

Beyond the Timescape

#Chapter 31: He Bought Insurance from Me - Read Beyond the Timescape Chapter 31: He Bought Insurance from Me

Chapter 31: He Bought Insurance from Me

Boneblade was unconscious, his hands and feet bound. He was currently being carried on the shoulder of a burly man.

Next to the burly man was a hunch-backed old man in a black leather jerkin. Perhaps because of his back, the man didn't bother wearing a mask. He had messy gray hair, a face full of wrinkles, and cold eyes. All-in-all, he had a somber and desolate air. The fluctuations he emanated made it obvious he was past the level of Sergeant Thunder and Captain Bloodshadow; he was in the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

Xu Qing had never seen someone with this kind of cultivation base in the scavenger basecamp.

As Xu Qing looked on, the man holding Boneblade growled, "Chief, this fog is coming at the worst time. What do we do about the other meat treasures?"

"It's all the fault of this meat treasure," said the old man, glaring at the unconscious Boneblade. "We wasted a lot of time figuring out where he was hiding. Call everyone back here. We need to wait for this fog to disperse, then we can find the other meat treasures."

"What is the big boss thinking?" the burly man grumbled. "Why can't we just capture people in the basecamp? Why do we have to wait until they come to the forbidden region to grab them?"

The old man snorted coldly. "The boss likes slow and steady profit. That's something your pig brain can't understand. If we started grabbing people right in the camp, how long do you think it would be before people stopped camping there?"

The burly man didn't seem convinced, but also didn't argue. Taking out a whistle, he blew it, and before long, two other black-garbed men hurried to them.

Xu Qing didn't take any action. He just crouched in the treetop watching coldly.

After confirming that there were only four people in this group, and that they were getting ready to leave, Xu Qing glanced at the unconscious Boneblade.

If Xu Qing hadn't stumbled onto this scene, if Boneblade hadn't purchased insurance, or if it had been outside of the jungle, then Xu Qing wouldn't have batted an eyelid. He wasn't a saint, after all, and didn't want to waste energy going around saving people.

But he did have his principles. If someone bought insurance from him, then it was his job to see them safely out of the forbidden region. What happened to them afterward wasn't his concern.

Xu Qing suddenly shot into motion, leaving behind a streak of afterimages as he headed with arrow-like speed toward the burly man and Boneblade.

Because he had been concealed so perfectly, and because of his incredible speed, only the old man sensed him. The burly man and the other two had no idea he was coming.

The old man spun and waved his right hand, causing numerous ice blades to gather and shoot up. However, he was too slow.

By the time the ice blades shot over, Xu Qing was at the burly man, his hair whipping around him, the sharp blade of his dagger glinting, his eyes radiating killing intent.

His dagger slashed through the burly man's throat. And though the man was in the fifth level of Qi Condensation, he had no opportunity to fight back. He didn't even have a chance to scream before his head tumbled through the air.

Blood sprayed everywhere!

Boneblade began to fall along with the corpse, but Xu Qing grabbed him by his clothes and bounded away into the jungle. Tossing Boneblade off into the bushes, Xu Qing turned with cold eyes to face the three surviving enemies.

The burly man's head and corpse, as well as the old man's ice blades, were only now hitting the ground.

Everything went quiet. It was a shocking scene, and both the old man and his two companions were deeply shaken as they looked at Xu Qing.

"It's the Kid!" one of the masked men in black said, his eyes wide.

"Shut up!" the old man shouted.

The masked man, realizing he'd slipped up, kept his mouth shut.

Xu Qing looked closely at the three of them. What had been said so far was already very revealing.

Looking grimly at Xu Qing, the old man said, "This has nothing to do with you, Kid. Get out of here, and I can pretend we never saw you."

A breeze picked up, causing Xu Qing's bangs to drift. Then it reached the old man and his companions, stirring some dead, crackling leaves along the way. With the breeze, the fog seemed to swell.

Xu Qing simply stood in place, not saying a word.

Boneblade was awake, but was feigning unconsciousness. When he heard the old man's words, he suddenly got very nervous that Xu Qing wouldn't continue to help him. Then he realized that if he dragged Xu Qing into the matter, it would force his hand, and give him only one option. Opening his eyes, he shouted, "Don't listen to him, Kid! They work for the camp owner. A lot of the scavengers who have gone missing through the years were captured by him and sold to caravans to be turned into living treasures! It's the camp owner's biggest secret!"

The black-garbed old man narrowed his eyes, looked at Xu Qing, and said, "This is your last chance to mind your own business."

Xu Qing ignored Boneblade. Whatever was the cause of this situation, it had nothing to do with him. To Xu Qing, everything was very plain and simple. If someone bought insurance from him, he would get them out of the forbidden region. What happened after that didn't matter.

"He bought insurance from me," Xu Qing said, sounding very serious.

The old man's eyes glittered coldly, and a cruel smile played out on his face. Then he lifted both of his hands, and a glowing ring of red light appeared beneath his feet. Wind whipped inside the ring, slowly transforming into an extraordinary tornado.

"You lack experience, Kid. You gave me too much time. So... now you can die."

He threw his hands out in front of him, and the tornado grew larger. Now it was possible to see that it was made up of countless blood-colored ice blades. At the same time, the other two black-garbed men grinned viciously and rushed toward Xu Qing from either side.

A look of despair appeared on Boneblade's face.

In contrast, Xu Qing looked as calm as ever. As the two figures closed in from either side, and as the tornado of ice blades grew even larger, he quietly said, "I should thank you."

The moment the words left his mouth, the two black-garbed men suddenly stopped in place.

Their skin started to turn dark, and terror filled their faces as streams of black blood oozed out of their eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

Both had been poisoned, and were now incapable of breathing. Their terror deepened, and instinct urged them to flee.

However, they took no more than a few steps before both coughed up huge mouthfuls of black blood. Then they staggered and fell, their bodies twitching, their expressions filled with agony as they let out torturous screams. Then they died.

Boneblade was shocked to the core, and the old man unleashing the magical attack was similarly stunned, so much so that his tornado destabilized. Then his eyes started bleeding black blood.

“You...” he said, his face falling. He couldn’t possibly finish his magical technique, so he shoved his hands out, causing the ice blades to explode prematurely.

Thanks to his shaken state, the explosion wasn’t very well-controlled, and Xu Qing easily avoided the attack. Then he watched as the old man turned and ran in the opposite direction.

As the man ran, he pulled out a medicinal pill and consumed it. Xu Qing did nothing. As Boneblade looked on in terror, Xu Qing just counted quietly.

“One. Two. Three.”

The moment he said “three,” the old man vomited black blood that contained rotting chunks of internal organs.

He staggered, his face pale, but he didn’t fall. From the look of it, he still had some energy to flee.

Seeing that, Xu Qing frowned and burst into motion after the old man. The old man looked back despairingly as Xu Qing launched a blow. The energy of his fist attack created the vicious face of a goblin, grinning fiercely as it bore down on the old man.

SLAM!

The old man shook violently as his clothing was ripped to shreds and his internal organs shattered. He was dead.

His corpse landed on the ground, the chest sunken in, the shattered flesh and bone deformed into the face of a goblin. It was truly a ghastly sight.

Theoretically speaking, once the seven types of poison powder combine in the wind, it should kill the victims within a few breaths of time. But he survived.... It seems I have some room for improvement.

Ignoring the terrified Boneblade, Xu Qing went to collect his spoils of battle. Then he sprinkled Corpse-Ravaging Powder on the three bodies.

Hissing and popping sounds filled the jungle as the corpses turned into pools of blood.

With those things done, Xu Qing looked at Boneblade. Boneblade was struck to the core with fear from everything he’d seen Xu Qing do. In fact, Xu Qing was the most terrifying entity in the world as far as he was concerned.

And when Xu Qing looked at him, he shook from head to toe.

Then, as he shook, he suddenly noticed that the skin on his hand was turning green. He nearly passed out.

“Fellow Daoist Kid, I-I... I got poisoned!”

“The wind in this area is filled with my poisons,” Xu Qing explained calmly.

“Antidote! I need an antidote....” Boneblade felt pain building up inside of him.

“There are no antidotes for my poisons.” Xu Qing looked at the Fog of Confusion, which was getting ever-closer, and then he looked at the despairing Boneblade. “I came to save you because you bought my insurance. I’m not someone you can manipulate with petty tricks.”

“Fellow Daoist Kid, I’m sorry. Really, it was my mistake. This hurts so bad! Look, I’m turning green....”

Boneblade trembled as he held his hands up. They were already turning greenish-black, which had happened to the two men in black garb, just before they started bleeding from all their orifices. Boneblade couldn’t have been more terrified.

Looking at him coldly, Xu Qing waved his hand, sending a package of medicinal powder over.

Boneblade grabbed it and dumped the entire thing into his mouth. Soon the green color began to fade, and yet, his face started to swell.

“What did you give me?” he said, feeling his face. “I’m swelling up. It feels numb....”

Xu Qing looked down at him.

“That was also poison.”

Deathblade's Thoughts

Hey everyone, this is the last day for this novel to be in Sneak Peek. Tomorrow is the public launch! Make sure to check out the livestream starting at 12:30 Pacific. I’ll be sharing some of my favorite comments from the first 31 chapters, having some cool giveaways, and will also have a guest that you’ll not want to miss!

Thanks to everyone who’s been commenting. I recognize some of you from over the years, others are new to me. Either way, I appreciate all the comments and do my best to read as many as I can and interact with them as well.

I want to thank all of you who left reviews. I’ve really been blown away! We currently have more reviews than any of the other new releases, and we aren’t even public yet! Speaking of which... are there any of you out there who have a moment to add another review to the mix? I will definitely give you a shoutout. We have a chance here to absolutely smash any previous

record for number of reviews on the day of public launch!!! Let's do it!!!New novel chapters are published on [n0v/e/\(lb\)i\(n.\)co/m](http://www.lbi(n.)co/m)

Speaking of which, thank you Zhadar for the review!

Okay everyone, brace yourselves for a BIG mass release of chapters throughout the day tomorrow!

Chapter 32: Life to the Left, Death to the Right

“Also... also p-poison?” Boneblade stammered, his eyes wide with despair. It seemed like he wanted to say more, but before he could, he passed out.

That was when the Fog of Confusion rolled over them, covering the area and swallowing both Xu Qing and Boneblade.

Four hours later, at a crossroads at the edge of the jungle, Boneblade opened his eyes. His entire body ached, but the first thing he did when he opened his eyes was jump to his feet nervously.

There were no dangers around, and he didn't see Xu Qing. He sighed in relief. Then he checked his face and found it wasn't swollen anymore. It didn't seem like he was poisoned any longer.

“I'm not dead?” he murmured, his heart pounding at the realization that he'd somehow made it alive out of a seemingly impossible situation. Then he noticed a bamboo slip laying off to the side with some text on it.

“Insurance expired.”

Mixed emotions filled Boneblade's heart as he read the words, including shame at the trick he'd tried to pull earlier. Finally he sighed, clasped his hands, and bowed deeply in the direction of the jungle.

“Thank you.”

Turning around, he saw that there were two paths in front of him. The one on the right led straight back to the basecamp. On the left was a road that would eventually go to the city of Laughing Pines.

Given there was no one around, he stood there, thinking.

The camp owner is from the Golden Vajra Warrior Sect, and they control all the cities around here. Even if I go to Laughing Pines, I doubt I'll escape the wrath of the camp owner, especially considering the team he sent after me is dead.

Boneblade struggled to make a decision. The easiest way to stay alive would be to go back to the camp and lay all the blame on the Kid. He could explain that the Kid was the one who killed the

camp owner's subordinates, and that he had nothing to do with it. That idea pricked his conscience, as the Kid had saved him. But after some thought, he made his decision.

In this chaotic world, the most important thing is to keep on living. You can't worry about other people! Having reached this point in his train of thought, he quashed his guilt and started running back to the camp.

However, the moment he started moving, a cold beam of light shot toward him with shocking speed, and in a split second, pierced through his head. With a thump, Boneblade fell to the ground, his eyes wide, blood pooling around him. He twitched a few times, and then his view of the world turned dark. And it would remain that way forever.

He was thoroughly dead.

Xu Qing stood above the corpse, retrieving his iron skewer.

He wasn't interested in getting involved with the camp owner. And he understood human nature, so he hadn't left the scene. Instead, he waited to see what Boneblade would decide to do.

The path to the left led to life.

The path to the right led to death.

Boneblade had chosen the path to the right.

Face completely expressionless, Xu Qing sprinkled Corpse-Ravaging Powder on Boneblade's corpse, then turned and sped off.

The Fog of Confusion was still present in the jungle, but that didn't pose an obstacle for Xu Qing. Eventually he reached the canyon with his laboratory. Upon entering the canyon, he heard the faint cry of a wolf, but he ignored it.

First, he checked to make sure the traps he'd set up before leaving last time hadn't been sprung. Then he pushed open the door of the laboratory and stepped inside.

It wasn't very big inside. There was no bed to sleep on, and the walls were covered with a grid of small cabinets, within which were various medicinal plants and poison glands. Some of them had already been prepared for use in mixtures. Others were completely intact. Altogether, there were hundreds of specimens.

Xu Qing looked around and felt very pleased.

This was the collection he had built up after he started studying with Grandmaster Bai, and most were things he had personally collected in the forbidden region.

Poisonous plants made up most of the collection, with only a small portion being medicinal plants.

Xu Qing inspected everything, then sat down to think.

Grandmaster Bai had given him the pill formula for the white bolus, but it was hidden in the content of his lectures. Xu Qing had taken extensive notes, and also had a very good memory, and had already organized the information from those specific lectures. However... he didn't have all the medicinal plants he needed to concoct the pill.

I have no way to make the pill, but I might be able to substitute some other plants with similar qualities to the ones I'm missing.

He had no idea if it would work, but even if it didn't, he would learn from the process. Having reached this point in his train of thought, he waved his hand, causing seven or eight medicinal plants to fly out of various cabinets and land in front of him.

After inspecting them closely, he thought for a bit, then went to the small courtyard behind the laboratory. The courtyard had colorful flowers growing everywhere, and also a small patch of dirt where a few medicinal plants were growing. Those plants were the kind that had to be used within a certain period of time after being harvested. After turning this back courtyard into a medicinal garden, he had transplanted them here.

As he stepped into the medicinal garden, he heard the wolf howling again, even more clearly than before.

Xu Qing's expression was the same as ever as he harvested three plants from the garden, then went back inside.

There, he produced a stone basin, within which he began to crush the various ingredients together into a mixture.

Whether it was picking off leaves, extracting the liquid, or separating flower petals, he worked with great precision, making sure not to add too much or too little of anything. Gradually, the medicinal liquid in the basin turned pitch black in color.

I'm missing five kinds of medicinal plants....

Looking around at the cabinets, he considered the matter carefully before gathering the replacement ingredients.

Using the principle of yin-yang polarity, he tried to create something that would produce the proper result, but it turned out to be harder than he expected. The night passed, and morning came before he was finally able to produce the mixture he wanted.

Looking at the black, viscous liquid in the stone basin, he frowned. It didn't come close to resembling what he expected a white bolus mixture to look like. But given the work he'd put in so far, he wasn't going to give up now. Gritting his teeth, he took out some seven-leaf clover and added it to the mixture.

Soon, the medicinal liquid in the basin started bubbling, and it looked like the color might change. But after three breaths of time passed, it went still.

Looking closely, Xu Qing saw that the liquid was no longer black, but instead, a brown color.

Xu Qing hesitated. Rubbing his chest where the violet crystal rested inside, he thought about his resistance to poisons, and finally decided he wasn't in any danger. Reaching carefully into the basin, he took a small handful of the mixture and rolled it into the shape of a pill. Then he put it close to his nose and inhaled.

It smelled so revolting and acrid that he didn't dare to eat it.

Is it even edible? After some more hesitation, he took the pill out to the medicinal garden.

Yet again came the howl of the wolf. This time, Xu Qing walked through the medicinal garden and directly toward the source of the howling. Beyond the garden, in a patch of weedy overgrowth, was a large cage made of iron, wood, and vines. Inside the cage was an emaciated black-scaled wolf.

Upon seeing Xu Qing, it got to its feet and bared its teeth. However, its eyes shone with terror; clearly, it was afraid of Xu Qing.

Some time ago when Xu Qing was out in the jungle harvesting plants, this wolf attacked him out of nowhere. Instead of killing it, he'd brought it back here to be a test animal.

Upon noticing the brown-colored pill Xu Qing held, the wolf started trembling, and edged away from him.

It did no good. Xu Qing reached into the cage, grabbed the wolf by the neck, and pulled it toward him.

No facial expression could be seen on Xu Qing as he looked coldly at the trembling wolf. Using his other hand, he took the pill he'd just concocted and put it to the wolf's lips.

The black-scaled wolf shook uncontrollably. Realizing that death shadowed over it, the wolf meekly took the pill and swallowed it. All **newest chapters** on [n.o./velbi/n/\(\).com](http://n.o./velbi/n/().com)

A moment later, black smoke started rising off the wolf, and then it vomited. At the same time, a huge blister formed on its head, which grew larger and larger until it popped loudly. Then the wolf sagged to the ground, gasping for breath.

Xu Qing frowned, threw a few pieces of meat into the cage, and then went back to the laboratory to think.

Why didn't it work as expected...? Something strange happened when the medicine kicked in. Instead of neutralizing the mutagen, it caused it to converge and then explode.

After considering the matter, Xu Qing decided it was probably because he didn't include a medicinal augmentation agent. If he added one, it would probably make the medicine more effective.

An augmentation agent. What if I used snake venom in the mix?

He waved his hand, and three different venom glands appeared in front of him. After carefully extracting the venom, he added it to the mixture in the stone basin, causing the liquid to hiss and pop, while green fumes wafted up.

Seeing the poisonous fumes, Xu Qing waved his hand to fan them outside. Then he set the stone basin off to the side to ferment.

While waiting, Xu Qing sat down cross-legged to do breathing exercises and cultivate the Sea and Mountain Incantation.

Later, as evening fell, Xu Qing checked the medicinal liquid. Pulling out another handful to create a pill, he again went over to the black-scaled wolf.

A string of popping sounds rang out, and then Xu Qing returned to the laboratory looking dejected. After sitting down to think for a while, he took out a completed white bolus, melted it, and then studied the results.

In this manner, six days went by in a flash.

During that time, Xu Qing didn't pay attention to anything but his research into white boluses. He'd already used about half of his collection of medicinal plants, and his garden was completely empty. Furthermore, he'd made more than ten attempts at creating different versions of the white bolus liquid.

As for the black-scaled wolf...

Upon consuming the latest pill, the mutagen within it experienced a rapid influx. That, in turn, caused the spirit power in the area to pour into the wolf, bringing even more mutagen with it. Finally, the wolf exploded into a cloud of blood.

Thankfully, Xu Qing's shadow could absorb mutagen, otherwise the resulting convergence would have inundated him.

Seeing that final result, Xu Qing felt even more discouraged. That said, he knew that white boluses weren't easy to make, and that was especially true considering he didn't have all the right ingredients.

Even still, he was learning a lot about mixing medicinal ingredients. Every time he tried to make a new version of the mixture, he learned more. Furthermore, the final version of his pill actually did something.

Unfortunately, what it did was the opposite of what a white bolus did.

White boluses dispelled mutagen, but the pill Xu Qing made attracted it.

Looking down at the stone basin, he saw a thin green membrane that was created by adding seven-leaf clovers to the mix. Underneath it was a pitch black medicinal liquid. The reason for the membrane was that, without it, the liquid would immediately attract mutagen and create a strong convergence.

That was what had killed the black-scaled wolf.

Xu Qing sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose. Focusing on the fluctuations of his cultivation base, he tried to get rid of any feelings of failure.

He hadn't succeeded with the medicinal pill, but he had experienced some growth in his cultivation base. Right now, he was at the peak of the fifth level of the Sea and Mountain Incantation.

I should be able to reach the sixth level tonight.

Taking a deep breath, he stopped thinking about medicinal pills and went all out to achieve a cultivation breakthrough. In the chaotic world he lived in, every additional level of strength led to greater chances of survival.

That night, when the moon hung high in the sky, rumbling sounds echoed out within Xu Qing.

These sounds were far louder than anything from before. And despite the fact that he'd assumed there was no more filth within him to extrude, as soon as he reached the breakthrough point, massive amounts of impurities emerged from inside him.

An unprecedented sense of clarity swept through him, and then a roaring sound echoed out from behind him.

In the past, his fist strikes caused the spectral image of a goblin to appear. This time, a similar image appeared behind him, except larger and fiercer. And instead of having a single leg, it had two legs.

Moreover, this time... the spectral goblin even had a horn!!

Strictly speaking, it wasn't actually a goblin, but instead, a hobgoblin!

The howling of the hobgoblin echoed out into the night, causing the roars of the mutant beasts to cease.

Xu Qing's eyes snapped open, and violet light spilled out into the laboratory, as though a bolt of violet lightning had just landed. As the violet light spread out, and the hobgoblin roared, Xu Qing sat there looking profoundly intimidating.

A moment later, the light faded, and the spectral hobgoblin disappeared.

Sea and Mountain Incantation. Sixth level!

Deathblade's Thoughts

Many thanks to mnrnicedonovan, demonfox12, Deov1000, Azura The Immortal God Of Dao, De Kelvin for the reviews. You guys are awesome! Going forward, reviews will be put into the highest sponsor tier chapter so that everyone has a chance to see them. Thanks to everyone who takes the time to review the novel. Er Gen and I really appreciate it!

Chapter 33: Eternal Darkness

The Sea and Mountain Incantation was an ordinary technique, and the way it separated mutagen from spirit power wasn't anything special. There were many such techniques throughout the continent of South Phoenix, most of them cultivated by small clans or minor organizations. Even cultivating it to the peak didn't provide any amazing level of battle prowess. After all, the parts of the technique description that made it sound amazing were mostly exaggerations.

The saying about goblins can move mountains, hobgoblins can transport seas was a perfect example.

However, Xu Qing was unleashing power that had never before been seen in the Sea and Mountain Incantation. In fact, not even the person who created it had ever done something like this.

His fifth-level spectral goblin was actually as strong as what would normally appear in the sixth or seventh level. And today, his sixth-level goblin had already advanced to the form of a spectral hobgoblin. Though it was a young hobgoblin, its power vastly surpassed that of a goblin.

One could only imagine what Xu Qing's Sea and Mountain Incantation would be like when he reached the seventh level. Most likely, that hobgoblin would completely transform.

For most cultivators, the hobgoblin was the end of the line for the Sea and Mountain Incantation. But Xu Qing still had further to go.

He currently sat in his laboratory, a curious expression on his face. According to the technique description, the hobgoblin isn't supposed to appear until the tenth level. And it won't turn into an adult until reaching the peak level. Given my progress, it's going to reach adulthood in the seventh level. So what will happen in the eighth? And what about the ninth and tenth, and then the peak level of the technique?

Feeling full of anticipation, Xu Qing looked down at himself.

This time, he didn't do any tests of speed and strength. He could already tell that he was vastly stronger than he'd been in the fifth level. In fact, it was a level of strength that he already found astonishing. It was the same with his speed. From what Xu Qing could tell, he could now move so fast that wind resistance was the only thing he needed to worry about.

He had to wonder where he stacked up to the strongest people in the scavenger basecamp. One thing he was certain of: even if he had to fight two people who were like that black-garbed old man, both of whom could unleash magical techniques from the seventh level of Qi Condensation, he could still slaughter them. A moment later, he took a deep breath and looked around.

It was nighttime, and the laboratory was dark. However, he could still sense the presence of his shadow.

His breakthrough had affected his shadow too, allowing it to absorb even more mutagen. Furthermore, their connection was stronger and more complex.

Xu Qing looked thoughtfully at the ground as time slipped by. Eventually, the sky grew light, and sunlight filtered down into the laboratory. At that point, Xu Qing was able to make out the shape of his shadow. Suddenly, his eyes narrowed.

The moment he had been waiting for had arrived, as he had just seen his shadow ripple and distort. Then the shadow's right hand slowly raised.

Xu Qing took in a deep breath and kept his eyes focused on the shadow. Under his control, the shadow stretched across the floor toward a dark spot across the room. There, the shadow merged into the darkness and then disappeared. Xu Qing's expression remained placid, yet he could still sense his connection to the shadow.

Next, he sent the shadowy hand toward one of the cabinets, where it grabbed a medicinal plant. As the shadowy hand touched the plant, the mutagen within it grew more concentrated, and the plant turned greenish-black. That was when Xu Qing reached the limit of what he could do. His head felt like it was about to explode as he released control, and his shadow snapped back to its original shape.

A moment later, he looked up. His eyes were bloodshot and his head hurt so badly that he simply closed his eyes and tried to steady his breathing.

Two hours later, he opened his eyes. His headache was gone.

I can't really control it very well, he thought, staring at the shadow for a bit.

He wasn't in a rush. He knew that sooner or later he would be able to have full control over his shadow. And when that happened, his shadow... would be his most secret trump card.

After taking some time to rest, he reached out, causing the mutated medicinal plant to fly toward him. Once it was in his hand, he studied it closely.

This plant mutated just as if the eyes of the god above had opened. Does that mean my shadow can send mutagen into anything it touches?

Once again, he began to experiment with his shadow. Four hours later, Xu Qing had a much deeper understanding of his shadow. It couldn't send out mutagen into external objects at any time. It was only when Xu Qing had control of it.

By using that ability at an unexpected moment, he could definitely kill someone if he caught them off guard. At the same time, he felt just the same as ever that he needed to be wary of his shadow.

He glanced down at his chest to the spot where the violet crystal lay hidden inside. From what he could sense, it was only the violet crystal that allowed him to keep the shadow in check.

Finally, he put down the medicinal plant he'd been studying and looked around at all the little cabinets on the wall. He'd eventually tossed everything into that stone basin, and therefore, his collection was almost completely depleted now.

Looking at the basin, he sighed.

On the one hand, he regretted wasting so much of his collection. On the other hand, that black medicinal liquid had some good uses, and could even be considered a weapon.

After some more thought, he took the remaining medicinal liquid and rolled it into pills that he covered with a seven-leaf clover membrane. In the end, he had ten pitch-black pills that were slightly green on the outside.

"I'll call them black boluses," he murmured. Putting the pills away, he left his laboratory and prepared to go harvest some plants and think of a way to capture another black-scaled wolf. After all, it had worked well to have a wolf as a test animal.

Leaving the canyon, he headed to the temple complex. However, he didn't stop when he reached it. Instead, he ran through and continued deeper into the forbidden region. There were a lot more medicinal plants in that area.

Though he hadn't gone very far into this area, he had explored it on a number of occasions, and had reaped quite a harvest each time.

Not long after Xu Qing made his way into the depths of the forbidden region, a group of people slowly made their way into the jungle in the periphery behind him.

There were over a hundred in the group, including both men and women. There were also bodyguards, including five or six men who emanated unusually powerful auras.

The people being guarded were the very same young men and women who had set up their tents outside of the scavenger basecamp. Apparently, they'd come out into the jungle for sightseeing purposes, and they didn't seem the least bit anxious. In fact, the sound of chatting and laughter could be heard from them.

Their guide was Ol' Stony, who didn't have much choice in how the party proceeded. As he led the way, he glanced at the carefree young men and women, and grumbled in his heart.

This is a forbidden region!

He wanted to speak up, but knew that they wouldn't listen to him. City people like this thought they understood the dangers of forbidden regions, but the truth was that they had no idea of the terrors there that scavengers knew.

The city dwellers had learned things in books, or by hearing stories. But the scavengers had experienced things firsthand.

I just hope everything goes smoothly, and I can finish this mission and finally retire. Then I'll never come to a forbidden region ever again.

Nervous, but on guard, Ol' Stony continued to lead the group forward.

Unbeknownst to anyone present, something was happening in the middle of the group. One of the young women, a true beauty with long black hair, clad in a cyan gown, was talking with a fawning young man in a blue jerkin. But at the same time, that young woman was casually scattering some medicinal powder.

As the wind blew, the powder drifted about, odorless and invisible. That powder was apparently a catalyst of some sort, and it soon provoked a reaction deep in the forbidden region.

Xu Qing noticed.

As he was moving along carefully, he suddenly realized that there were a lot less mutant beasts than usual.

He even spotted an aggressive lizard that was on the same level of strength as the sixth or seventh level of Qi Condensation. Normally, that lizard would have attacked him, but now, it lay

concealed in a mud pit. Even when Xu Qing got close to it, it didn't do anything. It almost seemed afraid.

Xu Qing was on even higher alert than normal as he looked around. Feeling very uneasy, he harvested a medicinal plant then prepared to leave. But before he could, a frigid aura erupted from even deeper in the jungle, spreading out so rapidly the trees started freezing up.

Xu Qing's pupils constricted. Looking up, he saw numerous transparent jellyfish floating out from the depths of the forbidden region. Six of the jellyfish were gigantic, and they were surrounded by hundreds of smaller jellyfish. All of them floated in the general direction of the temple complex. It was almost as if something there was attracting them. As the group flew over, they noticed Xu Qing below.

One of the large jellyfish turned in his direction, its mass of eye-covered tentacles writhing. Most of those eyes were open.

A sensation of crisis exploded within Xu Qing. At the same time, his flesh and blood vibrated as, behind him, the spectral hobgoblin appeared, then looked up and howled noiselessly at the jellyfish.

Xu Qing looked on, his eyes narrowed. He was no longer the same person he was back in the third level of Qi Condensation, when he first felt the might of a jellyfish like this. Back then, he had been incapable of standing up to it.

As for the jellyfish, when it saw the howling hobgoblin, it seemed to hesitate.

Whether it was because of the force of attraction in the temple complex, or the fact that Xu Qing posed a threat, the jellyfish turned and floated away. Discover **new stories** on [no/v/e\(\)/lbin\(.\)com](http://no/v/e()/lbin(.)com)

Xu Qing breathed a sigh of relief.

Looking around, he thought about how strange this part of the jungle was today, and decided to leave.

Are they actually going to the temple complex? Or are they going somewhere else? I hope it's the latter. Otherwise, I'm going to have to go the long way around....

Looking thoughtful, he proceeded at top speed, becoming a streak of light that pierced through the jungle.

About two hours later, Xu Qing heard rumbling sounds in the distance as he perched atop a tree looking at the distant temple complex. He was only about an hour from the complex, and was close enough that he could just barely see the outline of the buildings there.

Unfortunately, the circumstance he had been worried about had arisen.

The group of jellyfish was hovering in the air above the temple complex, where they seemed to be fighting a group of people.

It was too far to make out any details of who was involved in the fight. After mulling the matter over, he headed carefully toward the complex.

Meanwhile, in the temple complex itself, Ol' Stony trembled, his lips quivering as he looked around in despair.

Bodies littered the ground around him, all of them servants and bodyguards of the group of young men and women.

Before, the young men and women had been carefree and relaxed. But not now. Their faces were pale, and all of them were injured. In their bedraggled state, they looked terrified.

The surviving bodyguards and servants surrounded them protectively as they desperately tried to fight their way out of the complex.

They were being constantly attacked by the hundreds of small jellyfish, while further up, the five or six huge jellyfish fought the five middle-aged cultivators who were part of the group.

Ol' Stony was in the group trying to break free. Why is this happening? Why is this happening...? Everything was going fine....

Unfortunately, he was old, and he couldn't move as fast as the others. After only taking a few steps, a jellyfish broke through the bodyguards and rushed toward him. He wasn't quick enough to evade. A moment later... the jellyfish swept past Ol' Stony, leaving behind a gaping hole where his heart had been. Then it attacked the young men and women.

Ol' Stony fell onto the ground, twitching.

Blood poured out of his chest, pooling up around him. Blood also filled his mouth and throat, making it impossible for him to say a word.

I guess... I won't get that city residence permit....

Ol' Stony closed his eyes, and his energy dissipated. Then, his view of the world became eternal darkness.