleased with himself, and was clearly expecting Xu Qing to say something. However, that was when a guish light shone in the eyes of the snake, and it opened its mouth wide and bit its own neck.

The bite contained immense power, and the snake was clearly holding nothing back in the effort. A ripping sound could be heard as the snake's head was torn off the rest of its body. However, it wasn't dead. The guish sensation grew even stronger as the snake then began to eat the rest of its body. Blood sprayed out from the severed parts of the snake, creating a shocking and ghastly sight.

As the Captain stared in shock, Xu Qing calmly said, "Actually, Captain. I win."

After the words left his mouth, the snake's head shuddered, and then it seemed to lose whatever power was sustaining it. It dropped down into the water, while Xu Qing's shadow quietly returned to him.

It was only at this point that Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior finally managed to unseal himself. Returning to Xu Qing, he looked angrily at the Captain. The patriarch had lost a lot of face just now, and what was more, he had to wonder if the Fiendish Xu was going to think he was useless after this fight. Even worse, the shadow had clearly performed amazingly. The patriarch felt a sensation of crisis growing stronger and stronger within him.

The Captain stared blankly at the mangled sea snake floating on the surface of the water. Then he looked at Xu Qing. Seemingly a bit embarrassed, he lowered his voice and said, "Little Junior Brother, why don't we negotiate a way—"

"You lose."

"Hey, you dropped a spirit note!"

"You lose."

"Yeah, yeah. I get it. Wait, I just had a really good idea! I think—"

"I said. You. Lose!" Xu Qing's expression was very serious as he said the words one at a time. Then he thought for a moment, and an odd expression appeared on his face, as if he disapproved of the Captain's behavior. As far as Xu Qing was concerned, if you lost a bet, you needed to take the matter very seriously. It was just as important as paying back money you owed. Both came down to heaven's law and earth's principle.

Meanwhile, the Captain was having trouble steadying his breathing. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was even grinding his teeth.

"Fine. All we're talking about is dressing up like Third Princess, right? Not a big deal! Hold on a second!" Eyes filling with determination, he turned and went into the ship's cabin.

The anticipation in Xu Qing's heart built as he stared at the cabin door and waited.

Time ticked by. About an hour later, when Xu Qing was just beginning to lose patience, the cabin door slowly opened, and a bewitchingly charming, elegantly lithe young woman strode out.

She was none other than Third Princess.

At first, she walked slowly and steadily. But after taking a few steps, she turned her delicate and charming face toward Xu Qing. That was when she noticed the odd look on his face, and her own expression turned sour. Snorting coldly to hold back from lashing out, she stomped over to him, then hiked up her skirt, revealing two long legs. Squatting down, she pulled out a large apple and viciously took a bite.

"Happy?" the Captain said. His disguise was remarkably true to life, making him truly a feast for the eyes. No matter which angle Xu Qing looked at him from, he couldn't find any flaws. The only exception was that his legs were a bit too hairy. Everything else was perfect. The bright eyes and white teeth. The dainty hands, as fair as jade. The arms as slender as a lotus root. Even the most beautiful female disciples back in the sect would have been jealous at the sight.

Xu Qing was really curious about how the Captain managed to do this, and took a long moment to size him up. Meanwhile, the clearly irritated Captain stretched a delicate hand toward Xu Qing.

"Give me the bag of holding."

Xu Qing took out Third Princess's bag of holding and held it upside down. Instantly, numerous miscellaneous objects tumbled out into a big pile. Most were clothing items. There weren't very many spirit stones, although there were some small black stones that pulsed with mutagen. And Xu Qing also spotted numerous finger-sized crystal bottles, all of which contained black pearls. And each pearl had a magical symbol inside. Presumably, it was an item like this that he'd run into with his dharmaskiff.

"So many!" Xu Qing picked up one of the bottles to inspect.

Rifling through the other things, the Captain said, "Those things are called Yin-Illuminating Lightning Pearls. They're a disposable magical device unique to Seazombies. They're very powerful, and can only be created by top Seazombie experts. Because of that, they're rare among other species, and go for different prices depending on how powerful they are.

"Different Seazombies will make different versions. There was one type created by the Seazombie patriarch that could unleash an attack comparable to the Nascent Soul level. A few years ago, it went up for auction in the Violet Lands, and ended up selling for an astronomical price. One unique property of these pearls is that you need to power them up with blood. And they're more lethal to whatever species the blood comes from."

As he spoke, the Captain picked up an identity medallion. Sounding pleased, he continued, "I spent a lot of money on this disguise technique. It's really amazing. Not only does it allow you to imitate the aura of a species, but also, it can perfectly mask your own fluctuations. Since I've been keeping an eye on Third Princess for a while now, I can imitate her perfectly.

"Now, we need to head into Seazombie territory. As long as we don't somehow end up stuck there for a long time, and as long as we don't run into any Gold Core experts who can pierce through this disguise, then no one will have any idea what's going on."

At this point, the Captain looked at Xu Qing and then tossed him a white robe. He also handed him a small bottle.

"Get dressed in that. Then open the bottle and pour some of the contents on yourself. It will allow you to exude zombie poison, plus, it will mask your aura and change your physical appearance."

Xu Qing did as told. Afterward, the zombie poison he emanated and his withered features made him look exactly like a Seazombie. As for the little bottle, Xu Qing could tell that it had been created by someone with a very extraordinary cultivation base. Furthermore, it gave him even new insights into the unorthodox and extraordinary things the Captain did.

"And now," the Captain said somberly, "you're going to be my dao protector. You will escort me, the princess, back to Seazombie territory. Going forward, we need to put on an act that nobody can see through. Agreed?"

Xu Qing nodded, as what the Captain said definitely did make sense.

The Captain cleared his throat, stretched at the waist a few times, which revealed his attractive figure, then sat down and slowly crossed his legs. Gently bobbing one leg up and down, he took out an apple and bit into it.

“Come, little Ah Qing. The princess needs a leg massage.”

Xu Qing looked at the Captain, then took out some poison powder from his bag of holding and prepared to pour it out into his palm.

The Captain tucked his legs back and looked somberly at Xu Qing. “It just occurred to me that we need to talk about the plan.”

Chapter 184: Strange Seazombie Developments (part 1)

In the dome of heaven, a warship that resembled a black tree sped along rapidly, piercing loudly through the clouds. Assuming it stayed on its current course, it was obviously going to reach the island that was the Seazombies’ ancestral land in only ten days.

Based on the sea charts Seven Blood Eyes had given out during wartime, Xu Qing knew that though the place was called an island, it was vastly larger than the home of the Merfolk. Actually, it was about ten percent the size of the continent of South Phoenix.

Xu Qing and the Captain were on that warship. After going through lengthy discussions, they had finalized their plan.

“Only ten more days,” the Captain said, “and we’ll arrive in Seazombie territory. Your plan is okay, Xu Qing. Except, we’ll need several days, and I’m worried your plan doesn’t allow for enough time. Also... why do you seem so excited about all the prep work for this plan of yours?”

The Captain seemed both hesitant and suspicious.

In terms of plans, their discussion the first day had revealed that the Captain actually didn’t have any. He had just intended to charge into Seazombie territory and figure things out as they developed.

Xu Qing couldn’t agree to that.

After some thought, and determining what his goal was, he came up with the idea of trying to get to the nearest zombie ancestor statue as quickly as possible. After setting that goal, the plan fell into place quickly. The fastest way to get to that statue would be to have a Seazombie cultivator personally escort them there. That way, there wouldn’t be any time wasted.

As for how to get that escort, Xu Qing and the Captain had already decided that it would be: injury!

If Third Princess was ‘injured’ and had struggled to get back safely, then it would be a given that she’d be sent for healing. And given her status, the obvious location for healing was a zombie ancestor statue. After all, the Captain’s intelligence report made it clear that the statues were used for two main purposes: zombification of new Seazombies, and astonishing healing.

That was why the Captain was still a bit hesitant and suspicious, and had asked the question he just did. “If the healing finishes in a day,” he continued, “people will notice and get suspicious.”

Xu Qing shook his head. “Not if we keep adding injuries daily for the rest of the journey. Old injuries added onto new ones will seem more realistic!”

The Captain still wasn't convinced, and was fairly certain Xu Qing was using public authority to avenge private wrongs.

Xu Qing looked the Captain in the eyes and didn't make any attempt to look away.

Seeing that, the Captain sighed and remembered the advice he had given Xu Qing some time ago. Because of that advice, he wasn't really sure what Xu Qing was thinking. [1]

That said, the Captain was a ferocious, determined person. Thus, it was no surprise he suddenly pulled out a dagger and stabbed himself viciously in the gut with it. Instantly, his artificially blue blood spilled out, staining his garment.

“What's the big deal about something as trivial as that?” the Captain asked, continuing to munch on his apple.

Xu Qing shook his head. “Captain, self-inflicted wounds look completely different from real wounds. For the good of our plan, you're going to have to suffer through a bit of humiliation. Don't worry, I'll help.”

The Captain stopped mid-bite, his eyes widening into a glare.

Xu Qing looked back at him seriously, straight in the eye. After a moment of silence, the Captain sighed, tossed his dagger to Xu Qing, and then held his arms out wide.

“Bring it on.”

Grinning, Xu Qing gripped the dagger, walked forward, and slashed the Captain's stomach. Then he pulled the dagger back for a moment before stabbing the Captain. It was a great feeling. Then the Captain gasped as Xu Qing slashed the dagger across his right thigh. As the blood bubbled out, Xu Qing used the Seaforming Scripture to strike the Captain in the chest.

A boom rang out, and blood sprayed out of the Captain's mouth. As his face became deathly pale, Xu Qing's dagger flashed left and right, until the Captain was covered with blood, and looked completely bedraggled.

“Okay! Enough! Enough, Xu Qing!!”

Xu Qing was a bit disappointed. Those handful of dagger attacks had felt wonderful. After stopping, he looked at the Captain's left leg, and decided he would focus there tomorrow.

When the Captain noticed Xu Qing studying his leg, his eyelids twitched. “Deputy Director Xu, as a dao protector, it makes very little sense that the princess would be so badly wounded while you don't have a scratch on you.”

Xu Qing's smile faltered.

“Therefore,” the Captain continued, a slight grin appearing on his face, “for the good of our plan, you're going to have to suffer through a bit of humiliation. Don't worry, I'll help.”

Heart filling with anticipation, he took the dagger back, then viciously stabbed it toward Xu Qing's thigh.

Xu Qing's instinct was to evade the blow, yet he couldn't refute the Captain's logic. Taking a deep breath, he simply looked the Captain in the eye as the dagger stabbed into this thigh.

Xu Qing gritted his teeth.

Next, the Captain excitedly stabbed Xu Qing three times in the stomach, slashed the side of his neck, and inflicted numerous superficial wounds over spots where vital organs were.

After Xu Qing was dripping with blood, he suddenly took a step back, glared at the Captain, and hoarsely said, "Your right leg is pretty badly injured, but not your left. That doesn't make much sense."

As the words left his mouth, a dagger suddenly appeared in his hands, and he stabbed it toward the Captain's left leg.

A moment later, the Captain gritted his teeth and stabbed Xu Qing again.

And thus, the two of them exchanged dagger attacks back and forth. Sometime later... they stopped. Both of them lay on the deck gasping for breath, covered in numerous appalling wounds.

Voice tremulous, the Captain said, "Xu Qing... I don't think we need to do this every day. I'm the princess. You're the dao protector. We're supposed to be fleeing after having been attacked, right?"

After a bit of thought, Xu Qing said, "Yeah, maybe we should flee for seven or eight days, then get 'attacked' one more time. What happens if the Seazombies figure out who we are after we arrive? Do you have an escape plan?"

Hearing this, the Captain's eyebrows shot up. Grabbing back his half-eaten apple, he took a bite and smiled complacently. "Deputy Captain Xu, I do indeed have an escape plan for that scenario. But you don't need to worry. When risking one's life, it's better to keep things exciting by not revealing all the details. So you should probably be ready to take care of yourself.

"Given that you work for me, I suppose I can tell you some details. That said, it's one of my biggest secrets and so it's worth, um, 1,000,000 spirit stones!"

Xu Qing had been thinking about selling an entropic teleportation talisman to the Captain. But when he looked over and saw the lowbrow look on the Captain's face he decided not to. There wasn't any need.

The Captain was shocked that Xu Qing didn't ask any follow-up questions. Given that, he came to the conclusion that Xu Qing must have his own life-saving techniques. But even if he did, the Captain couldn't believe that they were as amazing as his own.

"When the time comes, you're welcome to use it," the Captain said. "All you need is 1,000,000 spirit stones."

Time passed quickly. Seven days. They were now only three days away from Seazombie territory.

Xu Qing and the Captain spent time meditating and occasionally reviewing their plan. Also, in the interest of making sure the plan went smoothly, the Captain explained some things about the Seazombies.

“... and that’s about all there is to say about the Seazombies,” the Captain said. “Now let me tell you more about Third Princess. You have to feel bad for the girl. The truth is that she hates the Seazombies more than anyone in Seven Blood Eyes. That’s why I told you she would help us.”

The Captain glanced into his bag of holding to check on Third Princess.

“She was born to Devakind parents. Her father had astonishing cultivation aptitude, and was named a chosen among Devakind. He was thought to have the potential to follow the path of the Ancient Emperors and Imperial Sovereigns.

“However, he eventually rebelled against his people and intentionally zombified himself. Considering his shocking cultivation base, he met the approval of the Seazombie patriarch, and was named as the first Seazombie king.

“As the Seazombie king, he cultivated a very unique Seazombie technique called The King Severs Love. And he cultivated it to the highest level, gaining enlightenment of a ‘will domain’ called... Forgetting Grief! It was all part of his plan. When he rebelled against Devakind, he took his wife and three daughters with him, and zombified them along with himself, all for the purpose of sacrificing them to his pursuit of the dao. Simply put, whenever the Seazombie king reaches a cultivation bottleneck, he can sacrifice a loved one to break through it. Over the years that have passed, he’s already sacrificed his wife, his firstborn daughter, and his second daughter. Only his third daughter is left, and the only reason she’s still alive is that her father hasn’t reached a cultivation bottleneck.

“That’s why I wanted to include her in the plan. The girl seems foolish, but that’s only because of the sheltered life she’s lived. The truth is that she hates her father down to her core, far more than anyone from Seven Blood Eyes could hate him. Therefore, she’s always getting into trouble. My plan was to get her to swear an oath to help me, with the promise of taking her with me afterward, and helping her truly free herself. I told her over and over again not to stir up any trouble, but that obviously didn’t work. The girl feels like her fate has already been sealed, and that fatalistic outlook has seeped down to her soul.

“As a matter of fact, my intelligence reports indicate that she’s already been killed seven or eight times in the past few years. Sadly, her father extracted half her soul and keeps it on him at all times. Because of that, he can recreate her any time he wishes, and therefore, even if she dies somewhere far away, it doesn’t mean much to him.”

Hearing this story from the Captain, Xu Qing felt quite moved.



“My intelligence report also contains a line attributed to the Seazombie king,” the Captain continued. “Listen and tell me what you think.

“Red dust scatters on a scroll painting;

“The ink can’t trace out the years that pass;

“They leave behind a burst of loneliness;

“How can I forget my grief?”

As the words echoed across the deck of the warship, they seemed to contain with them an unspeakable grief.

Xu Qing didn’t say anything.

Everyone in the world had their own story to tell about what happened after the broken face of the god arrived. And those stories always seemed to be tragedies. Seeking the dao by killing loved ones seemed like a bitter and desperate thing. But Xu Qing had seen things like that from the time he was young. It wasn’t anything unusual. Even still, Xu Qing took out a medicinal pill and tossed it to the Captain.

The captain caught it in surprise. And when he realized what it was, he said, “What’s this for? My wounds aren’t that bad! I don’t need this.”

“Give it to Third Princess,” Xu Qing said quietly.

“Little Ah Qing!” the Captain said, smiling enigmatically. “I had no idea you were so kind and gentle!” Hefting the pill, he continued, “Hold on, do you like her? Are you actually thinking of becoming her consort?”

Xu Qing looked placidly at the Captain. Seeing the rakish expression on the Captain’s face, he declined to comment.

“When you look at me like that, little Ah Qing, are you really looking at me? Or are you looking at your beloved Third Princess? Aiya, if the female disciples back in the sect knew about this, I think they’d all start weeping.”

The more the Captain talked, the happier he seemed. Eyebrows dancing, he put away the medicinal pill and took out a tangerine, which he started to peel. Noticing Xu Qing frowning slightly, he was about to keep on in the same vein.

However, Xu Qing interrupted him. “Princess, we arrive in Seazombie territory in three days. I think you need some fresh wounds.”

Before the Captain could say anything else, Xu Qing walked over, produced a dagger, and plunged it into the Captain’s stomach. The Captain gasped, grimaced in pain, then took out his own dagger and glared at Xu Qing.

“As the princess’ dao protector, you also need a few wounds!”

He prepared to launch a stab, but Xu Qing dodged out of the way.

“Princess, your cultivation base is only in the great circle of Qi Condensation, which means you heal slowly. As your dao protector, I need to spend more time on the lookout for trouble, not wasting time healing you. That means your wounds will get worse as we travel. As a Foundation Establishment cultivator, my wounds heal much faster. If I have too many wounds, it won't be realistic!”

The Captain was temporarily struck speechless.

Seeing that, Xu Qing jumped forward and stabbed him several more times.

Cradling his abdomen, the Captain jumped backward and glared at Xu Qing. However, when he noticed Xu Qing's earnest expression, he sighed. “Despite being chased, the princess and her dao protector would still have time to rest. Besides, given how close we are to Seazombie territory, our pursuers would eventually give up the deadly chase out of fear.”

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. “That's true. However, given how close we are to the ancestral land, the princess definitely needs to be seriously wounded and even on the brink of death. Otherwise, they might not send her immediately to the healing area.”

The Captain looked bitterly at the wounds he already had, then looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's very serious expression caused the Captain to hiss out a sigh and then close his eyes.

Feeling wonderful, Xu Qing inflicted another four or five dagger wounds, until the Captain was obviously seriously hurt and very weak. Only then did the session of 'deadly pursuit' end.

In this manner, time passed.

## Chapter 185: Settling In

Xu Qing looked back at the Captain but didn't say a word. As far as he was concerned, the Captain was taking this role far too seriously. The charming way in which he'd just cleared his throat was just plain jarring. However, Xu Qing didn't say anything. He knew that though Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior had been quiet lately, based on the patriarch's personality, he was surely recording all of this for later use. One day, they would be precious images that Xu Qing was certain he could find a use for. After giving the Captain a long look, he turned away and ignored him.

The Captain raised his eyebrow and was about to say more when another series of spell formation fluctuations rolled over the warship.

The octopus shivered and dropped into a kneeling position as it waited for the spell formation to finish the scanning process. As the ghost thirst butterflies dispersed, Xu Qing looked over the rail at a huge structure below them. It was a very simple construction. There were two freestanding pillars that created a sort of gate. Between the pillars was a black vortex, slowly spinning as red electricity crackled within it.

Outside of the gate were numerous red magical mushrooms, atop of which sat a host of Seazombie cultivators. There were men and women among them, and they included both humans and nonhumans. There appeared to be about a thousand in total, all of them tasked with keeping this location secure. Clearly, anyone who wanted to enter the vortex would have to pass by them first. Some of them were powerful experts whose gazes caused a feeling of danger in Xu Qing.

When the spell formation fluctuations swept over the warship, the sealing barrier with the mark of that three-flame Seazombie reacted to it, glittering brightly. Then the spell formation fluctuations faded away.

The octopus crawled back up and cautiously proceeded forward. As they passed the various magical mushrooms, the Seazombie cultivators on them stood and offered greetings with clasped hands.

“Well met, Third Princess.”

“Well met, Third Princess.”

Xu Qing’s expression remained placid, but inside he was fully on guard. Given that there were so many eyes on them, if a single person saw through their disguise, they would be finished.

The combined auras of all these Seazombie cultivators created a mighty pressure that forced the little bottle in his robe to work much faster to deal with it. If things kept going like this, the bottle would stop working much sooner than expected.

It was the same with the Captain. It wouldn’t matter if his disguise looked even better than it did. He was still in great danger. Taking out a black pearl, he started fiddling with it while simultaneously plastering an impatient expression on his face.

Soon enough, they were closing in on the gate. However, all of the gazes were still fixed on them, therefore, the Captain suddenly threw the pearl off to the side. It exploded, sending out powerful aura fluctuations toward the surrounding Seazombies.

“Seen enough?” the Captain said, and his irritation faded into a broad, sweet smile. Because his complexion was pale, and he looked visibly weak, which was no act, his smile seemed even more effective than usual.

The surrounding Seazombies quietly bowed their heads.

“Give me a hand,” the Captain said loudly, walking unsteadily up to Xu Qing at the prow and reaching out to him.

Xu Qing really did admire the Captain’s acting skills. Bowing his head, he took ‘her’ by the forearm and helped ‘her’ walk off of the warship, away from the octopus, and toward the black vortex.

Compared to the vortex, Xu Qing and the Captain looked as insignificant as ants. The mere fluctuations it emitted were so terrifying that both Xu Qing and the Captain reeled inwardly. However, they had strong willpower and were prepared. Moving neither fast nor slow, they approached the gate. Finally, after sharing a quick glance, they stepped into it. The moment they did, their minds filled with rumbling sounds, and they felt like they had entered a different dimension.

They were now in a world of bright red! It wasn’t a very large space, and the ground was covered with a red elixir that made it seem like a pool of blood surrounded by eight stone pillars. Sitting atop each of the stone pillars was a cross-legged Seazombie cultivator!

Most eye-catching was a huge statue in the middle of the pool. Its feet sank below the surface, but it still stood 3,000 meters tall, making it seem like it was propping up the sky. It was a blotchy crimson color, and looked like the corpse of a human, its head thrown back as it howled to the sky.

Its hands were posed in a very unusual way. One hand was extended up, as if to grasp at the dome of heaven. The other hand rested on its chest. The statue had many undulating tentacles growing out of it, all of them covered with eyes. That alone was bizarre, but what was even stranger was that if you looked closely at the eyes, they all seemed to contain images of other worlds. Each world was different, and they added to the statue's astonishing aura, which crushed down on everything around it, and seemed to create a harmonic resonance with the Seazombies.

Apparently, the surrounding Seazombies had been created by the aura of this statue; the statue itself was their origin.

The mighty pressure was many dozens of times greater than outside the gate, and it caused Xu Qing's bottle to start draining even faster.

Meanwhile, a crack appeared on the Captain's face, in other words, a fracture in his disguise. However, using some unknown method, he quickly fixed the problem. That said, Xu Qing could sense unstable fluctuations coming from him. Clearly, not even the Captain would be able to stay in the place for very long. Both of them were deeply shaken.

This statue could only be one thing: the divine likeness of the seventh zombie ancestor of the Seazombies.

Each of the zombie ancestor statues were different sizes, and the seventh wasn't even the biggest. Nor was it the strongest. Even still, as one of the nine, it was considered a paramount entity among Seazombies. The Seazombie king himself would pay obeisance every time he came to the statue.

That was because these nine divine likenesses contained the secret of how to create Seazombies. Furthermore, they would naturally create the bright red pools beneath their feet, an elixir that was required for the zombification process. What was more, it had miraculous healing properties.

In fact, there were a few dozen Seazombie cultivators sitting cross-legged within the elixir being healed. The weakest of them was at the level of two flames, and there was one at the three-flame level. All of them had obviously been seriously injured on the front lines.

And yet, they didn't count for much. What was really shocking to Xu Qing and the Captain was that sitting atop the statue's left hand, which was right in front of its chest, was a young boy in a blood-red robe!

Xu Qing had first seen this young boy in the Pearl Archipelago. He was one of the Seazombies' Gold Core cultivators, who had led the assault on the Pearl Archipelago from the sea! [1]

Upon seeing him here, Xu Qing turned to the Captain.

The Captain looked stunned, then smiled back wryly. Obviously, his intelligence report had not been accurate. Either that, or some adjustments had been made to ensure that a Gold Core cultivator was watching over this place.

Xu Qing stood there silently, musing that he had allowed himself to go too crazy this time, and wondering why he had allowed the Captain to drag him along. This place had dozens of two-flame cultivators, over a thousand other cultivators outside, plus a Gold Core cultivator who could kill both Xu Qing and the Captain with a single palm attack. The Gold Core Seazombie was meditating at the moment, and it was impossible to say what would happen when he opened his eyes. Would he

see through their ruse? After all, the mere pressure in this place was causing problems for their disguises.

Besides, they were in the Seazombie's ancestral land, very close to their army's main camp. Who knew what other powerful experts might show up out of the blue...?

Taking a deep breath, Xu Qing stifled his anxiety and turned it into determination. Gritting his teeth, he decided that since he was here, he might as well make the best of the situation. Then he exchanged a glance with the Captain, and saw that familiar crazy look in the Captain's eyes. Together, they walked forward. After they had walked about 300 meters in, rotten corpse hands began to rise up in front of them.

The hands weren't there to grab them, but rather, to provide a place for them to walk. As the two of them proceeded along, the Seazombie cultivators on the surrounding pillars mostly ignored them. A few cracked their eyes open, but upon seeing Third Princess, they quickly closed their eyes. As for the Gold Core boy, he didn't open his eyes at all.

At that point, Xu Qing breathed a sigh of relief. Eventually, when they were close to the statue, the Captain found a place by the statue's feet where he sat down cross-legged to meditate. Almost immediately, he started readjusting his position to edge close enough to touch the statue.

Without a word, Xu Qing also entered the pool. As soon as he was in the elixir, he could sense a strange force at work. It wasn't spirit power, and it wasn't mutagen. It seemed full of pure nourishment, including soul power. As soon as it entered Xu Qing, his dharma apertures stirred, which was all he needed to confirm that this elixir was going to be a big help in opening dharma apertures.

He immediately settled down cross-legged, and after taking a look at the surrounding Seazombies in their healing routines, he carefully attempted to absorb that unique force. He knew that he couldn't directly open any dharma apertures, as the resulting fluctuations would be too obvious. The best thing would be to just do some stockpiling. If he could collect enough of the elixir, then after he left, he could use it to open some dharma apertures. The number of dharma apertures he opened would depend on how much of the elixir he could get.

Eyes filling with determination, he rotated his cultivation base, whereupon blood-colored streams of liquid started moving from the pond and into his body. He sent them to his dantian region, and they stirred with such alarming, soul-stirring power that all of his unopened dharma apertures trembled. At the same time, an intense feeling of thirst arose in Xu Qing. Stopping for a moment, he looked around, then continued with the absorption process. As it turned out, stealing from the enemy right under their noses... was very exhilarating.

#### Chapter 186: Something Happens....

The seventh zombie ancestor statue grotto was still and peaceful. Normally speaking, there was never much activity in this place. The Seazombies didn't permit breakthroughs here. Therefore, the silence was normal.

The only people allowed to use the blood elixir for healing were extremely high-ranking individuals, or those who had performed amazing services to their people. Because of that, there weren't many cultivators present. That added to the peacefulness, and also ensured that no one would dare to make any sort of commotion. For many years, no member of any other species had

ever infiltrated this holy land of the Seazombies. The heavy guard outside, plus the spell formation defenses, would make it very difficult to do so.

That said, such events had occurred on a few occasions in the past.

Those who attempted to get into the grotto would attempt to absorb the blood elixir, or steal parts of the statue. The nine divine likenesses were built from special, extremely rare materials. In fact, such materials could only be found in those nine statues, which was why so many other species were keenly interested in them.

The statues were incredibly durable. Even if they were damaged, they would automatically repair themselves very quickly. Besides, not many people would be able to not only sneak into the grotto and deal with the Seazombies guarding it; therefore, the statues had never been defaced in that way.

Of course, if someone strong enough came along, they might be able to harm the statues. However, someone that strong wouldn't need to sneak in. They could just demand cooperation from the Seazombies.

Furthermore, once those special materials left the Seazombie island, they would lose their miraculous qualities and become ordinary in nature. Therefore, as time passed, and other species learned those things about the statues, people gradually stopped being as curious about them.

And because they could repair themselves, they still looked exactly the same as the day they'd been made. There were legends, of course, that there had originally been more than nine statues, and that the current number were only the ones the Seazombies had managed to preserve.

Regardless, they were holy objects, and any who came with the intent to damage or steal them would have to deal with the wrath of the Seazombies. After all, if the statues were to be harmed in any way, the Seazombies would see it as a humiliation.

The last time someone infiltrated one of the grottoes was a full sixty-year-cycle in the past. It was a Foundation Establishment cultivator who used some unknown method to steal a large quantity of the blood elixir, and barely escaped with his life afterward. The Seazombies were enraged, and tried for years to track him down and kill him. Unfortunately for them, the thief was profoundly talented, and escaped any traps they lay for him. Eventually, he was taken in as a son-in-law by an almighty individual, forcing the Seazombies to temporarily abandon their efforts. However, from then on, security around the grottoes was increased.

The Foundation Establishment cultivator who accomplished that had risen to prominence in the last hundred years or so, and had become the peaklord of the Seventh Peak in Seven Blood Eyes. He was... Master Seventh.

On this day, a similar event was taking place again, in the grotto housing the seventh zombie ancestor's divine likeness.

Xu Qing carefully absorbed the blood-colored elixir and stored it within himself. As he did, his dharma apertures seemed to quiver with greater anticipation. Of course, the surrounding dangers, especially the Gold Core cultivator atop the statue, made Xu Qing's heart tremble with fear. So while he absorbed the elixir, he kept a close eye on everything around him.

I can't get too greedy. I'll just take what I need. Once I've filled up, I'll get out of here.

Seeing that no one was paying attention to him, he started absorbing the elixir even faster.

At the same time, his shadow was there in the elixir, its hundred-plus eyes open and looking around curiously. Then it absorbed a small portion of elixir, whereupon all of its eyes narrowed as if in intoxication. After that, it started absorbing the elixir as quickly as possible.

Seeing that, Xu Qing thought for a moment, then secretly took out his black iron skewer and put it into the elixir. Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior shivered in anticipation, and when he started absorbing the elixir, his eyes shone.

Does it work on everything? thought Xu Qing. Surprised, he secretly unleashed Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, whereupon the totem tattoo on his back flickered and then began to suck in large quantities of the red liquid.

Xu Qing couldn't have been more delighted.

When the Captain noticed what Xu Qing was doing, his eyes turned bloodshot, and he immediately felt a bit jealous. For Xu Qing to absorb so much elixir so quickly was obviously a big loss of face to the Captain, and therefore he looked around to make sure no one was watching, then took out a little bottle and put it down into the elixir.

Instantly, large amounts of blood elixir poured into it. It was a miraculous bottle that could hold a lot of liquid in it, but it filled up fairly quickly. Not making a sound, the Captain put it away and took out a second bottle. In that manner, he personally absorbed the elixir and also stored some in various items, and thus was able to match Xu Qing's speed.

When Xu Qing picked up on what was happening, he looked over with a frown to see the Captain looking back at him, an expression on his face that said, "Can you top this?"

Xu Qing was well aware of how crazy the Captain was, and didn't feel it necessary to try to compete with him in craziness. Therefore, he kept reminding himself not to get greedy, and to only take what he needed. Once he had absorbed enough, and once his shadow and Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior were full, he would leave.

That said, neither himself, the shadow, nor the patriarch were full yet. And thus, after a bit of thought, Xu Qing started inching closer to the statue. After all, it had quickly become obvious that the closer you got to the statue, the higher the quality of the blood elixir. As he neared the statue, it was to his delight that he realized he could absorb the elixir much faster. It was the same with the shadow.

Around this time, it became apparent that the patriarch was the most useless of Xu Qing's assets, as he was already full, and couldn't absorb any more. After scanning the iron skewer, Xu Qing put it away, feeling a bit irritated.

Okay, once the shadow and I are both full, I'm leaving!

With that plan in mind, he kept getting closer to the statue. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he was right by the statue's foot.

Meanwhile, the Captain noticed what Xu Qing was doing, and also started shifting to a more optimal position. Eventually, Xu Qing was right next to the statue's left foot, and the Captain was next to the right foot. In the Captain's mind, Xu Qing was acting a bit crazy. After all, why had he stuck around absorbing the elixir for so long without leaving?

No way. I can't be outdone by my own subordinate. Grrrrr. What, he thinks he's crazier than me?

The Captain suddenly took out ten bottles and started filling them all at the same time.

Looking over, Xu Qing frowned.

The Captain is being way too greedy. If he keeps this up, we'll be discovered! I can't stick around here for much longer. I just need to take what I need, no more. I can't get greedy!

Xu Qing kept absorbing the elixir for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn. At that point, he realized that he was absolutely full, and couldn't absorb any more. Though nothing about him looked out of the ordinary, he felt like he was about to explode. From the emotions of contentment rolling off of the shadow, it seemed it couldn't absorb anything further either.

Then Xu Qing checked his Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, and found that it still wasn't at capacity, so he leaned back, allowing his back to touch the statue itself.

I can't get greedy. However, though I, the shadow, and the iron skewer are all full, the golden crow still has some room left....

With his back touching the statue, which was the source of the elixir's power, his totem tattoo began filling up rapidly. All of a sudden, some ripples spread out over the surface of the elixir, causing Xu Qing's heart to fill with alarm. He immediately slowed down his absorption speed.

The Captain's eyes were wide as he looked over at Xu Qing. Then he looked down at his bottles, gritted his teeth, and took out an additional ten bottles.

After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn... the golden crow was reaching the point of being full.

However, that was when Xu Qing realized something strange was going on. As he used Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits on the divine likeness, there was something else on the move inside the statue other than its energy and blood. It seemed to be some current of power. No observer would be able to detect that current, but with Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, Xu Qing could.

After a short time, he realized the current was a manifestation of impurities within the statue. Because the impurities had no way to leave, they built up inside. What was more, the fluctuations of the impurities caused Xu Qing's heart to pound with anxiety. The fluctuations were unstable, to the point that the slightest instigation could cause them to explode.

Xu Qing was shocked. After all, if an explosion did occur, it would be terrifying, and he would be caught up in it. He was suddenly struck with an intense sensation of deadly crisis.

If this thing explodes, it'll probably cause a chain reaction with other things in the statue.... This situation is far too dangerous.

Keeping his guard up, Xu Qing slowly retracted Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, making sure not to disturb that current. Afterward, he sensed that, having removed his own gravitational force, the current was now moving upward, and was more unstable than ever.

Looking up, he spotted the Gold Core boy sitting cross-legged on the statue's hand.

Slowly getting to his feet, Xu Qing moved away from the statue.

The motion caught the attention of the Captain, who looked over in shock. Xu Qing looked back at him and gave him a meaningful look.



The Captain hesitated, then got to his feet. However, his expression was one of hesitation and even defiance. He wasn't pleased with how things had gone so far.

Besides, this whole thing isn't as crazy as when the old man did it, thought the Captain. If he left now, and no one ever found out what happened, it wouldn't matter. But if he did leave, and then people found out, it would be downright embarrassing. Chances are, people will find out. And people will also find out if I do something really outrageous. So I might as well go for it. That way, when the old man hears about it, he'll have no choice but to admit I outdid him.

After a bit of thought, a crazy look appeared in the Captain's eyes. [1]

Xu Qing was still backing away, and was still trying to wordlessly tell the Captain to do the same. But then he saw that crazy look, and he groaned inwardly. Convinced that something bad was about to happen, he unhesitatingly backed away faster than before.

Meanwhile, the Captain suddenly burst out laughing and pulled a lump of flesh out of his robe. The flesh pulsed with the aura of godliness, and as soon as it was out in the open, caused terrifying fluctuations to roll out in all directions. Just as the fluctuations rolled out, the Captain bit a huge chunk out of the meat, chewed it, and then swallowed it. Rumbling sounds echoed out from inside him and he erupted with glowing golden light. Instantly, all the surrounding Seazombies opened their eyes.

The Captain activated his life flame, and at the same, opened one of the seals within him. His entire person shone with golden light as he jumped onto the statue's toes. Then, he completely ignored all the surrounding Seazombies, including the Gold Core expert, as he opened his mouth and took a huge bite out of the statue's toe!

CRUNCH!

Chapter 187: Second Life Flame, Activate!

Xu Qing inhaled sharply, and his eyes went wide with shock.

That psycho!!

Back again was the same Captain with bloodshot eyes that had rushed to get Joine's flesh. A loud crunching sound echoed out as the wild-eyed Captain took a big bite of the statue's toe.

Now, an obvious bite mark was visible on the statue. The material of the statue was inherently something difficult to damage, but by tapping into the godliness of Joine's flesh, the Captain managed to bite a chunk out of it. Before the statue could repair itself, the Captain had already swallowed the chunk he bit off.

The surrounding injured Seazombie cultivators were dumbfounded by this shocking twist, and began getting to their feet. The cultivators on the columns also opened their eyes in astonishment and looked at the Captain. At the same time, a terrifying Gold Core aura erupted from the hand by the statue's chest, as the boy there opened his eyes and looked down suspiciously. His eyes came to rest on Xu Qing.

Xu Qing felt himself trembling, and his heart pounding.

Then the Gold Core boy looked at the Captain, who shivered and started backing away. Then the boy ignored the Captain and shifted his gaze to the statue's toe. He instantly noticed the bite mark,

and the missing chunk of the statue. Though the statue was already repairing itself, the bite mark was clearly visible.

“It’s been a long time since outsiders infiltrated this place,” the Gold Core boy said coolly. “Interesting. How would the two of you like to die?”

It seemed that, to him, two Foundation Establishment thieves weren’t anything to worry about. He hardly seemed to even care that they were here, and would probably forget about them immediately upon killing them. Gold Core pressure spread out, causing a rumble like thunder to fill the grotto with apocalyptic pressure. As he got to his feet, his calm face suddenly flickered dramatically as he turned his head to the side to look at the statue.

Inside the statue, an unstable current was flowing rapidly past him toward the head of the statue. Even as he had spoken a moment ago, it began to gather by the statue’s nose, where it started trying to batter its way out of the statue.

Then a massive boom filled the entire grotto as the statue’s nose exploded!

The explosion was so loud that the entire grotto shook violently, and the sound was even audible outside. And the force of the explosion was so intense that... the nose cracked in two and fell off the statue.

The Gold Core boy was so close to the explosion that he was sent spinning off to the side, coughing up blood like mad until he slammed into the wall.

Many of the Seazombie cultivators below were hit by the shockwave. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, and expressions of utter shock and disbelief covered their faces as they looked at the spot on the statue where the nose used to be.

Then, rage filled every single Seazombie’s eyes, a killing intent so intense it caused winds to whip around the grotto.

Finally, an enraged roar filled the grotto, coming from the Gold Core boy who was currently embedded in the wall, blood oozing out of his mouth.

“WHAT DID YOU DO???”

His roar was like heavenly thunder, shaking everything. All eyes in the grotto were now fixed on the Captain. Killing intent roiled!

Truth be told, the bite the Captain had taken out of the statue wasn’t a very big deal. But for the statue’s nose to explode was a different story. The two things were poles apart. Furthermore, everyone present realized that this event couldn’t have just happened randomly. There had to be a cause behind this effect. Obviously, this person disguised as Third Princess had taken a bite out of the statue’s toe, and then the statue’s nose exploded. The two had to be connected!

The Captain was stupefied. Considering the Seazombies believed he was behind the explosion, it was no surprise that he also suspected that it had something to do with his actions.

But I was too far away from the nose, wasn’t I...?

As the Captain stood there panting, and the Gold Core cultivator roared in rage, Xu Qing quickly ran over, threw one of the chunks of the destroyed nose into his bag of holding, and then dashed for the exit.

Up to this point, no one was paying attention to him. All of the Seazombies' rage was directed at the Captain.

Continuing to roar angrily, the Gold Core boy shot toward the Captain. And though he couldn't personally do anything about Xu Qing, he wasn't just going to let him escape.

"Kill the other one!" he shouted.

Meanwhile, the Captain quickly grabbed the other chunk of the nose, then released numerous seals within himself, causing him to rise from two life flames to three. Fire erupted around him, along with a raging godliness, as he fled.

He was fast, but the Gold Core boy was faster. A boom erupted out, and blood sprayed out of the Captain's mouth. However, that was when he tapped into a secret magic to flee again.

The Gold Core boy's eyes were bloodshot with madness. The fact that something like this happened when he was on watch was a complete humiliation, and his killing intent toward the Captain raged without limit. It had been years since something as vile as this happened to the Seazombies. If the culprit was some incredibly powerful expert, it might not have been a big deal, but instead, it was a Foundation Establishment cultivator. And what caused the Gold Core boy to tremble with absolute fury was that... though the zombie ancestor's toe had recovered, the nose was not doing the same thing.

Impossible! Even after an explosion like that, it should still repair itself!

The Gold Core boy's heart shook uncontrollably. After all, when it came to the zombie ancestor statues, repairable damage and non-repairable damage were two vastly different things. If the damage could be repaired, the event would be considered vile, but as long as the culprit could be killed as an example, then overall, it wouldn't matter a lot. At the most, it would result in tightened security on the grottoes. But if the damage couldn't be repaired....

The Gold Core boy didn't dare to think about that. It didn't even seem possible. From ancient times until now, the Seazombies' divine likenesses had been damaged, even by explosion, but they always repaired themselves within a few breaths' worth of time.

Sometimes when the damage was extensive, it took the time it takes an incense stick to burn.

It's not possible!

Taking a breath, the Gold Core boy again looked at the statue, only to realize that the nose still wasn't growing back. The rage in his heart built as he continued to pursue the Captain. He absolutely had to capture the culprit, otherwise, the consequences for permanent damage to the statue would be absolutely terrifying.

Because of the unique material the statues were made from, if this statue didn't repair itself, it meant it would forever be lacking a nose. If that happened, then for years to come, any Seazombies who came to the seventh zombie ancestor statue would be forced to relive an outright humiliation!

What was more, if someone possessed the power to actually destroy the divine likenesses, then it meant... they possessed the ability to wipe the Seazombies out of existence! It was something that was even more important than the war with Seven Blood Eyes. And thus, the Gold Core boy was devolving into mad fury.

At the same time, Xu Qing was anxiously trying to make his escape. Thankfully, the Gold Core boy wasn't after him; all of the Seazombies chasing him were in the Foundation Establishment level. Even still, he was feeling the pressure, as his pursuers, more than twenty of them, were in the profound radiance state. Most had two life flames, but there was one with three!

It was an old man, and the power of his three life flames weighed heavily on Xu Qing. Terrifying fluctuations rolled out from him in all directions. Normally speaking, if someone with three life flames pursued someone with two life flames, the chase would end in a matter of moments. But Xu Qing's fleshly body power combined with the power of his life lamp ensured that not even a three-flame cultivator could catch him easily. That said, the distance was closing.

If he caught up, and was joined by all the other Foundation Establishment cultivators, Xu Qing knew he would be in trouble. Besides, given the fluctuations of the conflict, it was likely Seazombies from the outside would get involved.

And it wasn't impossible for another Gold Core cultivator to show up.

The mere thought of that happening caused Xu Qing's hair to stand on end. All of a sudden, he realized that he and the Captain had done something very big here.

Because of the nature of this dimensional grotto, he couldn't use an entropic teleportation talisman. In order to teleport away, he had to go outside.

I have to open some dharma apertures! Eyes bloodshot as he fled madly, he decided that his only option was to try to get a second life flame as quickly as possible.

With a second life flame in combination with his life lamp, he would have power equivalent to three life flames. Add in the fleshly body strength from Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, then he was confident he could defeat a three-flame cultivator. In fact, if he reached that point, he was sure that he could break through the known limitations of Foundation Establishment and wield the power of four flames, enabling him to fight people in a higher realm.

With such thoughts on his mind, he reached out to the blood elixir in his dantian region and sent it toward his 50th dharma aperture.

A tremor passed through him as his 50th aperture opened!

His dharma force increased, and of course, he sped up. But he wasn't done yet. Thunderous rumblings filled him, sending out shockwaves that caused those pursuing him to reel in astonishment.

Dharma force erupted as his 51st, 52nd, and 53rd dharma apertures burst open. Yet he still wasn't finished. Thanks to all the blood elixir he had absorbed, in the blink of an eye, he opened his 54th and 55th dharma apertures!

The process was happening without pause; with every breath of time that passed, he opened another dharma aperture! After seven breaths of time had passed, he had opened his 56th aperture!

The eighth breath of time arrived, and he opened his 57th dharma aperture. Dharma force rumbled within him, and his life flame burned more vigorously. His energy was like a tempest that caused some of the pursuing Seazombies' faces to fall.

That was especially true of the three-flame Seazombie, whose heart was beating with anxiety as he tried to catch up. He could tell that the cultivator he was pursuing was opening dharma apertures at a terrifying rate, and so, he gritted his teeth and accelerated.

“Time to die!” he shouted.

In that moment of deadly crisis, Xu Qing's eyes were bloodshot as he relied on the toughness of his fleshly body power to sustain him as he pushed the blood elixir to its limits.

“Open, open, OPEN!!”

Shocking rumbling echoed out as his 58th, 59th, and 60th dharma apertures all opened!

In fact, he battered at them with such force that he opened all the way to his 65th dharma aperture!

“Life flame!”

His eyes were bloodshot and he was trembling from head to toe as his 31st through 60th dharma apertures connected with countless threads, converging together and causing flames to erupt around him.

His second life flame was illuminating heavenly palaces!

Chapter 188: Two-Flame Godly Might

Within Xu Qing, 65 dharma apertures created as many vortexes, spinning rapidly and causing deafening rumbling noises to echo out. When his second life flame ignited, blinding light erupted. Combined with his first life flame, it made his heavenly palaces even more visible. Meanwhile, as his 65 dharma apertures burned, he became terrifyingly strong. His two life flames transformed into a sea of flames, causing the ground beneath him to ripple and distort, and sending indescribably intense heat out everywhere. Because of all of this, Xu Qing no longer seemed like he had a volcano erupting within him. It was more like an entire continent engulfed in flames!

Several of the injured two-flame Seazombies pursuing him were caught up in the eruption, and screamed in agony. Their eyes, which had been fixed on their quarry, began bleeding because of the heat of his life flames. Even the two-flame cultivators who were mostly healed from their injuries still trembled, and their cultivation base teetered unstably. Because of the immense pressure, their life flames flickered on the point of being extinguished. As for the three-flame Seazombie, he was shaken to the core, and in his astonishment, slowed down in his pursuit.

One life flame was early Foundation Establishment. Two life flames was mid Foundation Establishment!

As of this moment, Xu Qing had two life flames, and thus, he had stepped into a new stage. Mid Foundation Establishment!

Although it was a breakthrough within one larger level, in the world that housed the Revered Ancient mainland, the sub-levels cultivators had to deal with could be profound.

In Qi Condensation, the sub-levels weren't very dramatic. But in Foundation Establishment, they were immense. Someone without the profound radiance state who faced a person with it, could be killed as easily as turning a hand over. It was the same when comparing one-flame and two-flame cultivators.

As for Xu Qing, because of his life lamp, even though he had only two life flames, his battle prowess was no different than someone with three life flames. When you added in the terrifying fleshly body power of Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, then his breakthrough moments ago could only be called heaven-shaking and earth-toppling!

Flames wreathed him as his energy surged high, causing everything around him to twist and distort.

All of his pursuers stopped in place, even the three-flame cultivator.

Xu Qing turned to face them, his eyes burning with killing intent. Then he charged toward them with such incredible speed that the two-flame cultivators couldn't track his movement. The three-flame Seazombie's scalp was tingling so hard it felt like it might explode, as all he could make out was a blur.

However, he was in late Foundation Establishment, and had immense experience in battle. It was a moment of deadly crisis, and thus, he bit the tip of his tongue and spat out some blue blood. As it ignited, spreading around him, he chose to burn some of his dharma apertures! Among Seazombies, this cultivator had a reputation as being chosen. Tapping into all 92 of his dharma apertures, he entered the profound radiance state. Instantly, his face fell. That was because he could now see what Xu Qing was doing. And Xu Qing's target wasn't him, but rather... the Seazombie cultivators further back.

In the blink of an eye, booms rang out as Xu Qing achieved speed that approached the limit of what Foundation Establishment was capable of. And he was already closing in on one of the injured two-flame Seazombies. Without pause, Xu Qing slammed into him.

The two-flame Seazombie seemed as weak as a piece of paper. He exploded, and even as his flesh and blood splattered everywhere, Xu Qing reached the second Seazombie, whom he also slammed into!

Then a third, a fourth, and a fifth!

He lifted his right hand, and a dagger of flames appeared, which he slashed through the throat of another two-flame Seazombie!

A head flew!

Blood sprayed!

Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior directed the iron skewer out, shooting toward another Foundation Establishment Seazombie.

At the same time, the shadow stretched out. A host of eyes appeared on the ground, and the Seazombie who stood in the shadow suddenly felt all their mutagen being sucked out.

Over the course of seven or eight breaths of time, roughly half of the Seazombie pursuers either exploded, lost their heads, or died in some other way!

The survivors looked absolutely terrified, and without the slightest hesitation, they fled.

Then, a shriek pierced through the air as the golden crow manifested behind Xu Qing. Looking around coldly, it flew toward the survivors, surrounded by shocking flames as it transformed into a chain.

Xu Qing was on the move again.

He still hadn't left the grotto, and was still in great danger. But once he took action, his instincts would lead him to slaughter all opponents. Stamping his foot onto the ground, he burst into motion, his fleshly body rumbling as he moved with shocking speed toward the three-flame Seazombie.

The three-flame Seazombie's pupils constricted. He had no time to evade, and therefore, his expression became one of fury and madness as he threw his hands out in front of him and called on the fury of all of his 92 dharma apertures. In fact, he even went so far as to detonate 2 of them! With the detonation of those two apertures, his energy temporarily rose to a higher level, and he braced to meet Xu Qing.

The ground in front of him collapsed as numerous skeletal arms shot out and swept out to surround Xu Qing.

There were so many bleached bones that it looked like a sea. However, the three-flame Seazombie wasn't done yet; eyes flashing with madness, he spat out a mouthful of blue blood. It transformed into a blue flying sword, and it immediately erupted with a shocking baleful aura. Locking onto Xu Qing, it screamed toward him.

Then the three-flame Seazombie performed an incantation gesture and slapped his own chest. His entire person suddenly blurred as he split into four different versions of himself, each of which charged Xu Qing from a different direction.

"Die!"

Xu Qing snorted coldly. Not slowing down a bit, he sent out a burst of flames that slammed into the skeletal arms and sent them spinning to the side. At the same time, he lifted his hand overhead, then dropped it down viciously. The heavenly saber appeared, and given his current battle prowess, it was even more powerful and faster than before. In an instant, it slammed into the blue flying sword.

As a boom rang out, Xu Qing's right hand clenched into a fist, and he launched a blow at one of the Seazombie clones coming in from the side. Blood sprayed out of the clone's mouth as he tumbled back. Xu Qing followed, striking him with a knee blow.

Bone and flesh collapsed as half of the clone exploded.

Afterwards, Xu Qing turned his head and exhaled sharply toward the second clone. A burst of black balefire emerged, turning into a sea of flames that enveloped the clone.

As bitter screams rang out from within the fire, the third clone closed in, his eyes burning with insanity as his body collapsed in on itself. As his flesh rotted and melted, he turned into a black spike that shot toward Xu Qing's forehead.

"Well, isn't this interesting," Xu Qing murmured, his eyes shining. This three-flame Seazombie's methods, especially the black spike backed by soul-suppressing power, made Xu Qing very curious. Reaching out with his right hand, he grabbed the spike out of the air. It struggled against him, but that did no good.

Meanwhile, the air off in the distance rippled and distorted as the three-flame Seazombie's true body appeared. Expression flickering, he backed up and prepared to flee. However, before he could, he suddenly stopped in place.

Then his eyes filled with alarm and terror, yet strangely, he began cackling loudly and walking toward Xu Qing. Nearing, he dropped onto one knee, put his bag of holding on the ground in front of him, and then broke his own neck.

Popping sounds rang out within him as his dharma apertures detonated. Xu Qing waved his hand, causing balefire to sweep out and absorb his soul. At the same time, the golden crow glided over. The three-flame Seazombie shivered, his eyes bursting with terror as his soul was extracted. At the same time, his body withered, and his energy and blood was absorbed by the golden crow.

The shadow also appeared to be very satisfied with its meal.

Only the iron skewer seemed a bit disappointed. Inside, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior felt a growing sense of crisis as he realized that he was turning out to be completely superfluous.

I can't let this happen!!

The patriarch simply was not willing to be turned into cannon fodder. Reaching out to the Seazombie blood elixir he had absorbed, he decided that he would find the soonest opportunity to achieve a breakthrough.

Both the shadow and the golden crow were growing much stronger due to the blood elixir. And the shadow also benefited from consuming the three-flame cultivator's shadow.

And the golden crow continued to grow more and more realistic, until Xu Qing felt almost like it was made from real flesh and blood.

This was all worth it! Taking a deep breath, he shot toward the grotto exit. As he did, he thought about the Captain and sighed. He's being chased by a Gold Core expert. What a beast....

Though this incident had been incredibly dangerous, it was thanks to the Captain attracting the fury of the Gold Core expert that Xu Qing was able to escape his own pursuers. As he neared the exit, his eyes narrowed, and he didn't need to issue any orders. Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior immediately went ahead, shooting out of the exit to scout the area beyond. The shadow seemed to have recovered much of its lost intelligence, and stretched out to do the same thing.

Pleased, Xu Qing focused on preparing his cultivation base for what was to come.

A moment later, he received details from the shadow about what was happening outside, and he was stunned. A moment later, his eyes filled with determination, and he gritted his teeth. Lunging forward, he shot out of the exit.

Chapter 189: Seazombie Dao Child

“So, you're finally out?”

The moment Xu Qing stepped out of the vortex between the two stone pillars, he heard someone speaking to him, calmly and without any hint of emotion in their voice. He looked up. The truth was that he had already been expecting this thanks to his shadow. But to see it with his own eyes caused his heart to sink.



Before, there had been more than a thousand Seazombie cultivators standing guard over this area, but now they were off in the distance, bowing in obeisance.

In their place was a single person. It was a young man wearing a golden imperial robe. However, he did not have an imperial crown on his head. His skin did not have any necrotic patches, and his aura was deep and profound. In fact, his eyes seemed to twinkle with starlight. Though he wasn't as good-looking as Xu Qing, he seemed to exude a noble air, the type that would make him the center of attention wherever he went. He sat atop a huge crimson mushroom, looking coldly at Xu Qing. Floating next to him was a black cloud, imprisoned within which was Xu Qing's iron skewer. Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior had been captured the moment he shot out into the open earlier.

Because of the shadow's special qualities, it hadn't been noticed. It was currently on the magical mushroom, slowly and carefully creeping in position to pounce on this enemy's shadow.

"I'm Vastworld, the Seazombies' dao child of this generation," he said coolly. "Elder Ying Ling is after you, so there's no way you're getting away. I was really curious who would dare do something as reckless as this, so I came to see with my own eyes. I'm actually a bit disappointed. That said, you have a nice spirit automaton. Can I have it?"

Xu Qing didn't respond. Now that he was out of the portal, he checked his surroundings and confirmed that teleportations were still restricted in the area. He would need to get farther away before he could use an entropic teleportation talisman.

"There's no use in studying your surroundings," Vastworld said. "I don't know how you're planning to escape, but it won't do any good. And that's because today, you're going to become one of my battle trophies."

"You talk a lot," Xu Qing said.

Vastworld got to his feet, laughing so loudly that it sent out energy fluctuations, which in turn created a harmonic resonance that caused wild winds to spring up. It was a tempest that could topple mountains and drain seas, which kicked up dust and sent the ghost thirst butterflies spinning away.

Thanks to the wind, Xu Qing's hair whipped around him, and his clothing flapped loudly. It was as if the wind wished to erase him out of existence. Obviously, it couldn't. All it could do was move his hair and clothing. It couldn't move his body, nor could it do anything about the coldness in his eyes.

For a moment, Xu Qing just stared at the young man in front of him, and at his surging energy. Then he burst into motion and charged right toward him.

He ignited his life flames, and the golden crow totem tattoo on his back erupted with fire, bolstering his fleshly body power. Moving with shocking speed, he pierced through the wild winds to appear right in front of Vastworld, his right hand clenching into a fist and punching forward.

A projection of the golden crow appeared around his fist, and it pulsed with the power of the Balefire Soulswallowing Scripture. At the same time, he backed it with the rage of a burning continent.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the fist sailed right toward Vastworld's chest.

Vastworld's eyes contained contempt as he prepared to wave his hand. However, before he could, the red magical mushroom he stood on turned black, and a host of eyes opened up on it.

Those eyes contained a gruish power that caused Vastworld to pause in place momentarily.

Then, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior, who had previously been imprisoned in the black smoke, suddenly caused the iron skewer to glitter with lightning. The lightning symbols on its surface flared, and then surged with astonishing power. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the skewer shot out of the smoke and headed right toward Vastworld's neck, accompanied by the tinkling sound of a bell.

Obviously, the patriarch had allowed himself to be captured, and could have escaped at any time, but was just waiting for Xu Qing to make a move before taking action.

Now that he was making his move along with Xu Qing and the shadow, the results were spectacular.

Vastworld's expression flickered as he realized he was in a dangerous situation. He couldn't avoid Xu Qing's fist strike, and thus he summoned a fist-sized jade coffin, which appeared directly over his head. It glittered with radiant light that swirled around Vastworld, creating a defensive barrier. Xu Qing's fist slammed into it.

A deafening boom rang out as Vastworld was sent spinning backward like a kite with its string cut. The patriarch shot after him relentlessly, and a thud could be heard as the skewer hit the barrier. Though it didn't pierce all the way through, it did manage to send lightning smashing into Vastworld.

At the same time, the shadow came at Vastworld from behind. A vague tree shape could be seen, and a host of eyes opened, causing vast quantities of mutagen to be sucked out of Vastworld.

Things weren't done yet, though. Xu Qing was still charging forward at full speed. Slamming into the barrier with his fist, he then summoned the heavenly saber and slashed it down. A rumbling boom could be heard as Vastworld was thrown back 300 meters, where he slammed into the ground so hard a crater opened up. The Seazombies that had been bowing in obeisance all looked shocked, and were about to rush over to help when an angry howl erupted from the crater.

"Everybody get back! This is my fight!" The power of a single life flame erupted from the crater, and Vastworld climbed out, his hair disheveled, his eyes burning with killing intent. After he was out of the crater, his second life flame whooshed to life. After that came a third, and finally, a fourth.

Shockingly, this dao child of the Seazombies had 120 dharma apertures opened, allowing him to ignite four life flames.

Chosen individuals like this would normally spend their time in seclusion, working toward a breakthrough. Based on what he'd said earlier, the only reason he wasn't in seclusion was because something big was going on with the Seazombies. Perhaps it was because there weren't many people left behind in the city, or perhaps it was just his curiosity. For whatever reason, he had come to deal with the situation personally.

But how could he have imagined that Xu Qing would attack him, and also throw in gruish tactics? By striking the first blow, he made Vastworld lose a lot of face. Now Vastworld had to resort to going all out.

As Vastworld erupted with power, Xu Qing closed in, his life lamp burning. That alone gave him strength equivalent to three flames, but when you added Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, his battle prowess actually surpassed the four-flame level. Without hesitation, he attacked, hoping to once again crush Vastworld.

As a dao child, Vastworld was an extraordinary individual. Right now, his expression was pure ferocity as he waved his hand, sending out drops of black rainwater. In the blink of an eye, a black sea took shape around him, which then spun viciously toward Xu Qing. Shocking rumbling echoed out as the spinning black sea turned into a huge mouth that sought to devour Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered with killing intent, and yet, he knew that he couldn't afford to stick around this place. Without any hesitation, he tapped into all 65 of his dharma apertures, as well as their spirit seas, creating a 3,000-meter lake of dharma force around him.

That mighty dharma force crushed down viciously toward Vastworld.

The mouth-shaped black sea collapsed, but so did Xu Qing's dharma force. And then Vastworld shot toward Xu Qing with all four of his life flames burning, his hand stretching toward his heart.

Xu Qing avoided the attack, then sent his knee slamming into Vastworld.

A boom rang out as they clashed. Meanwhile, the iron skewer shot in from the side, its lightning symbols glittering as it screamed right toward Vastworld's throat.

Vastworld's expression flickered, and he was about to dodge out of the way when the shadow pounced from below.

Xu Qing accelerated, balefire raging as he launched a blow toward Vastworld's forehead.

In that moment of deadly crisis, Vastworld howled and sent all the power of his life flames shooting outward, creating both an attack and a crushing pressure. Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior screamed as he spun away. Meanwhile, Xu Qing bore the brunt of the force, and his internal organs trembled, causing killing intent to once again burn in his eyes.

The shadow was also repelled, but it still managed to get a sliver of itself onto Vastworld. As it bored into him, it reached his dantian region, and just like the time when the shadow saw the Spirit Breath Lamp for the first time, it tried to extinguish the first life flame it encountered. The life flame flickered, and in the blink of an eye, it seemed like it was about to go out.

Yet again, Vastworld was shaken to the core. Inside of him, his life flames flared with light and power, and his heavenly palaces even seemed like they were working to prevent the life flame from being extinguished. Because of that, Vastworld couldn't pay close attention to everything that was happening, which gave Xu Qing the opportunity he had been seeking.

His eyes flashed with icy coldness as he considered that this was a moment of either life or death. Thus, he didn't worry about revealing what he was capable of. The golden crow appeared behind him, trailing black flames as it lunged toward the Seazombie dao child. The golden crow let loose a piercing cry as it dropped onto Vastworld's face, black fire sweeping out over his head.

Assimilate!

Xu Qing had used his shadow to create an opportunity to assimilate his opponent while he was still alive!

The two opponents were fighting each other with such speed that an ordinary observer wouldn't be able to see what was happening. And though it might seem like the Seazombie dao child was in a bad spot, he was actually incredibly strong, and it was only because Xu Qing held nothing back that he got this advantage.

In battles between two powerful experts, even slight advantages can be very important.

Xu Qing's eyes were completely vicious as he used Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits to devour his opponent. Vastworld let loose a bloodcurdling scream, and his eyes filled with terror as he realized his energy and blood was being extracted. And his head was melting! His right ear vanished. The right side of his face had turned into liquid. His good looks were being completely disfigured!

The other Seazombie cultivators were visibly astonished, to the point that they ignored the dao child's orders and charged forth to attack.

#### Chapter 190: Stealing Away

Unfortunately, the other Seazombies were too far away to provide any help. In that critical moment, Vastworld howled, yet again summoning that jade coffin. Gritting his teeth, he activated the coffin, causing a sea of light to spread out. And this time, a finger stretched out from the coffin and into the light.

It pointed to the space right in front of Xu Qing, which caused cracking sounds to echo out. Xu Qing's heart filled with a sense of imminent crisis, and his expression flickered. Without the slightest hesitation, he backed up, which was when Vastworld finally breathed a sigh of relief and also backed up.

Off to the side, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior felt like he suffered a lot in this encounter, and was very anxious because of how many times the shadow had helped out. The patriarch was convinced that if he didn't change the status quo, he would definitely end up as cannon fodder. Eyes bloodshot, he howled and detonated some of the lightning symbols to gain a burst of speed. A moment later, he managed to stab right through the arm of the shocked Vastworld.

As blood sprayed out of his arm, the Seazombie dao child's face fell.

Meanwhile, the patriarch fled, his face lit with excitement.

From a distance, it was possible to see both parties backing away from each other. However, Vastworld seemed a lot more bedraggled, while Xu Qing seemed much more at ease.

Of course, Xu Qing wasn't an arrogant person. He knew full well how spectacular Vastworld's battle prowess was. Vastworld was only in this state because he had lost the initiative, and also because Xu Qing had attacked relentlessly and used the gruish tactics of his shadow along with Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits.

Although Xu Qing was confident that he could kill this opponent eventually, he also knew that he couldn't afford to keep the fight going. Turning, he fled at top speed, his shadow and the iron skewer speeding along with him.

About half of the nearby Seazombie cultivators rushed over to Vastworld, while the other half prepared to chase Xu Qing. However, before any of them could take more than a few steps, their faces fell, and then they coughed up mouthfuls of blood. They had been poisoned!

The group who had gone to help Vastworld had also been poisoned. Flustered and exasperated, Vastworld pushed them aside, his eyes raging with killing intent, and his heart seething with humiliation.

In life, he had been a chosen from the Spiritjade people, and had sensed 120 dharma apertures within himself when reaching Foundation Establishment. After perishing, he had been zombified, after which the Seazombies had recognized his talents and placed him into the king's echelon. After that, his hard work had enabled him to step into the four-flame level.

Regardless of when he had been a Spiritjade or a Seazombie, he had never suffered any humiliation, other than the occasion on which he died. Worse, the right side of his face had been melted off, including his ear. Given how much he cared about his physical appearance, he was now going mad with fury.

"I'm going to kill you!" he howled, rubbing his face. Then, flames erupted around him as he gave chase.

Off in the distance, Xu Qing looked over his shoulder, his eyes narrowed. He was actually itching to continue the fight, but at the same time, he had just sensed three auras on the horizon, all of which surpassed the Foundation Establishment level. They were Seazombie Gold Core experts, three of them, and they were heading in his direction.

Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth, while the clouds stirred and winds screamed. It was like these three were causing an angry wave to sweep through the dome of heaven, seeking to punish all living beings.

Xu Qing inhaled sharply as a sense of crisis filled every fiber of his being. Without pausing for a moment, he pushed his cultivation base to its limits, and also tapped into everything his flesh and blood was capable of. Accelerating rapidly, he shot off into the distance.

Meanwhile, a different explosive rumbling sound could be heard behind Xu Qing, along with a howl of rage that echoed through all heaven and earth.

"Thief! I refuse to believe you can use some paltry invisibility technique to evade my Seazombie searching abilities!!"

Xu Qing recognized that voice. It was the Gold Core boy named Ying Ling, who had been chasing the Captain. Apparently, the Captain had managed to evade that pursuit without being killed.

Yet again, Xu Qing started to wonder at the truth of the Captain's identity and cultivation base. At the same time, he was feeling very anxious. The Captain was the mastermind behind this whole event, and was obviously the center of attention. But if he disappeared, then that meant everyone would be focusing on Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked at his iron skewer. Without any hesitation, the patriarch detonated several lightning symbols, creating a boost of speed that dragged Xu Qing forward rapidly.

With the help of the patriarch, Xu Qing shot along even faster. In an instant, he was 3,000 meters away, just outside the borders of the restricted area around the grotto.

As the Gold Core auras closed in, and as Ying Ling howled, his divine will sending terrifying fluctuations everywhere, Xu Qing didn't hesitate for a moment to activate one of his entropic teleportation talismans.

In the blink of an eye, he started to fade from existence. However, just when it seemed like he would teleport away, a cold snort echoed through the air.

It was an enormous Seazombie with three heads and six arms, his Gold Core aura far stronger than that of the Ying Ling.

Though he was far away, he pointed at Xu Qing and said, "Confine!"

The single word caused the space around Xu Qing to be locked down. However, his entropic teleportation talisman was powerful, and couldn't be locked down by a Gold Core confinement. It still activated, and the fluctuations of a teleportation began to roll out. Clearly, Xu Qing would disappear within moments.

"Hmm?" The Gold Core Seazombie's pupils constricted, and then he tossed out a pearl which he crushed. "Sever!"

The moment the word left his mouth, the power of the pearl connected to the entropic teleportation talisman, and then severed the teleportation link. Not only was Xu Qing incapable of teleporting away, but also, he had been hit by the Seazombie's divine ability.

A powerful will of destruction immediately began to eat away at his flesh and blood, causing them to wither.

In that moment of crisis, Xu Qing pulled out another entropic teleportation talisman and activated it.

He had originally possessed three such talismans. The first he used to escape the dragon chariot. The second had just been destroyed. This was his last one.

At the same time, his dharmaskiff appeared to defend him, only to immediately crumble. However, it had some of Joine's flesh in it, and that managed to block the power of destruction from the divine ability. As a result, what would have been a deadly blow only ended up injuring him. Blood sprayed from his mouth as every bone in his body was crushed. His life flames were extinguished, and he began to rot away. As he tumbled away, the spot he had just occupied collapsed into nothing. Even his soul seemed to be damaged.

However, thanks to that last-minute defense, his final entropic teleportation talisman fully activated. The Gold Core cultivator was closing in fast, and preparing to attack. However, the entropic teleportation talisman was a gift from the vice-peaklord of the Seventh Peak, and it had been created by a Nascent Soul cultivator. It was no ordinary talisman.

On this second attempt to escape, teleportation power surged out, wrapping around Xu Qing's blood-soaked form. Then he vanished!

The moment he was gone, the Gold Core Seazombie arrived, causing intense rumbling to fill the area.

A teleportation talisman created by a Nascent Soul cultivator. And he had two of them. He's obviously an important person. However, given the level of his cultivation base, my Spiritdepth Curse will kill him in three days or less.

Looking irritated, the Gold Core turned and went back into the restricted area.

The events that had played out were already stirring the Seazombies into a fury. A mad hunt was underway.

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Some distance away in a wide open space, there were some very faint ripples. They were so faint no one could see them, but the reality was that they were there because of the Captain.

He was covered with wounds. One arm had been severed, and he had a wound on his waist so severe that it had almost cut him in half. His aura was very weak. His one remaining hand held a seven-colored conch shell which made him completely invisible, and also concealed his aura. He had vanished without a trace. That was how he had evaded his Gold Core pursuer.

Yet, right now he was somewhat flabbergasted. He had watched in shock as Xu Qing snapped an entropic teleportation talisman and vanished. He had previously been thinking of calling out a greeting, but seeing what had played out caused him to shiver.

Gone? He left? He teleported away? I....

Inside, the Captain was howling. Everything about this endeavor had suddenly gone sideways. All the Captain had done was take a bite of that statue's toe. How could the nose have exploded? Even now, he found it all somewhat hard to believe. It wasn't that he didn't consider Xu Qing could have been involved. But the fact that the explosion happened right after he took that bite seemed to indicate that the two events were connected.

The old man didn't mention anything like this happening. Nothing so crazy played out the time he came here....

Scowling on the verge of tears, he prepared to leave, when suddenly, a bit of pride sparked to life in him.

That said, if you think about it, this just proves I'm way more formidable than the old man. This thing... was actually awesome!

Feeling a bit smug, he looked around at all the commotion, including all the Gold Core auras. There were even traces of Nascent Soul auras on the way.

Looking down at his prone body, he tried to move a bit. On the one hand, he wanted to find a place to hide. On the other hand, he was worried that he might rip his lower half off.

Worst case scenario, I'll just leave my lower half behind....

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Three days passed.

As the matter festered in the hearts of the Seazombies, they got angrier and angrier. Their mad hunt continued. To them, this was a vile matter that was humiliating in a way that words couldn't even describe.

The situation Ying Ling had most feared ended up happening. The seventh zombie ancestor's nose never grew back.

Right now, Ying Ling stood in front of that statue, his face ashen.

A middle-aged cultivator stood next to him. This cultivator wasn't human. He had two wings. And though his aura was retracted, as he stood there, Ying Ling trembled from head to toe.

"Marquis An, this whole thing—"

"Ying Ling, the king is very, very angry." Marquis An was studying the noseless divine likeness, as well as the Seazombies investigating the area. There was also a team trying to fix the nose.

In response to his words, Ying Ling trembled even harder.

Before long, the leader of the team that had been inspecting the nose came over to Marquis An.

"Marquis, the divine likeness was damaged by some very bizarre power. There's nothing we can do. The only way we might be able to fix it would be to get the missing pieces back."

Marquis An was silent for a moment. Then he sighed.

"You're telling me that one of our most holy Seazombie items, the seventh zombie ancestor divine likeness, will henceforth have no nose? And all Seazombies will know this? Is that what you mean?"