

## Timescape 211

Chapter 211: Controlled Completely

Xu Qing walked back into the house.

The Gruegloom cultivator lay on the floor, looking like the character 大. Other than his head, there was no flesh on his body. Only bones. Yet he wasn't dead. A glowing red light surrounded his head, keeping him alive. Obviously, Chen Feiyuan had used a special technique to keep the Gruegloom alive while he vented his fury.

As Xu Qing approached, the Gruegloom looked at him listlessly. Xu Qing put his hand on the Gruegloom's head and unleashed Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits. The head trembled as essence power flowed into Xu Qing.

A moment later, the Gruegloom was dead.

Shortly thereafter, in a public graveyard outside of the city, the ground exploded, sending dirt and bone fragments in all directions. A burly man with disheveled hair climbed out into the open. His expression was vicious, and his eyes gleamed with madness. Also in his eyes was unprecedented terror.

"They're both degenerates!" he growled. This burly man was of course the 'unkillable' Gruegloom. He had invested a lot to prepare this body ahead of time and then put it into a state of suspended animation. It was unusual in that it had the capability to sustain a three-flame cultivation base. He'd hoped to avoid using this body, as it would be very disappointing to lose it. But right now, he was out of options.

He didn't dare to stay inside the city anymore. It didn't matter whether he hid in one of the eight great clans or not, he was in extreme danger. This opponent seemed able to stay as close to him as marrow was to bone. And the grue factor caused him to feel unrivaled danger. The enemy's grue had a power that seemed similar to the Gruegloom's, so much so that, at long last, the Gruegloom was experiencing the same dread its own victims faced.

Thinking about it all, the now-burly Gruegloom shivered. After looking around to confirm that he was outside of the Violet Lands, he breathed a sigh of relief.

He shouldn't be able to track me down anytime soon. I'm too far away. And thus, I should be able to make my escape.

Even still, he had no idea who was after him. Face grim, he turned, ignited his life flame and entered the profound radiance state, then started moving at top speed.

After the first time I died, it took him a whole night to find me. After the second time, it took him two hours. After the third time, it was an hour....

After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, the Gruegloom's expression flickered, and he looked over his shoulder to see a beam of light rumbling through the air in his direction. Within that beam of light was a middle-aged man who seemed to burn with scorching fire and crush everything around him with the pressure he emanated. The Gruegloom, despite having a three-flame cultivation base, still felt his eyes stinging just at the sight of it.

So fast!

He couldn't have been more astonished. He had previously thought he understood what kind of person he was dealing with, but now he realized his assessment was off. Based on what he was feeling, this person's power surpassed that of three flames. It was...

Four flames?

Sweat broke out on his forehead. Without the slightest hesitation, he ignited the rest of his three flames, and started barreling forward with frantic speed.

He was correct. Xu Qing did indeed have the power of four flames! With his life lamp lit, Xu Qing had power equivalent to two life flames. With his second life flame lit, he had battle prowess the same as three flames. And when you added in the fleshly body blessing of Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits, then it was only natural that his battle prowess was comparable to four flames!

The reason he had been able to track down the Gruegloom so quickly was thanks to the direction provided by his shadow.

And because Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits had absorbed some of the Gruegloom's essence, to Xu Qing, the Gruegloom stood out like a bright torch on a dark night.

As soon as the Gruegloom resurrected, Xu Qing sensed him, and was able to reach him in the time it takes an incense stick to burn.

When Xu Qing spotted him, his eyes burned with killing intent. Given the speed he was capable of, it seemed like the Gruegloom was moving in slow motion. In the blink of an eye, Xu Qing arrived and launched a palm strike at him.

Blood sprayed out of the burly Gruegloom's mouth as he flopped out of the sky like a kite with its string cut. When he slammed into the ground, a boom erupted. As the Gruegloom struggled to his feet in the crater, Xu Qing closed in again, smashing his knee into his opponent's chest.

Blood poured out of the burly Gruegloom's mouth as he flopped backward. Then Xu Qing stepped onto his chest, eyes filled with animosity as he produced a dagger. He stabbed the Gruegloom once, twice, three times, four times. Seven times. Then he picked the Gruegloom up, broke his arm, then head-butted him.

The burly Gruegloom screamed. His bones were broken, and it was in a horrifically mangled state. Compared to Xu Qing, his three-flame power made him incapable of defending himself. And now, the terror and astonishment in his eyes reached new heights. It was now pure madness. Finally, he threw his head back and howled and prepared to detonate his life flames and kill Xu Qing along with himself.

However, the power of self-detonation fizzled as the shadow entered him and swept over his life flames.

The volcanic eruption inside him faded into nothing.

Because of how his profound radiance state was instantly severed, he suffered a backlash, causing popping sounds to ring out as many of his dharma apertures collapsed. He fell onto the ground, bleeding profusely. He could already guess what torment was coming, and thus, he quickly tried to smash himself in the head to kill himself.

Except, a black skewer appeared, stabbing through his hand and preventing him from landing the blow.

As his suicide attempt failed, Xu Qing arrived, killing intent swirling in his eyes. A sharp cry pierced the air as a golden crow appeared, gracefully gliding through the air before it started viciously absorbing the Gruegloom.

The Gruegloom shivered as his energy and blood swept out of him toward the golden crow, within which was his essence.

Then, Xu Qing stabbed his finger into the Gruegloom's eye and shattered his skull.

In the moment before dying, a calm but nightmarish voice reached the Gruegloom's ear.

"Don't be too quick to tell me what I want to know. This is fun.... See you soon."

An instant later, in the wilderness outside the Violet Lands capital city, a rabbit suddenly jumped out of the undergrowth and started racing away at top speed.

However, after less time passed than it takes half an incense stick to burn, a black dot appeared in the sky that raced in the direction of the rabbit.

It was a cinereous vulture. Instead of trying to capture the rabbit, however, it slammed into it, causing it to explode into a mass of blood and gore. The vulture also died, but just before it did, a cruel voice echoed out from within it. [1]

"Hello."

Moments after the rabbit died, a snake started wriggling out of a tree. After a fraction of an incense stick's worth of time passed, a black iron skewer shot through the air and nailed the snake to the tree. As terror still flickered in the eyes of the dead snake, a goshawk in the air started flapping its wings even harder than before. The only thing that awaited it was a golden crow.

As time passed, similar scenes played out over and over in the wilderness. It didn't matter that the Gruegloom was using his innate ability to its ultimate limits. Every single time, he ran into a black iron skewer, or a golden crow, or another possessed animal, or Xu Qing himself. His mind was growing unstable. He had died over and over again. Each instance of dying drained him only a small bit. But when added on top of each other, the effect grew more and more pronounced.

And every time it happened, he felt like he was losing more and more of himself. Eventually it reached the point that, when he was trying to possess a coyote, he experienced interference.

He's taking away my innate ability!

When the Gruegloom cultivator realized that, it shook him to the core. Then Xu Qing caught him and started absorbing him.

"I only have three more times!" he blurted. "Then I'll die for real! And if I die you'll never find out who's behind this!!"

The only response he got was a palm strike from Xu Qing. He exploded, and before he died, a sliver of his essence was taken by the golden crow.

After thirty breaths of time passed, a black crow in the sky called out, “You’re from Seven Blood Eyes, right? I can tell from the fluctuations of your techniques. I’m willing to say who the mastermind is. But I’ll only tell Master Sixth!!”

In the blink of an eye, the iron skewer pierced the crow, and Xu Qing watched expressionlessly as it dropped out of the sky. Then Xu Qing looked down at the ground for a moment before landing and stamping his foot. Cracks spread out over the surface of the ground, revealing a pangolin huddling below.

Fear filled the pangolin’s eyes as it frantically transmitted divine will.

“Bring it on! Put me to death. Once I’m dead, you’ll never get answers. Take me to Seven Blood Eyes to see Master Sixth and tell everything!!”

Xu Qing pulled his hand back and then smacked the pangolin.

Insanity filled the Gruegloom pangolin’s eyes, and his mind was on the verge of collapse. Yet despite the sense of impending doom that filled him, he refused to talk.

Xu Qing’s hand stopped briefly, then he grabbed the pangolin and examined it coldly.

Only a moment later, Xu Qing started moving toward the teleport spot the Captain had prepared. It wasn’t far away, so it only took him a moment to reach it. It was a mountainous valley, within which was an abandoned teleportation portal. Stepping onto it, Xu Qing produced his identity medallion and touched it to the surface. Then he waited.

A short time passed, then the portal activated, and the teleportation began.

At that exact moment, the pangolin in Xu Qing’s hands shivered and went limp. In an instant, it died. However, right before it died, a new light of teleportation glittered, as if someone had teleported away from that spot before the portal fully activated.

The Gruegloom cultivator had clearly been bluffing. He only wanted Xu Qing to go to a teleportation portal knowing that he had a special way to make a clean getaway. And of course, he had used some unknown method to teleport away to a location no one could possibly identify.

After that, the teleportation light disappeared, and Xu Qing was still standing there.

The Gruegloom cultivator had disappeared, but Xu Qing didn’t seem surprised. Nor was he angry. Glancing down at the dead pangolin, he tossed it to the side.

Then he closed his eyes for a moment. After, he opened them, and they glittered with a profound light.

“I’m in a bit of a hurry,” he murmured. “Don’t waste time going to meet the mastermind.”

Chapter 212: So, It Was You All Along!

Meanwhile, not very far away from Seven Blood Eyes near the Forbidden Sea was another abandoned teleportation portal. It flickered with light, and then a mist appeared above it, which gradually took a humanoid shape.

After the teleportation was complete, the figure smashed the teleportation portal to bits. Then he breathed a sigh of relief before throwing his head back and laughing long and hard. The mist grew denser, eventually revealing the features of a middle-aged man, his face filled with extreme complacency.

The truth was that, in the end, he had hoped to be captured by Xu Qing and then use the power of the teleportation portal to activate a secret magic. Everything had gone according to plan.

I haven't lost too much time. Next, I just need to get to my employer and recite the formula for the supreme yin chosen assimilation pill, which I already memorized. As of now, I'm the only one who knows it, so if she doesn't hand over the payment item I want, she can forget about ever getting the formula.

Laughing coldly, he burst into motion.

As he sped through the moonlit wilderness, he didn't notice that, within his shadow... an eye opened. He was a grue, but he still had a shadow, and as long as that was the case, he was vulnerable to Xu Qing's shadow. Xu Qing had intentionally let the Gruegloom get away. He had never believed the story about wanting to talk to Master Sixth. His plan all along had been to lure the Gruegloom into a sense of safety, then follow him to discover the identity of the true killer!

Back when searching for countless ghosts haunting the night, Xu Qing came to a clear understanding of how the shadow eyes worked. When they were very far away, the images they conveyed became blurry, but they could still impart a general sense of direction.

Opening his eyes, he made some adjustments to the teleportation portal. The other teleportation portal had been destroyed, but that didn't matter. He had a direction to move in.

A moment later, he vanished.

Meanwhile, the Gruegloom cultivator was speeding along through the night near the waterfront. On more than one occasion, he looked over his shoulder, and the entire time, he was keeping close watch on his surroundings.

Despite confirming that he wasn't being followed, he was still being very cautious. Sadly for him, he didn't understand how Xu Qing's shadow operated, and had no idea that his own shadow had an eye in it.

That said, the Gruegloom cultivator was being very cautious. He didn't immediately go to the spot where his employer waited. He spent the entire night taking a roundabout route before eventually going to the shore. Eventually, he spotted a merchant vessel off in the distance.

"Hey!" he shouted. "Come meet me! I have the item you want!"

Then he stood there, quietly keeping an eye on his surroundings. However, he never noticed the eye in his shadow, which was narrowed to a slit, but was still observing him closely. After a long moment in which nothing happened, the Gruegloom turned and started moving in a different direction. Obviously, his words shouted to the merchant vessel had been an act to lure out any potential enemies in the area.

By now, he was finally starting to feel safe. Looking very pleased with himself as the light of dawn began to spread, he eventually reached the shore and jumped into the water. A moment later, a swordfish nearby shivered, then changed directions and started moving at high speed.

However... the shadow eye was locked onto the Gruegloom's true form, so even when he possessed a new body, the shadow eye stuck with him. Grues existed on different levels, and the shadow was obviously on a much, much higher level than the Gruegloom. In fact, it was almost like the shadow was the grue's ultimate nemesis.

Meanwhile, the shadow was pulsing with faint emotions. It had come to realize that it and the Gruegloom were a good match. If it hadn't attempted to possess Xu Qing but instead this Gruegloom....

The shadow suddenly forced itself to stop thinking such evil thoughts. No, the Gruegloom was not a good match for it. It didn't measure up to Fiendish Xu, and was only food. How could the shadow possibly consider possessing food?

The thoughts made the shadow feel embarrassed but at the same time terrified as it recalled the torment it had endured at the hands of Fiendish Xu. Forcing itself to cheer up, it worked hard on observing what was happening and conveying the information to Xu Qing.

The Gruegloom had no idea what was happening.

Time passed. The possessed swordfish sped through the water, taking a wide, arcing path. The Gruegloom switched hosts seven or eight times, picking a different sea beast each time. Finally, on the evening of the second day, it possessed a starfish.

Riding the waves, the starfish eventually landed on a black sand beach within Seven Blood Eyes territory.

Seawater dripped down onto the black sand, and moonlight shone down onto the frothy water. Everything was mysterious and quiet.

The Gruegloom starfish lay on the sand, not moving at all.

Time passed, and the night wore on. Eventually, the deepest part of night came and went. Dawn was approaching.... Soon it would be time for the sun to replace the moon.

Similarly... within the pre-dawn light, shadowy figures appeared in the distance.

There were four of them.

They wore black daoist robes with hoods that covered their heads, making it impossible to make out their facial features. In fact, the robes were so voluminous it was impossible to tell if these people were human or not.

None of them released any cultivation base fluctuations, and there was also a strange blurry haze around them. It was something that blocked divine sense, and was not the result of a magical device, but rather, an innate species ability.

The four figures walked along the beach until they eventually reached the Gruegloom in starfish form. When they stopped, one of them just stood there, while the other three moved away in three different directions. Some distance away, they produced disc-like objects which they placed on the ground and studied. They were obviously scanning the area. After finishing, they turned around and stood in place respectfully.

A breeze blew across the shore, carrying with it the pungent aroma of the sea. As it did, it stirred the garment of the figure standing next to the starfish. As the hood of the garment shifted... a strand of blue hair appeared!

Simultaneously, the figure within the hood spoke in a melodious voice.

“You’re late.”

The starfish on the ground responded, “I almost got killed in the Violet Lands. You didn’t tell me this mission was going to involve dealing with a degenerate psycho! He was more of a grue than me!”

“We had no idea that would happen,” came the response. “You’ll be fully compensated. Now, hand over the item.”

The breeze picked up, enough that the hood of the robe tumbled back, revealing an extremely pretty face. She had a mass of blue hair, as well as bright blue eyes, with skin as fair as jade. She was none other than... the Seastar princess who had come to visit Seven Blood Eyes! [1]

Upon arriving at Harbor 176, she had given Xu Qing a conch shell, and had frequently come to visit him afterward. On none of those occasions did she ever seem like she was plotting or scheming, and had always seemed to admire Xu Qing. She had asked a lot of seemingly random questions, but if you considered the group of questions as a whole... it was obvious she had been trying to learn more about Xu Qing’s personality and habits.

When you know a lot about someone, you can target them easier. All of it had been part of her plan. Everything had been devised with Xu Qing in mind.

“Hey, slow down,” the Gruegloom said. “Considering all of the chosen you’ve captured over the years, including many from Seven Blood Eyes, you have plenty of primary medicinal ingredients. You said you would compensate me, so I also want a supreme yin chosen assimilation pill!”

While the princess stared down at the starfish, one of the other black-robed Seastar people said, “Princess, we don’t have much time left. The elders’ powers are limited, and they can only keep us concealed for so long before Seven Blood Eyes notices something.”

“You’ll be rewarded back in our territory. Don’t worry, you can go back with us.” Without the slightest hesitation, the princess reached down and picked up the Gruegloom in starfish form.

However, right then...

A cold voice rang out, filled with killing intent.

“So, it was you all along!”

The moment the voice started talking, the Gruegloom starfish trembled and unhesitatingly self-detonated, killing himself.

At the same time, the Seastar princess’ expression flickered, and she shot backward. The other three Seastar cultivators immediately unleashed their cultivation bases to protect her.

She reacted too slowly. A figure moved with lightning-like speed in her direction. No longer was this person disguised as a middle-aged man. It was Xu Qing in his true form. Within him was a burning force like a continent on fire, and he was surrounded by a massive sea of black flames. And his killing intent surged to heaven.

Beneath his feet was a massive bluegreen dragon, like a vicious avenger, and behind him was a golden crow surrounded by black fire. Xu Qing was not holding back anything. He was letting all of his murderous rage out!

“Xu Qing!!!” the Seastar princess blurted, her pupils constricting. But before she could back away, Xu Qing was right in front of her, launching a blow. Intense rumbling sounds echoed out as the ground below exploded. A huge crater opened up, and all four of the Seastar cultivators coughed up mouthfuls of blood.

One of them stepped forward to defend against the attack, but Xu Qing, in his rage, directed a palm strike at him, causing him to explode and be absorbed by the golden crow.

Xu Qing also extracted his soul, imprisoning it in a dharma aperture.

The remaining three Seastars were visibly flabbergasted. Without any hesitation, all three of them tapped into the full potential of their cultivation bases. Shockingly, two of them were in the two-flame level, and one was in the three-flame level!

The one with the three flames was the princess herself!

However, their cultivation bases were completely useless. Their life flames flickered unstably, and obviously wouldn't remain lit for long. Meanwhile, Xu Qing, full of rage, erupted with tempestuous killing intent as he closed in on them.

### Chapter 213: Blood-Soaked Garments

Xu Qing had been keeping his killing intent bottled up for a long time. From the moment he found out Grandmaster Bai had been assassinated, insane rage had filled him, seeking a release. Seeking slaughter.

But that wasn't possible at the time. He had suppressed the killing intent, and forced himself to remain calm. It was the same in the Violet Lands. He had been very cautious, and had forced himself not to outright kill the culprit when he found him.

Instead, he had unleashed torment on him, all with the goal of finding out who the mastermind was. He had eventually found the clue he needed. And now he didn't need to suppress the killing intent. Instead, he let it erupt.

In the blink of an eye, he arrived in front of one of the Seastar cultivators.

She had two life flames, but as Xu Qing neared, they flickered wildly, as though they might wink out at any moment. Then, it was with extreme animosity and utter madness that he shoved his hand right into her abdomen. Slipping his fingers around one of her life flames, he crushed it out of existence!

A boom rang out, along with a tragic scream. In her entire life, this Seastar cultivator had never experienced pain on the same level as having one of her life flames destroyed.

But Xu Qing wasn't done yet. Wrenching his hand to the side, he grabbed her other life flame and dragged it out of her in a spray of blood. As it was destroyed, the Seastar cultivator's dharma apertures all exploded.

An even more anguish screamed rang out, but it rapidly grew weak. Blood spilled out of her eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, yet Xu Qing's killing intent had not lessened. He head-butted her viciously, causing her delicately beautiful face to explode like a smashed piece of fruit.

Xu Qing was soaked in blood as he grimly turned his head to look at the remaining two Seastar cultivators, including the princess. Behind him, the golden crow let loose a piercing, vicious cry. It attempted to absorb the fresh corpse but there was nothing there to absorb, so then it turned its brutal gaze onto the princess. Beneath the moonlight, Xu Qing's baleful aura made him seem like a ferocious god, while the golden crow seemed like an apex beast, its energy causing heaven and earth to shake violently.

The Seastar princess' face was pale, and her eyes shone with terror. "Xu Qing, this whole thing—" "Get out of here, Princess!!" the other Seastar cultivator shouted. His entire body burst with light as his life flame burned and his dharma apertures all erupted. A force of self-detonation began to build, while at the same time, he performed an incantation gesture to tap into the three discs that had been set up in the area. The three discs erupted with a shocking aura, creating numerous bolts of lightning that shot up into the air like a net, surrounding Xu Qing.

Seeing that, the Seastar princess gritted her teeth, turned, and dashed toward the sea. She knew that if she went back to Seven Blood Eyes, she would never leave.

However, just before she reached the water, a huge sea turtle suddenly burst out in front of her, its eyes flashing with terror and despair. At the same time, it growled cruelly as it snapped its mouth in the princess' direction. An iron skewer flew from Xu Qing toward her like a black streak through the air. In the blink of an eye, the sea turtle slammed into the princess, while at the same time, the skewer hit her from the other direction.

As that happened, killing intent flared in Xu Qing's eyes as the lightning net from the three discs tightened around him. That was when the power of Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits surged within him.

He looked up, and the golden crow behind him howled and shot forth like an arrow from a bow, its phoenix-like tail trailing black flames. It slammed into the net, and the net collapsed. Then cracking sounds rang out as the three discs exploded into bits.

Xu Qing was unstoppable! He was currently unleashing every scrap of four-flame battle prowess possible. Because of that, trifling two-flame cultivators and their magical devices simply couldn't stand up to him.

Xu Qing then vanished, only to reappear in front of the Seastar cultivator trying to self-detonate. Reaching out, he put his hand on the cultivator's head. Unimaginable terror and despair filled the cultivator's eyes as Xu Qing then unleashed the power of absorption. Balefire erupted, extracting the Seastar cultivator's soul. The pain caused him to scream shrilly. Then he began trembling violently as Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits also began to absorb him.

Energy and blood shot out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. In the space of only two breaths of time, the Seastar cultivator became a desiccated corpse that toppled over and collapsed into ashes.

Meanwhile, the sea turtle and the iron skewer had blocked the path of the Seastar princess, whose face was now as pale as death. Only moments had passed, yet all of her fellow Seastars were dead. Turning, she saw Xu Qing walking toward her, surging with a baleful aura. Terror pushed her mind toward the breaking point.

She suddenly thought back to when Xu Qing fought that girl in black from Eastnether Isle, and the fiendish reputation he had garnered in the Violent Crimes Division. She also thought back to his beautiful face, which she had gazed at so many times when she went to visit him.

Everything overlapping, merging together into a reality filled with unspeakable horror. She flew backward, but not fast enough. Her shock gave Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior the opening he needed to send the iron skewer stabbing through her abdomen. Then it spun around and stabbed toward her again.

As a scream escaped her lips, the sea turtle opened its mouth, bit down on her elbow, and ripped her arm off. It chewed, a mad expression on its face, but terror deep in its eyes.

The sea turtle was the Gruegloom cultivator, which he had possessed after dying in the starfish form. However, before it could flee, it suddenly found that it couldn't control this new body at all. It was a familiar sensation, but there was nothing it could do but watch in despair as it turned around and swam back to the shore.

And now, the Seastar princess, who had been stabbed through multiple times, and seemed to be on the verge of total mental collapse, looked at Xu Qing. Trembling, she piteously wept and said, "Xu Qing, I'm a victim in this too. I also—"

Before she could say anything else, Xu Qing slapped her, causing her face to swell up, sending teeth flying and cracking her skull. The slap also seemed to damage her thinking ability, and caused her limbs to start twitching spasmodically. The slap also extinguished two of her life flames. Before she could recover, he stepped toward her and slapped her again. She screamed as the other side of her face swelled up, and more teeth flew out intermixed with blood. This time, her skull seemed almost completely shattered.

Also, her final life flame exploded out of existence. Then Xu Qing stepped forward and viciously planted his foot onto the wounds on her abdomen. Blood sprayed out of her mouth as all of her dharma apertures shattered, and her cultivation base was crippled.

The pain caused her to teeter on the verge of passing out. But then Xu Qing shoved a medicinal pill into her mouth, ensuring that her life force would last longer, and preventing her from going unconscious.

She lay there screaming from the pain, her face twisting and distorting. As of now, there was no terror in her eyes. Only madness and malice. She opened her mouth to speak, but before she could, Xu Qing punched her, turning her mouth into a mangled mess.

Coldly eying her, Xu Qing took a deep breath and waved his hand, causing the bluegreen dragon to quickly consume the sea turtle and then float up into the air. Meanwhile, Xu Qing grabbed the Seastar princess and started walking, dragging her behind him.

The grains of beach sand were like knives, slicing agonizingly through the Seastar princess' wounded flesh, and making her pain even more intense than it had been just from the destruction of her dharma apertures. At this point, her screams almost seemed animalistic.

As Xu Qing walked, he left behind a long, bloody streak in the sand.

As the streak of blood grew longer and longer, the screams grew weaker and weaker. Eventually, Xu Qing was nearing the border created by the Seven Blood Eyes Formation.

When he spotted the city, he said, "Xu Qing, member of the Seven Blood Eyes Echelon and director of the Seventh Peak's Violent Crimes Division, reporting for duty. The Seastar people have rebelled. I hereby request that the sect's grand spell formation prevent all Seastar cultivators from teleporting away. Furthermore, do not let them send any messages!"

The spell formation rumbled to life as if to assess his request. But then, the voice of an old man spoke from the Sixth Peak.

"Request granted!"

As the voice echoed left and right, the Seven Blood Eyes Formation activated, creating a force of suppression. Meanwhile, numerous figures flew toward Xu Qing from inside the sect.

The fastest among them was Master Sixth, who seemed to span the distance with a single step. His Nascent Soul cultivation base was like a burning sun to Xu Qing, creating maddening scorching heat all around him.

"What did you find out, Xu Qing?"

Xu Qing took a deep breath as he forced himself to acclimate to the immense pressure of a Nascent Soul cultivator. Clapping hands, he said, "Master Sixth, a soulsearch will be most efficient!"

With that, Xu Qing threw the princess onto the ground in front of Master Sixth. Master Sixth was struggling to control his breathing. Any of the other peaklords would have been much more hesitant to perform a soulsearch simply because Xu Qing suggested it. But he was different. Without the slightest hesitation, he reached out, clamped his hand onto the Seastar princess' head, and began a soulsearch!

Shortly thereafter, the Captain arrived with a handful of others. Looking very serious as he took stock of the situation, he walked over to Xu Qing. He noted the screaming Seastar princess, and also saw the baleful aura that surrounded the expressionless Xu Qing. He clasped Xu Qing's shoulder.

"Your Elder Brother will bear this burden with you, little Ah Qing!"

Chapter 214: Dharmic Decree of Extermination

Xu Qing's eyes were bloodshot as he turned and looked at the Captain.

"Life is a unique thing, little Ah Qing. It's full of both bitter grief and sweet happiness. It never has just one or the other. In fact, it can't. Not even the god above us in the sky can change that. We're people, not animals, and therefore... I understand your sorrow, and I understand your rage. I guess what I'm trying to say is, do what you have to do. Follow your heart, and live life the way you want to live it."

The Captain smiled, and it seemed as bright as the sun.

That light entered Xu Qing's eyes and illuminated the killing intent within him, provoking an unusual sensation. He didn't say anything in response. He didn't hear things like that very often. Only two people had ever talked to him about the principles of life, and they were Sergeant Thunder and Grandmaster Bai. A moment passed, and then Xu Qing looked at the Captain and nodded solemnly. Then he turned back and waited for Master Sixth to finish the soulsearch.

Xu Qing had handed over the Seastar princess, but not the Gruegloom. He had not yet inflicted enough torment on the Gruegloom, nor had he extracted all the information there was to be had from him.

Now that the mastermind had been unmasked, whatever further information was needed would be provided by the Seastar princess.

As Master Sixth performed the soulsearch, he trembled, and veins bulged on his face and neck. He muttered in rage, then suddenly barked an exclamation of surprise. Finally, it seemed he had seen everything he had needed to see, as he let loose a shout of rage. The Seastar princess exploded into a haze of blood as Master Sixth extracted her soul and popped it into his mouth. As he chewed the soul viciously, his eyes turned completely bloodshot.

Without uttering a single word, he performed an incantation gesture and pointed to the sky. In response, the Seven Blood Eyes Formation rumbled, and streams of light shot down from it to a specific section of the capital city. The ground quaked, shaking the city, and screams of agony rang out as numerous figures were dragged up into the air by the beams of light.

There seemed to be around two hundred of them, all Seastar cultivators. Shockingly, three of them were Gold Core experts, and they seemed particularly alarmed and shocked.

They struggled in vain. The Seven Blood Eyes Formation was so powerful that no matter how they fought back, it did nothing. A moment later, Master Sixth clenched his hand into a fist.

The two hundred Seastar cultivators were wrenched through the air in front of Master Sixth. The force was so intense that many of them couldn't stand up to it, and their bodies were ripped to shreds. Those who survived lurched to a stop in front of him, trembling in terror.

Eyes full of vicious rage, Master Sixth inhaled sharply. Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth, and an intense wind sprang up. All of the cultivators hovering in the air screamed shrilly as their bodies rapidly withered, and their souls were extracted. It was possible to see soul shadow streams emerging from their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths, which then streamed to Master Sixth. That included the Gold Core cultivators. It seemed that, to Master Sixth, there was no difference between Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, and Gold Core!

Master Sixth began chewing up the roughly two hundred souls as he simultaneously extracted information from them. As he did, his eyes became even more deeply bloodshot. Agonized shrieks rang out until, eventually, all of the souls had been consumed.

Master Sixth closed his eyes for the space of a few breaths worth of time. Then he opened them, revealing towering killing intent. Taking a deep breath, he looked at Xu Qing.

It was a struggle, but Xu Qing managed to stand up to the terrifying pressure of the Nascent Soul level as he looked back at Master Sixth.

“Xu Qing, I owe you for this. If Master Seventh doesn’t take you in, then I want you to be one of my successor apprentices!”

With that, Master Sixth produced a blue jade slip. It was different from any type of jade slip Xu Qing had ever seen before. It didn’t look like it was made from spirit stone, but rather, some material that was even more precious than that. And it pulsed with an aura comparable to the Gold Core level.

Hefting the blue jade slip, Master Sixth quietly said, “Seventh Sib!”

The truth was that he didn’t need to speak the words audibly. He could have projected them via divine will. However, because Xu Qing was responsible for bringing everything to light, he spoke out loud to make sure that Xu Qing could hear.

“I got to the bottom of it,” he said quietly. “Years ago, the Seastar people acquired the first half of the formula for the supreme yin chosen assimilation pill. After that, they secretly started kidnapping chosen disciples from species far and wide. They worked hard to keep the matter top secret. There were many, many victims over the years, and one of them was my son.

“The active ingredient in the drug is already complete, but they were missing the second half of the formula. That’s why they assassinated Grandmaster Bai.

“The Seastars came to Seven Blood Eyes to further this conspiracy of theirs. Every part of the plan, from the kidnapping of the chosen to the murder of Grandmaster Bai, was ordered directly by the Seastar chieftain. On the surface, it seems like a very daring plan.

“But the reality is that the Seastars are weak. They don’t even have a single Nascent Soul expert. Even if it turns out their patriarch was in on it, and helped them cover everything up, it’s not possible that a group like the Seastars could pull off something this incredible without leaking any clues.

“There has to be someone else involved that we don’t know about. What do you suggest we do?”

Off to the side, Xu Qing struggled to breathe steadily. His eyes burned with killing intent, and he radiated a baleful aura. He heard the Seastar chieftain was the ultimate mastermind, and also heard Master Sixth suggest that there was someone else involved in the conspiracy. As for who that mysterious conspirator was, Xu Qing had the feeling they would find out soon. However, at the moment, his biggest desire was to slaughter the Seastar chieftain.

As Xu Qing’s killing intent simmered, he heard Master Seventh’s voice coming from the blue jade slip.

“The Seastar people violated our alliance treaty, and thus deserve to be exterminated. Time is of the essence, but I’m unable to return....”

“You don’t need to return,” Master Sixth replied. “If you don’t mind, confirm with the patriarch that it’s okay for me to handle it. I’ve been keeping this bottled up for years. I’m ready for a slaughter.”

The killing intent in Master Sixth’s eyes was just as intense as Xu Qing’s, to the point where it seemed he might not be able to control it much longer. For the space of about a dozen breaths of time, there was no response from the jade slip. Then, a grim, hoarse voice echoed out from it.

“Sixth Apprentice, heed my command!”

“Patriarch!” Master Sixth said respectfully. Xu Qing, the Captain, and the others present all bowed their heads.

“You’ve had it rough all these years.... Make sure that none of the Seastar people survive. Exterminate them all!”

Master Sixth looked up, and his eyes radiated madness. Xu Qing also looked up, and his eyes overflowed with killing intent.

“Your orders shall be followed, Patriarch!” Master Sixth took a deep breath, then threw his head back and laughed long and hard. There was nothing joyous about that laughter. Instead, it contained boundless grief and madness, and toward the end, it almost sounded like weeping. Then he waved his hand, and the distant Sixth Peak started rumbling loudly. After a moment, the entire mountain peak rose up into the air in a massive cloud of dust. Deafening rumbling sounds echoed out in all directions, while an indescribable pressure weighed down.

At the same time, countless mansion grottoes on the Sixth Peak opened up, and disciples poured out, including many Foundation Establishment disciples, and even Gold Core experts as well.

Although most of the Sixth Peak disciples were on the Seazombie battlefield, if there was one thing the Sixth Peak didn’t lack it was magical devices and puppets. Terrifying rumbling sounds echoed out as countless puppets flew out into the air, numbering in the thousands. At the same time, numerous magical devices appeared, all of them designed for warfare.

From a distance, the majestic Sixth Peak, glittering with boundless light, and pulsing with immense pressure and energy, looked like a gigantic floating fortress!

Master Sixth strode forward, and as he neared, the Sixth Peak trembled. The puppets, the Foundation Establishment disciples, and the Gold Core experts all dropped to their knees and kowtowed.

“Our respects, Peaklord!”

The sound of their voices echoed up into heaven.

Xu Qing was deeply shaken.

Even the Captain’s eyes were wide as he murmured, “The old man said he and Sect Uncle Sixth both used to be famous chosen, but that over the years, Sect Uncle Sixth wallowed so much in grief

that he got careless with his cultivation... Is this what careless cultivation looks like? He turned the entire Sixth Peak into a freaking fortress. This is unheard-of! We didn't even see anything like this in the Seazombie war."

Master Sixth suddenly stopped in midair and looked down coldly at the Captain. The Captain shrank back. Then Master Sixth's gaze shifted to Xu Qing, and his eyes softened.

"Xu Qing, take this to keep you safe." He waved his hand, and from within the alcohol gourd that hadn't left his hand for years, a stream of light appeared and shot toward Xu Qing. Along the way, it transformed into a blue pendant. It stopped in front of Xu Qing, floating in the air and radiating magnificent light. Based on what Xu Qing could sense, it contained a boundless power of protection.

"Nascent Soul shield!!" the Captain breathed, his eyes wide with envy.

"Also, Xu Qing," Master Sixth continued, "go to that museum of yours in Harbor 176. Get the scroll with the patriarch's calligraphy. Those four characters each contain a divine ability. With that scroll in hand, plus my shield, you can come with me to slaughter Seastars to your heart's content! You will have your revenge!! The two of us are going to vent our hearts out today!"

With that, Master Sixth stepped onto the Sixth Peak.

Xu Qing nodded. He was ready for killing. He wanted to cut down any Seastar he saw. He wanted to kill the Seastar chieftain. He wanted to kill until blood flowed like a river. If he didn't, his frustration couldn't be dispelled. If he didn't, his teacher couldn't rest in peace.

"Orders heard, Master Sixth!" Xu Qing clasped hands, then raced toward the Port District. Upon reaching the museum, he nodded to the two Gold Core elders standing guard, took the patriarch's calligraphy scroll, and then headed toward the Sixth Peak.

Together with the Captain, he stepped onto the Sixth Peak. After that, intense rumbling sounds echoed out, and heaven and earth seemed to distort as the entire mountain peak pierced through the air toward the Forbidden Sea.

As it moved, the entire mountain suddenly grew blurry, and then it disappeared in a greater teleportation!

Death was coming to the Seastar people!

Chapter 215: Fury Burning the Sea

The Sixth Peak of Seven Blood Eyes had been transformed by Master Sixth into a huge fortress.

Other than Master Sixth, no one knew exactly how many magical devices were hidden in the Sixth Peak, or what exactly the fortress was capable of, as this was the first time it had been deployed. Its might was not fully on display, but when it disappeared via greater teleportation, all onlookers were shocked to the core.

A greater teleportation was a divine ability that far surpassed a minor teleportation. It was capable of a much greater range, though at the cost of immense dharma force. What was more, it could only be imagined how much dharma force was required to teleport an entire mountain fortress.

In the blink of an eye, the huge mountain appeared in the air far, far, away over the Forbidden Sea. Beneath it, the sea roiled and countless sea beasts looked up, trembling. None of them dared come up to the surface. The merchant ships were like leaves on the water. The cultivators on those ships looked up at the gigantic mountain, and their expressions were that of astonishment.

Even being on the mountain, Xu Qing was also shocked. Next to him, the Captain looked left and right, his eyes glittering.

Standing ahead of them was Master Sixth, holding his alcohol gourd. His face was grim, and his blood seemed to be boiling. As he directed the Sixth Peak forward, thunder rumbled in the sky, and lightning shot down like silver snakes.

“The Seastars have a small population,” Master Sixth said coolly, “especially when compared to Seven Blood Eyes. They’re not even as numerous as the Merfolk. They only have seven Gold Core cultivators, and I already killed three of them. That leaves four.

“The strongest is the Seastar patriarch, who’s in the great circle of Gold Core. However, I suspect he might have broken through secretly, and has been keeping his true level hidden. The other three are in the early Gold Core level. That includes the Seastar chieftain, who’s the son of the patriarch.

“The fact that such a minor species would dare to provoke Seven Blood Eyes, as well as other species with powerful chosen, hints that something else is going on here. Therefore, be careful, Xu Qing. It’s possible... that the Seastars are keeping something very powerful hidden.”

Xu Qing nodded silently.

The Captain didn’t say anything. In fact, because Master Sixth and Xu Qing weren’t paying attention to him, he stepped over to the face of the mountain and rubbed it thoughtfully. From the gleam in his eyes... it seemed he was really fond of it.

Before the Captain could take much time to examine the mountain, deep rumbling sounds echoed out as the entire peak underwent a second greater teleportation. This time... it reappeared in the air above the Seastars’ homeland.

They occupied a single island that lay roughly between Seven Blood Eyes and the Merfolk Isles. Looking at it from above, it resembled a huge starfish, although the truth was that the Seastars had built it that way from the ground up. It wasn’t actually some immense living starfish. There were five major cities, most of the buildings were made from coral. Even more unique was the fact that Seastar Island was covered with coral trees! They were massive, and at night, they emitted a five-colored glow. During the daytime, though, they were gray. There were buildings constructed on the huge coral trees as well.

The population of the island seemed to be in the hundreds of thousands. Having benefited from the protection of Seven Blood Eyes for many years, they had not suffered any difficulties, and had prospered greatly.

The sudden appearance of the Sixth Peak obviously attracted immediate attention. Although the Seastars didn't recognize the Sixth Peak in its fortress state, there were many of their top experts who realized it emanated the fluctuations of Seven Blood Eyes techniques. Because of that, the moment the mountain peak appeared, a stream of divine will emerged from the island.

"To what do we owe the honor of your visit, Seven Blood Eyes? Whichever senior member has come, please forgive us for any breach of decorum."

The person sending out the divine will was an old man in a five-colored daoist robe. He was all smiles, but it was obvious he was concerned as he floated up into the air and clasped hands in the direction of the Sixth Peak.

The only response he got was the flick of a finger from the furious Master Sixth. Then the entire Sixth Peak rumbled and dropped down toward the island like a huge sealing stamp. Immense pressure preceded it, crushing down onto the Seastars, causing numerous mountains on the island to crumble. The land quaked, and massive crevices snaked out everywhere.

The old man who had come out to receive them was none other than the Seastar patriarch. Face falling, he said, "What's the meaning of this, Master Sixth?"

"What's the meaning of it? You tell me, you bastard!!" Master Sixth's voice dripped with uncontrollable killing intent as he floated out to meet the Seastar patriarch. Then he reached out with a vicious grasping motion.

Heaven went dark, the stars dimmed, and the sky fractured!

The Seastar patriarch had no way to evade the move. Master Sixth's hand latched onto his head and crushed down viciously. What resulted was a boom as the patriarch's head exploded.

However, as he exploded, a star-shaped blood shadow flew out, then formed into a humanoid shape off into the distance. Coughing up blood, he said, "Master Sixth, this must be a misunderstanding!"

Master Sixth looked coldly at the reshaped Seastar patriarch.

"So you have been hiding the level of your cultivation base. You broke through to Nascent Soul. Well, that doesn't matter. It just makes things interesting.... You let me suffer for years after losing my son, so I'll return the favor by letting you watch as your ancestral land and all your people are destroyed."

With that, he performed a right-handed incantation gesture and shoved his hand out. The Sixth Peak rumbled even louder as it continued to drop rapidly toward Seastar Island. It didn't land on the surface, though. Instead, it stopped about 3,000 meters overhead, whereupon it sent streams of blue fire down. They looked like rivers of blue flame, instantly incinerating countless buildings, and provoking bloodcurdling screams everywhere.

“Be assimilated! I’ll assimilate your species, your lands, your blood! I’ll assimilate all Seastars and turn you into a candle that will burn day and night in front of the tomb of my beloved son!!”

Master Sixth’s eyes were bloodshot and full of madness as he waved his hand, causing row upon row of magical devices to appear on the Sixth Peak. And when they rumbled to life, countless beams of light shot toward Seastar island. At the same time, the surrounding puppets thrummed with killing intent as they charged forth to unleash slaughter. The Sixth Peak disciples and elders also descended to fight.

Seeing all this, the Seastar patriarch’s expression turned grim. He wanted to do something to stop the attack, but before he could, Master Sixth attacked him. Yet again, blood sprayed out of the Seastar patriarch’s mouth. But then, a flicker of silver flashed through his eyes, and his energy levels surged, creating a tempest around him as Master Sixth closed in again.

As that happened, Xu Qing and the Captain leaped off of the Sixth Peak and shot toward the ground below.

Xu Qing landed on one of the coral trees. The gray coral couldn’t withstand the force and collapsed beneath him. Xu Qing, his eyes bloodshot and pulsing with killing intent, dropped down to the Seastar people below.

The Captain kept pace with him. He could sense the vicious aura that surrounded Xu Qing, and knew that only blood and slaughter could get rid of it.

The Seastar people weren’t important to the Captain. But because Master Seventh had entrusted this matter to him, and because of his relationship with Xu Qing, he really wanted Xu Qing back to normal. As a result, he was only here for one reason. To show support for Xu Qing.

“Kill them, little Junior Brother,” the Captain murmured, his eyes glittering madly. “In this chaotic world, slaughter is the only way to truly vent. I went through something like this before. If you don’t carry out a few slaughters like this, no one will respect you.”

Up ahead, Xu Qing was already carrying out that slaughter. He had lit his life flames, and his iron skewer circled around him. He attacked anything that moved, causing massive rumbling sounds to echo out.

All of a sudden, a Foundation Establishment Seastar appeared in front of him. Before the cultivator could react, Xu Qing viciously slammed into him, causing him to explode. As blood and gore rained down, Xu Qing noticed a tiny silver-colored bug wriggling out of the flesh. After merely glancing at it, he raced in the direction of the Seastars’ ancestral temple, where the Seastar chieftain was currently seated cross-legged while concocting a pill.

While on the way to the island, Master Sixth had already explained what was to come. Master Sixth would focus his revenge on the Seastar patriarch, and would also assimilate the Seastar people as a whole.

Xu Qing’s target was the chieftain, who was the one who had given the order for Grandmaster Bai to be assassinated.

An entire continent burned inside of Xu Qing as he raced toward the ancestral temple.

Blue fire rained down from above, destroying buildings and causing countless Seastars to let loose agonized shrieks. The ground shattered and then started to melt from the intense heat. Blue flames began to gather in spots of low elevation, as if to refine the earth itself. Numerous Sixth Peak puppets, driven by Master Sixth's will, carried out slaughter, joined by the Sixth Peak disciples. Seastar Island was in pure chaos. Coral buildings shattered, and of the five cities on the island, three were already engulfed in flames.

As Xu Qing raced forward, a group of Seastar cultivators appeared in front of him to block his path. He waved his right hand, and Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits instantly turned them into corpses. He didn't slow down at all. The golden crow followed him, its tail trailing fire like a phoenix. At the same time, he was surrounded by a black cloud of beetles that resembled a vicious face. His shadow was with him, as was his iron skewer.

Xu Qing looked like a god of death come to the mortal world, unstoppable, ready to kill everything!

#### Chapter 216: A Road of Blood

High in the dome of heaven, Master Sixth laughed. However, it was a laughter of pain and mourning, filled with indescribable grief that, over the years of being bottled up, had turned into madness. The Seastar patriarch had been crushed over and over again in his hands. But the patriarch had a gruish divine ability to be reborn after being destroyed. And that ability was driving Master Sixth into even deeper madness. The deeper his pain and grief, the more his killing intent raged to heaven. Apparently, he was skinning the patriarch alive, sending down chunks of bloody flesh to be incinerated by the fires below. Yet his hatred had not been sated.

Down below, Xu Qing's eyes were completely bloodshot. He was also in a state of madness. From the moment he landed on the island until he reached the ancestral temple, any Seastar he saw ended up dead.

He waved his right hand, causing a dagger of balefire to appear, which he slashed through the throat of a Seastar cultivator. A head flew, and Xu Qing stepped forward to deal with another Seastar cultivator. His dagger plunged into the enemy's chest over and over again. Then it flew through the air to sink into the throat of a third Seastar cultivator. Then Xu Qing stepped over and slashed out with another dagger. Another head rolled. Yet again, within the corpse, Xu Qing saw what appeared to be threads made of silver worms, which were now severed.

In some cases the threads were made of many worms entwined together. In other cases a thread was made of a single worm. It was a very gruish sight. It seemed as if all the Seastar cultivators had them. Xu Qing had seen them in every Seastar he killed, and upon collecting some, found that they tried to burrow into him. Thankfully, his tough flesh made that impossible, and he ultimately incinerated them. Except, the threadworms had a very strong life force, and ordinary fire from within Xu Qing wasn't strong enough to destroy them. He had been forced to use the golden crow.

Beyond the gruish threadworms' toughness, it seemed to Xu Qing that they could influence the Seastar cultivators' will and soul. Part of the reason for coming to that conclusion was that he had noticed the threadworms glittering in the eyes of some of the Seastar cultivators. Whenever they glittered, the Seastar cultivators seemed to go absolutely insane, and would attack without regard to their own lives.

Furthermore, upon devouring Seastar souls with balefire, Xu Qing came to realize that their souls were incomplete and damaged, as if they had already been partially devoured. It was the same with their energy, blood, and essence. Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits benefited from all that, but only minimally.

The Seastars looked ordinary on the surface, but had been largely devoured by some other force.

Master Sixth was right. There's a lot more going on with the Seastars than any of us knew.

That said, it didn't matter much to Xu Qing. He blurred into motion, the golden crow following behind him. Slaughtering six Seastar cultivators in a row, he absorbed them. At the same time, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior sent the iron skewer stabbing through one enemy after another. With every stab, thunder boomed, shaking the life force of the enemy.

The shadow spread out as well. One after another, eyes appeared in the shadows of the Seastar cultivators and began to ravenously devour them. In many cases, before the devouring was complete, Xu Qing or the patriarch would kill the target. That said, the shadow didn't give up. And occasionally, it managed to fully possess one of the enemy. When that happened, the possessed Seastar would throw its head back and laugh uproariously before rushing into the nearest group of Seastars and self-detonating.

All of that... was what Xu Qing led the attack with. What was truly frightening to the Captain as he watched from further back was the black cloud that surrounded Xu Qing. The beetles that made up the cloud seemed able to conquer every obstacle in their path. It didn't matter if it was coral trees or Seastar cultivators, they would ravenously devour them. Bloodcurdling shrieks rang out constantly. The black beetles even devoured the threadworms, although it took them a lot of effort to do so.

Regardless, Xu Qing was releasing all of his pent-up fury. Eventually, he slaughtered his way to the ancestral temple, leaving behind a wake of blood and bones.

Four figures sat cross-legged outside the temple. All of them looked up at the same time, and when they did, blue veins bulged on their faces. They were Seastar cultivators, but they were different from the others. The first difference was in their aura; all of them surpassed the three-flame level, though they weren't fully in the four-flame level. Second of all, the bulging veins visible on their faces wriggled. Apparently, there were huge threadworms inside of them, moving about.

As they caught sight of Xu Qing, he laid eyes on the person seated cross-legged in front of the pill furnace behind them in the temple. It was a middle-aged cultivator in a long, green robe embroidered with golden thread. The complex design emanated a noble aura, which was augmented by the imperial crown the man wore. He had a Gold Core cultivation base, as well as a starfish symbol on his forehead.

The cultivator seemed threatening without being angry, and was ignoring the mass slaughter going on outside. He remained seated in place, his eyes closed as he sent energy into the pill furnace. It was as if he didn't care at all if his people were wiped out of existence. The only thing that mattered to him was the pill in the furnace.

This man was the chieftain of the Seastar people, and was the son of the Seastar patriarch who was suffering up above.

When Xu Qing's gaze fell on the man, the killing intent in his heart erupted to greater heights.

Meanwhile, the four Seastar cultivators on guard outside rose to their feet. Their eyes did not contain any emotions. However, within their pupils were white threads as thick as chopsticks. As one, they entered the profound radiance state, revealing the battle prowess of three life flames as they closed in on Xu Qing.

Each of them had a cancerous growth on their back that resembled a starfish, which bolstered their fleshly body power. Howling, they all unleashed fist strikes! Their fists caused everything in the area to ripple and distort as wild power raged.

Xu Qing didn't attempt to evade the attack. He stood in place, eyes closed as the golden crow's feathers of black flame spread out like an imperial robe. Its flaming tail became a cape, and its head was like an imperial crown that settled on Xu Qing's head. A wild and domineering aura pulsed out of Xu Qing, making him seem like a young emperor. Then his eyes opened.

A boom rang out as the four incoming Seastar cultivators found that their fists couldn't come close to harming Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits. Instead, the power of their attacks created a backlash that sent all of them skidding backward.

Before they could think about fleeing, Xu Qing took a step forward, reached out with his right hand, and completely ignoring the fact that his opponent was in the profound radiance state, grabbed the Seastar's throat. He tightened his fingers, and a crunch rang out. Then the iron skewer stabbed through the Seastar seven or eight times.

After that, Xu Qing loosened his grip. As he did, the cape of flames behind him flared, transforming into a beam that shot toward the second retreating Seastar. A thump rang out as it slammed into the cultivator, who let loose an agonized shriek. He continued to flee, but Xu Qing was faster, slamming into him and causing the Seastar's head to explode.

Things weren't over yet, though. A cloud of black beetles swarmed over the third retreating Seastar, burrowing into his skin and devouring him. More bloodcurdling screams rang out.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing reached the fourth and final Seastar cultivator, who could do nothing but watch in horror as a golden crow shot out from Xu Qing, spreading balefire all over him and immolating him.

All of this happened in the briefest spans of time. In the blink of an eye, four Seastars died. Their energy and blood was taken, their souls were extracted, and their flesh devoured. Sadly, they were like pieces of meat that had been left in an icebox for years on end. They lacked nutrients and flavor, and were as useful as chicken bones.

Xu Qing waved his hand, and the corpses collapsed into ash and were blown away in the wind. He wasn't interested in them. His eyes were dead set on the Seastar chieftain sitting in front of the pill furnace.

Meanwhile, the Captain caught up with Xu Qing. Holding an apple that, for some reason, was now black, he took a bite and looked at the chieftain.

Grinning, he said, "Wowww, little Junior Brother. The way you're looking at this guy, he might as well already be dead!"

However, at that exact moment, the Seastar chieftain's eyes snapped open, and they glittered like lightning!

Xu Qing's mind spun as a tempestuous pressure swept over him. Thankfully, the pendant hanging around his neck dispelled most of the pressure.

The Captain took a few steps back, magical symbols glittering in his eyes. Expression turning a bit crazy, he licked his lips, revealing that he had some black apple flesh stuck in his teeth.

“Xu Qing, why don't we work together to kill this guy.”

Xu Qing nodded. Then the two of them rushed toward the Seastar chieftain in the temple.

The chieftain looked at them with a strange light in his eyes. Then he laughed. “Interesting. Who could have guessed that two runts like you, having run into a Gold Core cultivator in a little place like this, would charge into a fight? I still have enough time to play around.”

#### Chapter 217: Fiends of Fire and Ice

As the Captain and Xu Qing charged forth, the Seastar chieftain's words rang out and he took a step forward. The moment his foot touched the ground, his entire body superimposed upon himself, as if two resentful souls had stepped out, one moving to the left, the other to the right. In the blink of an eye, the Seastar chieftain became two versions of himself, one of which headed to the Captain, and the other to Xu Qing. Closing in on Xu Qing, he extended his right index finger toward Xu Qing's forehead.

He sneered as the finger unleashed an explosion of force. It was the power of Gold Core, and it caused a tremor to pass through Xu Qing, so violent his life flames flickered on the verge of being extinguished.

At the same time, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior sent the black iron skewer out to block the force. However, the Seastar chieftain simply reached out and flicked the skewer. It was sent spinning off to the side, cracks spreading out on its surface.

Before it could land, the Seastar chieftain lifted his foot and then stomped it back down onto the ground. Everything trembled as the shadow beneath his feet collapsed.

“That's all?” he said, shaking his head, sending his finger once again toward Xu Qing's forehead. Just when it seemed like it would stab into Xu Qing, the golden crow appeared and inhaled viciously.

The Seastar chieftain shivered and suddenly turned slightly blurry. However, his finger continued on its path toward Xu Qing's forehead. Just before he completed the movement, flames erupted from the golden crow.

At the same time, madness flickered in Xu Qing's eyes as, instead of dodging, he head-butted the finger. A boom rang out. The golden crow seemed to sag listlessly, but did manage to absorb a strand of energy and blood. As for Xu Qing, his forehead smashed into the Seastar chieftain's finger, resulting in a cracking sound. A curious gleam then appeared in the chieftain's eyes as his finger was crushed.

A massive force sent Xu Qing hurling backward. However, the pendant around his neck prevented him from being injured. Even still, his energy and blood vibrated chaotically. As soon as he skidded to a stop, he looked up and glared at the astonished Seastar chieftain.

Off to the side, the Captain was facing the Seastar chieftain's other version, which was also reaching toward his forehead with a finger strike. The Captain's method of dealing with the attack was similar to Xu Qing's, but at the same time, different. The magical sealing symbols in his eyes flickered out, and his energy suddenly surged. Just like Xu Qing, he didn't attempt to dodge the attack or fall back. But what was different was that he didn't head-butt the finger. Instead he opened his mouth and, eyes flickering with a crazy light, viciously bit down on the finger!

It takes some time to describe these two things, but they actually happened at exactly the same moment. The Seastar chieftain's two versions of himself clashed with Xu Qing and the Captain simultaneously.

The Captain chomped down on the chieftain's finger, and though he didn't manage to bite it off, he did pierce the skin, causing blood to ooze out. He also broke a few of his teeth in the process. He released the finger, though the crazy look never left his eyes; his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, creating a shield to block the Gold Core power that sent him flying backward.

"How amusing." The two versions of the Seastar chieftain both looked down at their fingers, then merged back into a unified version. The finger immediately healed. Then he unleashed the power of his Gold Core cultivation base. Xu Qing's eyes stung as though the sun were attacking them, yet the killing intent never left them.

It was the same with the Captain. He was missing a few teeth, yet that just made it easier for him to lick his lips. He even seemed in high enough spirits to flash Xu Qing a pleased grin.

The Seastar chieftain snorted coldly, then started walking toward the Captain. However, before he could even take three steps, his face fell.

His healed finger was now black, as though it were poisoned. And the effect was spreading to the rest of his body. If anyone present was able to look inside his body, they would see it full of countless black beetles. They were madly devouring the chieftain's insides, while at the same time were unleashing massive amounts of mutagen and other poisons.

This was what happened when Xu Qing and the Captain worked together.

Xu Qing knew how the Captain operated. He had been there when the Captain took a bite out of the Seazombie ancestor statue. And the Captain had done the same thing with that Gold Core octopus. Therefore, Xu Qing had put some black beetles in the apple the Captain had been eating.

The Captain knew, but didn't mind, and had allowed the beetles to remain between his teeth. When he sank his teeth into the chieftain's flesh moments before, it gave the beetles just the opportunity they needed to enter his flesh.

As the chieftain reacted with shock, the Captain laughed viciously and rushed forward. Xu Qing also charged forth in attack.

As Xu Qing moved, his shadow stretched out, and the lightning symbols on the iron skewer flickered to life. A piercing shriek rang out from the golden crow as it superimposed over Xu Qing.

His life flames ignited, and his life lamp shone. Combined with all the power of his fleshly body, Xu Qing closed in on the Seastar chieftain with a fist strike! He backed the fist with everything he had. All of his life flame and life lamp power, combined with the strength of the golden crow. He added the explosive power of his more than 60 dharma apertures. Tempest winds screamed, and a

sea of flames erupted out! It was the fire of the golden crow, the fire of his life lamp, and the dharma force fire of his life flames, fueled by his rage!

The Captain also exploded into action. More magical symbols in his eyes opened, causing the temperature around him to drop dramatically. As a result, the ground froze, and snowflakes appeared everywhere. They pulsed with a shockingly frigid coldness, something that surpassed most grues. In fact, it was so cold it didn't just freeze the ground, it could freeze one's will.

The dome of heaven itself seemed to change as the boundless frigid energy from the captain contrasted with the scorching heat from Xu Qing.

Fire and ice rushed from two different directions toward the Seastar chieftain.

In the blink of an eye, the crazy look in the Captain's eye grew so intense that, unexpectedly, the hand of a grue stretched out from his chest! It was a blue, icy hand that didn't look human at all. It had long claws of bone, and within the palm of the hand, astonishingly, there was a face! It was the face of the Captain himself, though its eyes were closed as if in sleep.

When the hand appeared, the Seastar chieftain's eyes widened, and he tried to dodge out of the way. However, the black beetles chose that moment to erupt with madness, causing countless detonations of mutagen and poison within him. As the chieftain twitched, the hand sticking out of the Captain's chest clamped onto his head.

A thump could be heard as boundless coldness swept into the chieftain, as well as cracking sounds as parts of him froze solid. In the blink of an eye, Xu Qing followed up with his own attack, causing an endless sea of flames to sweep over him. He also chose that same moment to take out the patriarch's calligraphy scroll.

"Flame!" he growled. The scroll read *Nose With Living Flame*, and in response to Xu Qing's words, the 'flame' character turned into green fire and swept toward the chieftain.

Killing intent burned in Xu Qing's eyes as all of the fire he had summoned converged on his fist, which he aimed at the frozen Seastar chieftain. When the fist landed, cracks spread out over the chieftain. Fire engulfed him, especially the fire from the patriarch's scroll.

As the fire burned, and the chieftain's flesh melted, his eyes didn't show any fear. Strangely, he just seemed a bit surprised.

"I can't believe you have calligraphy from such an almighty being!"

The chieftain suddenly exploded, whereupon a tentacle snaked out from the gore, lashing out toward Xu Qing and the Captain. The power of the blow caused the air to shatter, and seemed strong enough to wither one's soul. Xu Qing and the Captain were hurled spinning backward.

In that critical moment, Xu Qing pulled the Captain over to him so he could benefit from the protection of Master Sixth's pendant. As the pendant blocked the violent attack, the two of them skidded to a stop 300 meters away, coughing up blood and their internal organs aching. Looking up in the direction of the tentacle, they saw... dust settling, and a figure striding out of it.

Numerous silver tentacles swayed back and forth within the clouds of dust. It quickly became clear that they weren't tentacles. Instead, they were a host of huge threadworms, all of them bearing vicious fangs as they howled at Xu Qing and the Captain!

Then the figure within the dust became clear.

It was a nonhuman, fully three meters in height, pure silver in color, with a triangular head and eyes with double pupils. It had a long tongue, and its whole body was covered with threadworms.

Both Xu Qing and the Captain were completely shocked by the sight of it. But even more shocking were the explosive fluctuations coming out of it that distorted everything around it. This wasn't a Gold Core nonhuman. It was in the Nascent Soul level! As winds screamed and wild colors flashed, Xu Qing and the Captain backed up.

"I really didn't think I would run into two runts like you in a backwater place like this. One of you has a stage-four grue sealed in you, and the other has an imperial-class divine ability and the calligraphy of an almighty being. Sadly, the second of you doesn't have a grue sealed inside."

Hearing this, Xu Qing's pupils constricted, but at the same time, he breathed a sigh of relief. His life lamp remained a secret, as did his shadow and the violet crystal.

Off to the side, the Captain also breathed a sigh of relief. Apparently, he was thinking something similar to Xu Qing....

As they exchanged a glance, the two of them realized they were both thinking the same thing.

Chapter 218: Torchlight's Bai Li

"What species is this?" Xu Qing said as he continued backing up.

"The Revered Ancient mainland is too big and there are too many species there," the Captain replied, looking a bit confused as he also backed up. "It looks like a variant type of Threadwurm. I vaguely remember reading a file back in the Intelligence Division which mentioned them. Let me think."

Seeing Xu Qing and the Captain backing away, the nonhuman which had emerged from the Seastar chieftain grinned and blurred into motion.

Xu Qing's expression turned grim, and the Captain's pupils constricted. Unfortunately, neither of them was fast enough to flee from someone in the Nascent Soul level. Xu Qing's vision swam as something slammed into him, and he was sent flying back, blood spraying out of his mouth. The same thing happened to the Captain.

Thanks to the shield created by the pendant, though Xu Qing was thrown backward 300 meters, he wasn't injured. That said, his organs vibrated painfully, and he could tell that if this fight kept going, the pendant would eventually stop working.

The nonhuman was about to launch into another attack when a column of blue fire fell from above, blocking his path. Rumbling sounds filled the sky, and the ground shook violently as even more fire descended, consuming countless Seastar cultivators.

Wherever they died, threadworms crawled out of their corpses. The grisly nature of the scene attracted the attention of all the Sixth Peak disciples, and even Master Sixth. And when Master Sixth saw what happened to the Seastar chieftain, he crushed the Seastar patriarch with a palm, then performed an incantation gesture to block the chieftain from reaching Xu Qing and the Captain.

“He’s an Ironthread!” Master Sixth said, rushing down.

When the Captain heard those words, his expression flickered and he said, “Xu Qing! I remember now....”

As for the nonhuman, when he heard the words, he looked up into the sky and laughed. “It seems I underestimated this sect. That said, you’re only a single Nascent Soul cultivator. Do you really think you qualify to disturb my cultivation?”

The Ironthread lifted his right hand and pointed up to the sky. The wind and clouds seethed as rumbling sounds filled the dome of heaven. Something like the howls of gods echoed out in all directions as three huge spell formations appeared overhead, circular and glowing brightly. Each was fully 3,000 meters in size, and they emanated a shockingly powerful force of teleportation.

Astonishingly, figures began to pour out of the teleportation portals.

From within the first teleportation portal emerged a group of nonhuman cultivators with wings. They were pitch black, making them look almost exactly like crows. As they emerged, shocking killing intent rolled off of them, especially the one in the lead position, whose eyes glittered with sparks of electricity, and who pulsed with the fluctuations of a Nascent Soul cultivation base.

Things weren’t over yet.

From within the second teleportation portal came a group of nonhuman cultivators with elephant trunks and incredibly muscular bodies. Leading them was a burly man who also had Nascent Soul fluctuations, and whose expression was incomparably vicious.

A similar group emerged from the third portal. They were the strangest-looking of all. They appeared to be made from seaweed, and had triangular eyes. They emanated shocking energy that seemed capable of draining wildlands and crushing mountains, and were also led by a Nascent Soul expert.

Upon seeing them, the Captain’s pupils constricted.

“Sixwing Ink ravens. Herculean Mammoths. And Snakekelp Daemons. They aren’t exactly major species. They’re on the same level as the Seastars. But the Sixwing Ink ravens are allies of Seven Blood Eyes. And the other two are neither allies nor enemies.”

Even as the Captain explained these things, the three groups of newcomers turned without a word and shot toward Master Sixth and the Sixth Peak! They had no fear of death, and in fact, some of them made suicide attacks to damage the mountain peak. When looking closely, it was possible to see threadworms emerging from those who died. These three species had all been taken over just like the Seastars!

Master Sixth was obviously hindered by the onslaught. As for Xu Qing and the Captain, they had no choice but to flee. The two of them could fight an early Gold Core enemy, but when it came to Nascent Soul, there was no way they were strong enough.

Not even the patriarch's calligraphy could give them an edge, unless they used it at an absolutely critical juncture.

"I'm curious to see how long your defenses will last against us!" said the nonhuman who had once been the Seastar chieftain.

Meanwhile, as the Captain fled, he suddenly looked over his shoulder and blurted, "You're Bai Li! Bai Li of the Ironthreads!" [1]

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed, while Bai Li's expression was one of surprise.

It would have been amusing to Bai Li if one of the peaklords from Seven Blood Eyes stated his identity out loud. After all, he had the feeling the peaklord knew who he was. But instead, it was a low-level cultivator who actually knew his name. It almost seemed unbelievable.

"I really didn't think someone like you from a place like this would know me. You're a very interesting character."

Eyes narrowing, the Captain continued, "Bai Li of the Ironthread species. A sixty-year-cycle ago, he was a consummate chosen among the Ironthreads. His people even claimed that he had the potential to walk the same path as the Ancient Emperors and Imperial Sovereigns. But for some unknown reason, he betrayed them, sowing chaos among his people and desecrating their holy object. It was a catastrophe in which countless of his people died. After he left, he joined a secret society called Torchlight!"

"Very amusing. You've obviously read your fair share of intelligence reports. I think I'll soulsearch you to find out what else you know."

Bai Li closed in. The Captain's eyes glittered brightly. Xu Qing's expression turned vicious as he pulled out the patriarch's calligraphy.

Just when it seemed they would clash, a cold snort echoed down from the dome of heaven, like thunder. High in the sky, a bottle gourd appeared above Master Sixth's head. It was the same gourd that hadn't left his hand since his wife and son died.

Now, it suddenly erupted with an incisive, baleful aura as its exterior came to life with countless weapons. They all flew out into the open, soaring out like gliding phoenixes and soaring dragons. They seemed to represent every weapon imaginable. There were sabers, spears, swords, halberds, hatchets, battle-axes, hooks, tridents, and more. There had to be millions of them, and they created a massive vortex of weapons that could crush anything in its path.

The vortex headed toward the three groups of newcomers. Almost instantly, it struck the three Nascent Soul patriarchs that Bai Li had summoned. They couldn't avoid it, and blood sprayed out of their mouths as they were sent spinning away, heavily injured and coughing up blood. As for the other members of the three species, as the vortex of weapons approached, pulsing with a baleful aura, all they could do was look on in shock. Most were ripped to shreds, instantly killed. And those that initially survived obviously wouldn't last for much longer.

It was even possible to see a beam of light shooting out of the bottle gourd, carrying with it consummate ferocity and disdain toward the nonhumans.

RUMBLE!

The nonhumans hovering there were shocked as they got the sensation they were about to be exterminated by heaven and executed by the earth.

Apparently, all of this wasn't enough, as Master Sixth performed an incantation gesture and pointed at the Sixth Peak. Flames erupted from it in all directions, engulfing both the Seastars and the survivors from the other three species. Everything was being scorched and melted away.

For the first time, Bai Li's facial expression changed. "What magical device is that? How could that baleful aura be so incisive??"

Being unable to kill Xu Qing and the Captain, he vanished in a minor teleportation. When he reappeared, he was in midair not very far away, clearly preparing to make his escape.

Then Master Sixth spoke, and his voice trembled with fury and killing intent. "I was wondering why weaklings like the Seastars would have the gall to do something this big. As it turns out, they were being manipulated behind the scenes by a wanted criminal from the Revered Ancient mainland, someone working for the detestable Torchlight. A vile fugitive!"

The bottle gourd above his head erupted further, the baleful aura creating a tempest full of innumerable weapons that shot directly toward Bai Li.

Bai Li was shaken, and wanted to flee. But Master Sixth stood atop the maelstrom of weapons, closing in with a palm strike. Being unable to escape, a strange light glittered in Bai Li's eyes, and he spun to fight Master Sixth. When they clashed, heaven reeled and the earth quaked. Deafening rumbling sounds crashed everywhere, and all of the onlookers sped in the opposite direction.

Xu Qing looked on gravely, relying on the pendant to keep him safe.

Next to him, the Captain grinned, his eyes glittering with crazy greed as he said, "I honestly can't believe we've run into someone from the legendary Torchlight.... From what I've heard, every member of that group is a real character."

Xu Qing looked at the Captain.

Grinning, the Captain explained, "Torchlight is a notorious group from Revered Ancient. They haven't even been around a thousand years, but supposedly, all of their members are traitors from various species. The Intelligence Division has files on many of them. They try to get people to join them by claiming that their members... get destined opportunities to become gods. The requirement to join is that you have to put on a terrifying display called a Blood-Soaked Performance. The better the performance, the more likely they'll approve.

"I heard that a number of years ago, someone from South Phoenix managed to use the opening of the god's eyes to put on a performance like that, and ended up joining Torchlight.

"It's too bad they never came looking for me, otherwise I might have been able to join and see what this 'chance to become a god' is like. Is it just a way to follow the

Ancient Emperors and Imperial Sovereigns? Or is it actually a method that lets you turn into a god? I have a hard time believing it's true."

"Same here," Xu Qing said, narrowing his eyes. Then he rubbed the patriarch's calligraphy and looked up at Master Sixth fighting Bai Li.

The wind whimpered in the sky, but was overwhelmed by the deafening crashing caused by the fighting between Master Sixth and Bai Li. Each blow exchanged contained force to rock mountains and drain seas, and the shockwaves shattered the air. Rifts filled the sky in the area above them, and occasional vortexes sprang up like black holes, sucking in everything around them. Angry bolts of lightning crackled left and right like thunderous dragons.

The combatants flickered back and forth on the field of battle, using minor teleportations as they engaged in close-quarters fighting.

Both fighters casually wielded tempests like divine abilities, unleashing deadly force. As for Bai Li, he was covered with countless swaying threadworms, each of them capable of forming magical symbols that would unleash mysterious lightning attacks on Master Sixth. If one could carefully examine the lightning bolts, it would be obvious that they were made up of innumerable threadworms. As they got close to Master Sixth, they exploded, creating frozen spatial rifts in the air. From a distance, those frozen rifts looked like countless white centipedes.

Master Sixth was equally impressive. Each wave of his hand caused an infinitude of weapons to appear, all of them deadly and bursting with baleful auras. They pulsed with heaven-destroying, earth-extinguishing power that could crush any obstacle. However, Bai Li's cultivation base was on par with Master Sixth, so despite the fact that the latter had his amazing bottle gourd... Bai Li was not at a disadvantage. After all, Master Sixth was innately skilled at *forging* equipment, not necessarily fighting with it.

Rumbling echoed out as Bai Li used a minor teleportation to get right in front of Master Sixth. Hand flashing in an incantation gesture, he sent blade light slicing through the air toward Master Sixth, leaving a huge rift behind it.

Expression flickering, Master Sixth backed up.

Seeing that, Bai Li burst into laughter. "You're obviously a Nascent Soul cultivator from a backwater sect. You can't kill me with those magical devices of yours. Maybe I don't need to flee this fight after all. If I kill you, I can take that supreme-grade magical device. That's an outcome I can accept."

Bai Li hit his forehead, causing a tremor to pass through him. Then, a huge, horrific boil appeared on his back, filled with countless blood vessels, each of which contained a wriggling threadworm. As soon as it appeared, the boil exploded, and a plant burst out. It was fully nine meters long, allowing it to stretch over Bai Li's head. It was blood-colored, with six sawtooth leaves, and a triangular floral disc at the end with thousands of swaying stamens!

Flowing through the plant like blood were unending magical symbols. An astonishingly holy aura surrounded the plant, spreading out in all directions with such power that Xu Qing's eyes stung

looking at it. It was the same with the Captain, except for the fact that a crazy look was now visible in his eyes.

“Godliness!!” the Captain murmured.

The plant was indeed emanating godliness. And it was strong godliness at that. As soon as the plant appeared, it seemed to look up at the bottle gourd and then shiver. A fierce wind kicked up, causing the stamens on the triangular floral disc to part, revealing... a vicious ghost face! It had evil crimson eyes, and was currently grinning viciously.

“Let’s see which is stronger, your supreme-grade magical device, or my Torchlight god seeds!” Bai Li threw his head back and laughed uproariously, then waved his hand, causing a handful of medicinal pills to fly out of his sleeve and up to the ghost face.

They weren’t complete pills, but rather, a set of half-completed pills. They weren’t made from any sort of medicinal plant, but instead, raw flesh and blood. Within each of the pills was the shadow of a deceased soul, all of which resembled young people. Obviously, they were the chosen disciples from various locales that had gone missing in recent years. After mercilessly killing them, Bai Li had used their flesh and blood to concoct medicinal pills, into which he inserted their souls. The pills weren’t for his own consumption. Instead, he was using them to feed this evil plant. As for the ‘god seeds’ he mentioned, he obviously needed a lot of them, and that was why he’d come out to the Forbidden Sea.

It would have been too dangerous to do this on the Revered Ancient mainland. But he obviously thought that, given his strength and abilities, he could handle any difficulties that popped up here.

As he continued to laugh, the plant gobbled up the medicinal pills, then looked up at Master Sixth and made a very unique sound.

“Ommmm!”

This was not any ordinary sound. It was an enchantment of some sort, and didn’t even seem like a single sound. Instead, it sounded like numerous voices merged together into something completely extraordinary.

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Cracking sounds filled the dome of heaven as lightning bolts appeared, smashing down into the bottle gourd one after another. In only a few breaths of time, hundreds of thousands of crimson lightning bolts appeared, forming a massive magical symbol. The symbol was incredibly complex, and looked like a sealing mark. All of a sudden, the might of the bottle gourd faded into nothing.

After, Bai Li roared with cruel laughter and waved his hand yet again, causing a hulking figure to appear in midair. It was fully 300 meters tall, and resembled a gigantic praying mantis, pitch black, with front legs like razor-sharp sabers.

This was a battle form, and after it appeared, Bai Li fused with it. When that happened, the massive mantis’ eyes opened and it charged toward Master Sixth with blinding speed. The air shattered as it closed in, raising one saber-like leg in an attack. That saber attack seemed capable of completely

vanquishing the enemy, and when Xu Qing saw it, he was stunned, and couldn't help but think back to the saber move he'd seen in that temple. It wasn't the same, but it was similar.

Master Sixth held nothing back to block the attack, yet was still shoved backward through the air, blood spraying out of his mouth. Even still, a grim smile covered his face, and the killing intent in his eyes burned just as hot as ever.

"I'm not that good at fighting, but... I'm still peaklord of the Sixth Peak in Seven Blood Eyes! And what I *am* good at is... making magical devices. Especially big ones!!" With that, Master Sixth made a grasping motion in the direction of the Sixth Peak. "Come here!"

The Sixth Peak, which had been in the middle of assimilating Seastar Island, suddenly blurred. When it became clear again, it was right in front of Master Sixth. The mountain peak erupted with godly might. All of the magical devices thrummed to life, and the peak shot toward the gigantic mantis, bursting with blinding energy.

"Crush!"

All of the power of an entire mountain was being used to crush a single person!

Heaven-smashing, earth-extinguishing power swept out, making it impossible for the target to evade the blow. Bai Li's expression flickered, and he began to tremble visibly as he looked at the mountain barreling toward him. Cracks spread out over his body, and his eyes turned bright red. Waving both of his saber-like forelegs out in front of him, he prepared to meet the attack, even though he was tiny compared to the massive mountain.

A massive boom rang out as the two smashed into each other. Master Sixth performed an incantation gesture then viciously shoved his hand down, causing the mountain to crush down onto Bai Li, pushing him toward Seastar Island.

More rumbling booms echoed out in all directions, and everything shook violently. Xu Qing and the Captain flew backward as Seastar Island started crumbling apart. Massive waves surged out everywhere.

"I'm going to assimilate you!" Master Sixth growled, his hair disheveled and his eyes shining with madness. Hands blurring through incantation gestures, he caused a sea of flames to erupt from the depths of the mountain.

"You assimilated my son. I'll assimilate you!"

The mountain trembled as Bai Li, who was being crushed underneath it, struggled to free himself. A shocking power of godliness seeped out from beneath the mountain, along with animalistic roars. Then, to the absolute shock of Xu Qing and the Captain, the flaming mountain moved up slightly.

Bai Li was using the power of the early Nascent Soul stage to do this, clearly showing... that he deserved to be called a consummate chosen from his people. As the mountain edged upward, a mighty roar echoed out from underneath it. As Bai Li became visible, it became clear he wasn't using his battle form, but instead, had fused with the evil plant.

It had a thick stalk, six sawtooth leaves, and countless swaying feelers. As Bai Li used it to lift the mountain, the triangular floral disc became visible, along with the vicious face within it.

The face was no longer obscure; it now looked exactly like Bai Li, and his red eyes flickered with astonishing godliness. Cackling, he said, “You might be good at equipment forging. But I’ve met a lot of cultivators like that. And the other ones weren’t just good at making things, they were good at using them. As for you, I think—”

Before he could finish speaking, a look of utter madness flickered in Master Sixth’s eyes, and he waved his hand. Instantly, a huge banner appeared overhead.

The banner was about 300 meters long, and as it flapped, it burst with colorful energy.

The banner seemed dilapidated, and was splattered with massive amounts of blood. However, it also pulsed with godliness. It looked like it had been passed down from a previous epoch, and had experienced the baptism of innumerable wars. The sensation of ancient time permeated it, and as it was unfurled, it caused the sky to change colors, and made the sun seem less brilliant.

For tens of thousands of kilometers around Seastar Island, countless living beings were shaken to their core. Even entities lurking at the seafloor opened their eyes in alarm.

What was especially noteworthy was that there was a drop of golden blood on the flag, which seemed to surpass ordinary godliness, and imparted a sensation very similar to the broken face of the god above.

It could look down on anything and everything!

Apparently, this war banner had been used to slaughter countless godly entities, and innumerable powerful experts from various nonhuman species. As soon as Master Sixth pulled it out, a sensation of shocking brutality swept out to fill heaven and earth. The aura was so strong it locked down everything in the area, and caused all waves on the surface of the water to go still. This banner emanated a domineering aura that seemed capable of destroying everything and crushing all peoples.

Bai Li started shaking visibly, and his voice changed, becoming filled with terror and astonishment.

“The War Banner of Humankind? What’s that doing in a backwater place like this??”

Chapter 220: Bai Li’s Soul Pill

Time passed.

Back in Seven Blood Eyes, in Harbor 176, Xu Qing sat cross-legged on the deck of his dharmaskiff. As the boat swayed up and down in the water, he looked at the brilliant red sunrise. It looked like fire filling the dome of heaven.

About half a month had passed since the Seastars were exterminated. That affair had caused a huge commotion. After Seven Blood Eyes publicly announced what the Seastars had done, backed by Bai Li from Torchlight, countless groups and peoples finally got an answer as to why their chosen disciples had gone missing. And of course, everyone was furious at the Seastars, Torchlight, and the other three species that had been involved.

The Seastars had been exterminated, but the other species still existed. Seven Blood Eyes didn’t need to lift a finger regarding them. Other groups that had lost their chosen took the initiative.

When countless threadworms were found infecting those other three species, it was all the proof that was needed.

Before long, those other three species had been exterminated.

Master Sixth's actions made Seven Blood Eyes even more the center of attention than before. The fact that he had transformed the Sixth Peak into a fortress struck fear into the hearts of many.

However, after much analysis, many people came to the conclusion that though the mountain was mighty, it lacked a truly formidable power source. Although the fortress was capable of greater teleportations, it was relatively weak when it came to crushing power. Some people even speculated that, without using the War Banner of Humankind, Master Sixth wouldn't have been able to crush Bai Li.

Regardless, the extermination of the Seastars, and the assimilation of Bai Li from Torchlight, were now matters of public record. As a result, Seven Blood Eyes seemed even more powerful than before.

After everything was over, Master Sixth had escorted everyone back to Seven Blood Eyes. Along the way, he didn't speak. Nor did Xu Qing. Neither of them had experienced the satisfaction they had imagined they would after exacting their revenge. Instead, they felt calm and even slightly melancholy. However, life went on. There was still a path to follow.

As Xu Qing sat on the deck of his dharmaskiff, he raised an alcohol gourd in the direction of the Violet Lands, then took a drink and closed his eyes. "Have a safe journey, Teacher."

Rumbling sounds echoed within him; his 65 dharma apertures were like furnaces, burning brightly... as the massive numbers of discarnate souls within them were slowly being assimilated.

They were the discarnate souls of the Seastars. However, they were weak and almost valueless. Thankfully, he had acquired enough of them that they were going to be somewhat helpful in opening dharma apertures.

There was also one special soul in the group, imprisoned in one of his dharma apertures. There it burned, day and night, without ceasing. It was the soul of the Gruegloom cultivator. After capturing the Gruegloom with his shadow, Xu Qing had tormented it for some days. Eventually, the Gruegloom's body collapsed, whereupon Xu Qing extracted his soul.

Unfortunately, Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits had not yet been able to take the Gruegloom's innate ability. It wasn't because of a weakness on the part of the imperial-class technique. Rather, it wasn't possible to get the ability from only one member of that species. Many members were required.

That didn't bother Xu Qing. All he cared about was inflicting suffering on the Gruegloom. Gruegloom souls were unique in that they would naturally recover soul power, even when being suppressed and assimilated.

Master Sixth assimilated the Seastars into the Sixth Peak, where he refined them into a candle which he now burns at his son's memorial tomb. I can't do that, but I can suppress the Gruegloom's soul for as long as I'm alive. I'll make him wish he could die. And I'll continue to use the soul power he provides. Who knows, maybe one day I'll be able to steal his innate ability.

Whether because of the usefulness of the soul power, or his hatred of the Gruegloom, Xu Qing wasn't going to simply devour him.

Right now, Xu Qing was using the power from all the other discarnate souls to batter at his 66th dharma aperture. Before long, it opened, and more dharma force spread out to fill him. However, he wasn't finished. Shortly thereafter, his 67th dharma aperture opened. Then he sent the remaining soul power toward his 68th aperture, which he just barely managed to open.

Xu Qing shivered. His aura and dharma force were obviously on a higher level now. As he had come to find out, after igniting his second life flame, opening dharma apertures became increasingly difficult. Furthermore, the Seastar souls were not whole, and as a result, he only managed to open three apertures.

Opening his eyes, he took out a jade box and opened it. Inside was a black medicinal pill. On the surface of the pill was the image of a vicious soul shadow, constantly howling noiselessly. It almost seemed like there was a soul trapped inside the pill.

This was an extremely precious, high-level soul pill!

To cultivators who used the Balefire Soulswallowing Scripture, souls were kindling used to open dharma apertures. Only by slaughtering enemies and extracting their souls was it possible to advance their cultivation base. But sometimes, slaughtering enemies was a slow process. Because of that, soul pills like this were often used to get the large amounts of soul power needed.

For example, the pills Wu Jianwu had given Xu Qing were soul pills, just not a very high quality version. [1]

This particular pill had been concocted by Master Sixth using part of Bai Li's soul. He had then given it to Xu Qing as a gift, explaining that it was a discarnate soul pill. It was only made using part of the soul.

Master Sixth had directly explained that he himself needed a lot of souls for his forging work. This one pill was all that he could give. That said, he also stated that he owed Xu Qing a big favor.

Xu Qing felt it was perfectly reasonable. The only reason he had gotten his revenge so smoothly was because of Master Sixth. Therefore, even if Master Sixth hadn't given him the soul pill, he still would have been content.

Besides, Master Sixth had also given him that pendant of protection. Though he had used most of it during the clash with Bai Li, there was still some usefulness left to it. In terms of value, it was worth more than the discarnate soul pill.

Clearing his thoughts, Xu Qing picked up the soul pill and unhesitatingly put it in his mouth. As he chewed it up, it was possible to hear agonizing screaming from the pill. Eventually, he swallowed it, incinerated it with balefire, and then sent the power toward his 69th dharma aperture.

A moment later, he shivered as his 69th aperture opened. Then he moved on to his 70th. Then his 71st....

The majestic power of the soul pill allowed him to open even more dharma apertures. After the 72nd, he proceeded to his 73rd, 74th, and 75th.

But that wasn't it! He also opened his 76th, 77th, and 78th!

The discarnate soul pill made from Bai Li's soul was astonishingly powerful.

Finally, popping sounds rang out inside Xu Qing, and he opened his eyes, revealing a violet glitter of light. He had opened his 79th dharma aperture!

A terrifying energy swept through him, and stupefying dharma force abounded. Waves rolled out on the surrounding seawater as Xu Qing's cultivation base rose to a much higher level.

I actually opened 11 dharma apertures.... I think this soul pill contained more than just Bai Li's discarnate soul! Xu Qing was more than a little surprised. When Master Sixth said it was a discarnate soul pill, he must have meant... that he included the discarnate souls of the cultivators from the other three species, including their patriarchs.

Though those species' cultivators weren't very high level, there were many of them, so even a fraction of the aspects of their souls would provide terrifying results.

Only 11 more dharma apertures and I'll be able to ignite my third life flame!

With that, he looked into his bag of holding at the two wish boxes he had. After learning how to open them, he had begun the process, but it took time. Now, it was close to the point where he could open them.

Next, he looked over his shoulder at the continent of South Phoenix as a whole. Now that things had calmed down, he found himself thinking about Sergeant Thunder....

Beyond that, there had been some major developments in the Seazombie war during the half month that passed. For one thing, Third Highness had accomplished something very monumental.

Xu Qing hadn't heard much about Third Highness since the war started, and only now did he realize there was a reason for that. Third Highness had been assigned the task of inciting rebellion behind enemy lines.

Xu Qing wasn't sure how Third Highness did it, but he had successfully convinced three of the Seazombies' most important allies to turn against them on their home turf. Previously, the Seazombies and Seven Blood Eyes had been at something of a deadlock, but now things had changed.

The event had multiple ramifications. For one thing, it won acclaim for Seven Blood Eyes, and made them even more glorious than before. It also attracted the attention of the Seven Sect Coalition on the Revered Ancient mainland, which seemed completely caught by surprise by the turn of events.

Clearly, the Seven Sect Coalition had been happy to see Seven Blood Eyes and the Seazombies in a deadlock. Because of that, they had been content to simply stand by and watch things play out. But now Seven Blood Eyes had taken the fight so far that they were about to invade the Seazombie's ancestral land. The Seven Sect Coalition seemed worried.

That was because... the Seazombies' ancestral land was very close to Revered Ancient.

To be precise, the Seazombie's ancestral land, their fortified islands, and the Merfolk Isles created a straight line between Seven Blood Eyes and Revered Ancient.

Before Third Highness' plan came to fruition, the Seven Sect Coalition had been hoping to see Seven Blood Eyes slowly draining resources as the war dragged on. But then Third Highness' plan

completely changed their attitude. All of a sudden, the Seven Sect Coalition began interfering with matters related to the war. Before long, rumors started spreading in Seven Blood Eyes. Some people thought that the war would end soon, thanks to the interference from the Seven Sect Coalition.

Xu Qing wasn't paying much attention to all that.

He was getting ready to take a trip back to the scavenger basecamp. He wanted to go back into that forbidden region, clean Sergeant Thunder's grave, and try to get news about Crucifix and Graceful Raptor. Two years had passed, and he was curious how the two of them were doing. [2]

After looking off into the distance for a time, he stood, put away his dharmaskiff, and headed toward the teleportation portal complex. Along the way, he spotted the Captain haggling with a vendor over how many spirit coins to pay for a bag of fruit.

When the Captain spotted Xu Qing, he tossed over an apple, then picked one for himself and took a bite. Smiling, he looked Xu Qing up and down and said, "Going out? Say, why not take me along?"

Xu Qing looked at the apple, then the Captain. He refused to believe that this was some sort of chance encounter.

The Captain cleared his throat, ate some more of his apple, and then sighed and shrugged his shoulders. "Fine, you got me. The old man gave me another mission. I'm supposed to keep an eye on you while he's gone. Keep you safe. I think the old man is anxious to take on a new apprentice, and doesn't feel like messing with all those silly tests and assessments. When he sees someone he wants, he seals the deal. Anyway, now he's anxious to get the war over with and come back."

The Captain seemed to have no qualms about selling out Master Seventh.

A strange look appeared in Xu Qing's eye as he considered the situation. After some thought, he decided there was no reason to say no. After all, the Seazombies still had a bounty on his head, and as Chen Feiyuan had pointed out in the Violet Lands, there were plenty of people who wanted that bounty. Having the Captain by his side when he went out would make things a bit safer. At the same time, there was also the possibility for craziness.

"I'm heading home for a bit," he said.

"Heading home? Then I'll be a guest! Hahaha! Alright, let's get going. It's so boring in the sect nowadays, we really need to get out and get some fresh air." The Captain seemed more anxious to get out of the sect than Xu Qing, and led the way as quickly as possible toward the teleportation portal complex.

"You did something, didn't you?" Xu Qing said. "You want to go out and lay low for a while?"

"How could that be possible?" the Captain replied, shaking his head. After arriving at the teleportation portal complex, he asked Xu Qing exactly where they were going, personally made the adjustments to the formation, and then dragged Xu Qing onto it. A moment later, they vanished.

Not long after they were gone, a howl of rage erupted from the Sixth Peak.

“Chen Erniu, you little bastard! Is there anything you won’t chew on?”

A stream of divine will swept out of the Sixth Peak and filled the capital city, looking for any traces of the Captain. All to no avail....

In a temple on the forested back side of the Sixth Peak, Master Sixth stood looking grimly at a cleverly concealed passageway. Only members of the echelon could do something like this, and only the top three members at that. Only they could bypass the Sixth Peak’s spell formation in this way. The tunnel led deep into the interior of the Sixth Peak, which was the core of the battle fortress. The Sixth Peak’s true power source was a secret, and was kept hidden by a concealing fog that would make it very difficult for anyone to perceive its true nature. But Master Sixth could see everything clearly. And on the foot of that power source was a missing chunk with teeth marks on the edges.

Was Chen Erniu a dog in his last life? He’ll bite anything!

Master Sixth sighed. Struggling to control his anger, he looked up at the power source concealed by the fog.

The little brat must have seen the whole thing. And I bet he guessed at the truth.... That said, he knows when to keep his mouth shut. Besides, he surely noticed that, back when I was crushing Bai Li, I was careful not to tap into the core power source.... If he can’t keep his mouth shut, though, the patriarch is going to skin him alive.