

Timescape 451

Chapter 451: Shaabii's Zombies and Aalloh's Nightmare

Xu Qing nodded slightly, his eyes shining mysteriously as he glanced at the Captain and then scanned the surrounding area.

In addition to the literal painted border marking the separation between the periphery and the depths of Ten Entrails of the True Immortal, there were visible differences between the two sections. In the depths, the jungle was thick, with long branches crisscrossing each other. In the dark night, it looked like the place was full of demonic monsters. It was even possible to hear faint whispers floating here and there, making the place seem incomparably bizarre.

Another clear difference was that in the depths, there were more dao fruits. And the eyes that made the fruits weren't just open and staring. Instead, they blinked as they shifted their gaze back and forth in different directions.

A third difference was that in the depths, there were no leaves on the ground, nor any fallen twigs or any other such debris. The ground was dirt and nothing else.

Xu Qing waited until the other Black Guard cultivators had inspected the area ahead, then he let Lin Yuandong escort him forward.

As they walked further in, the countless eyes around them began to shift to look at them. They were malevolent gazes that seemed to pierce into the hearts and minds of those they touched. Everyone stopped walking, keeping their guard up and their cultivation bases active. After a short time passed in which they confirmed nothing further would happen with the eyes, they continued moving. The dao fruits here weren't possible to harvest. Upon being touched, they would instantly collapse into a rotting, stinking sludge.

They encountered some dangerous things along the way, but Zhou Xingwu and Duke Heaven Zenith with their Spirit Trove cultivation bases were immensely helpful in that regard. In addition to them, there were all the Black Guard cultivators. As a result, Xu Qing never faced any real danger.

About two hours later, when they were far past the border, one of the Black Guard cultivators suddenly let loose a bloodcurdling scream. A shadowy form wrapped around him and pulled him up into the air. Before anyone could even attempt to save him, blood showered out of his body and his flesh withered. In the blink of an eye, he became a desiccated corpse. At the same time, dozens of egg-sized boils appeared on his skin, which then burst, sending out splashes of yellow liquid as they revealed eyes underneath. And the malevolent eyes were all looking at the people below.

The cultivators' expressions were deeply serious as they realized that, further in the jungle were even more corpses suspended in midair! There were no less than 10,000 of them, as far as the eye could see.

Just about every tree had a corpse, or in some cases, multiple corpses all stuck together. It was a horrendous sight. Most of the corpses were rotten and wizened, with only scraps of tattered clothing remaining on them. From the clothing that did remain, it was possible to tell that these corpses represented a host of different species. The corpses all had egg-sized boils on their skin, in some cases dozens, in other cases, well over a hundred. As the wind blew, the countless corpses swayed back and forth.

As they swayed, some of the boils burst, causing yellow liquid to splash out as eyes opened, which glared viciously at the people on the ground. Then the breeze picked up, and the swaying corpses began to drop from the trees like ripe fruit. One after another, they landed below, until the ground was littered with corpses.

Duke Heaven Zenith's expression flickered; he had never read anything about this phenomenon in the records kept by the thirty-six city-states.

Something really unusual is going on here. Eyes narrowing, he glanced at Xu Qing and the Black Guard cultivators, but didn't give any warning out loud.

Xu Qing looked at the corpses with hard eyes as he backed up a few paces.

Suddenly, one of the corpses twitched. Its head moved, almost mechanically. Then it turned its neck, and as it did, countless eyes focused on Xu Qing and the others. The zombie burst into motion, running toward them like a wild beast.

One of the Black Guard cultivators in the front attacked, chopping the zombie in two. But then, a few dozen additional zombies rose to their feet and rushed toward them. Then hundreds of them. In the shortest of moments, all the zombies were on their feet, rushing forth with inaudible howls. The wind blew harder, and more corpses up above twitched and wriggled, breaking free to land on the ground and join the zombie charge.

Zhou Xingwu's expression was grim as he waved his hand, causing several zombies to explode. The other Black Guard cultivators also attacked, and soon booming sounds and shockwaves spread out through the trees.

Xu Qing didn't do a thing. He just watched coldly. The Captain stood next to him, his eyes narrowed.

There was more to the danger than just that. Before long, more zombies appeared, rushing out from the deeper parts of the jungle. Some of them were formed from numerous zombies stuck together to make a larger body, and they emanated Gold Core battle prowess as they rushed forth. More and more such composite zombies appeared. Things were devolving into chaos.

Before long, hair-raising howls echoed from even deeper in the jungle. Then, dozens of zombies appeared that pulsed with Nascent Soul fluctuations.

As rumbling sounds shook the ground, a massive beast appeared that was a composite of over a hundred zombies. The Spirit Trove fluctuations that rolled off of it caused expressions of shock to appear on the faces of everyone present.

But what was even more shocking was the realization that there wasn't just a single Spirit Trove zombie beast. There were several.

Expression flickering, Xu Qing backed up.

As for the Captain, his eyes glittered brightly as he projected a message to Xu Qing.

"You know what this is? It's Shaabii's Zombie Tribulation! Little Ah Qing, remember how I told you there was some astonishing good fortune here? Well, this time it's really going to happen!"

“You’ve been here before, Eldest Brother?”

The Captain looked off at the towering tree and frowned. “Not in this life.”

A thoughtful look appeared on Xu Qing’s face, and he was about to ask a follow-up question when the Captain’s expression flickered. Reaching out, he grabbed Ning Yan, who was staring blankly at the zombies, and started running.

“Follow me, little Ah Qing!”

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing reached out and grabbed the stunned Qing Qiu by the shoulder, then raced after the Captain.

As they flew along, Zhou Xingwu was in the middle of fighting zombies. Turning, he noticed them leaving, and was about to pursue.

But then Duke Heaven Zenith, who was in the middle of fighting two Spirit Trove zombies, coughed up some blood and backed up. Without him in the way, the two zombies rushed toward Zhou Xingwu. Then the duke unleashed his own attack to block Zhou Xingwu’s path.

Zhou Xingwu’s face fell as he was forced to give up any thoughts of chasing after Xu Qing. As he fell back, he turned and glared at Duke Heaven Zenith.

“My apologies, exalted Zhou,” the duke said coolly. “The godchild has a personal Nightshade matter to handle. It wouldn’t be convenient for them to take us along, so please don’t try to force the matter.”

Looking very dour, Zhou Xingwu said, “Are you sure they’re actually Nightshades? They rushed off and prohibited us from following? Something suspicious is obviously going on!”

“Let me ask you, exalted Zhou. Are you sure they’re not Nightshades? Regardless, your mission wasn’t to determine if they’re authentic or not. Our superiors can make that call. Why should you take responsibility for it?”

Zhou Xingwu didn’t say anything further. He understood basic reasoning principles. In fact, he had been hoping that the duke would say something like this. Considering he had, if anything really did go wrong, Zhou Xingwu would have a better explanation for his actions.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing and the others were taking advantage of the distraction provided by the zombies to leave the Black Guard cultivators behind. The Captain took the lead, moving at top speed and dragging along the terrified and trembling Ning Yan.

Ning Yan was on the verge of tears. He had no idea why this Nightshade had grabbed him, but he knew it couldn’t be for a good reason.

Qing Qiu was thinking the same thing. She was in Xu Qing’s grasp as he flew along after the Captain. She was indignant, and wanted to fight back, but also knew it didn’t make sense to do so.

As they fled, Xu Qing didn’t ask any questions. He just kept his eyes on the surroundings and the Captain. He had decided that, since he had chosen to trust his Eldest Brother, then there was no reason to go around asking for details. That said, what the Captain mentioned earlier had cleared up a lot of Xu Qing’s suspicions.

He hasn't been here 'in this life.' And that means he must have come here in a previous life....

Ducking past a tree branch, he followed the Captain deeper into the jungle. He could already see that the Captain wasn't moving in a straight line. He was zig-zagging in a specific pattern.

"Eldest Brother, what are you looking for?"

The Captain's eyes glittered, but not with a crazy look. Instead, it was unprecedented longing.

"I'm looking for Aalloh's Nightmare! Why hasn't it shown up? My calculations can't be wrong! It starts with Shaabii's Zombie Tribulation. After that is Aalloh's Nightmare Tribulation..." [1]

At almost that exact same moment, they heard a sound from off in the distance.

Thunk!

Thunk-thunk!

Thunk-thunk-thunk!

Both Xu Qing and the Captain noticed it immediately, and looked over to see a roughly one-meter-tall bird in a tree. The bird had no feathers at all; all its muscles were visible, and it was covered with blood that slowly dripped to the ground below. It had no eyes, only vacant black holes. And its entire body rocked back and forth as it pecked at the tree. A freakish vibe filled the area. If this area was a painting, then it would be a painting full of holes. Left and right, there were pieces missing, making the entire place seem riddled with damage. In the empty spots there was nothing but darkness, like a void.

As Xu Qing took in the bizarre scene, the thumping of the woodpecker echoed out. Then his pupils constricted as he realized that the very sounds coming from the woodpecker were materializing and fusing into a huge musical symbol that drifted about and devoured whatever it touched. It didn't matter if it touched the ground, or trees, or anything else. Whatever it touched vanished and turned into black, empty holes.

"It's here!" the Captain said, his voice thrumming with joy. As the sound of the woodpecker continued, causing the musical symbol to drift everywhere, he turned and nodded at Xu Qing. Then he hoisted Ning Yan in front of him and continued toward the musical symbol.

Xu Qing took a deep breath, gripped Qing Qiu tight, and pressed onward.

In the blink of an eye, the four of them reached the musical symbol. When they did, they smashed into it, and the symbol exploded. The four of them disappeared, along with everything for about a meter around them. Left behind was nothing but a dark hole.

The woodpecker was still on the tree, pecking away. Everything in the area continued to disappear, until eventually the woodpecker looked up. Stretching its featherless wings, it let loose an ear-piercing cry, then flew off in a different direction.

Eventually, it found a new tree, where it settled down and started to peck again. A new musical symbol appeared, which began floating around and causing everything to disappear.

Beneath a blood-colored sky, violet mountain ranges stretched this way and that. There was no moon; the blood-colored light rose from the lands below to illuminate the dome of heaven.

This was the place where Xu Qing and the others appeared after slamming into the musical symbol. There were no flowers, plants, or trees anywhere. Ground and mountains alike were made from rock and soil. The ground was firm, yet it sank slightly underfoot. To Xu Qing, it felt like walking on flesh.

As the red light shone, Qing Qiu breathed heavily and studied her surroundings just as Xu Qing was. Ning Yan trembled, and when he felt the ground beneath his feet, he let loose a moan of grief.

“Finished! We’ve been devoured by the nightmare of the Woe-Immortals! There’s no way to get out this—”

“Shut up!” the Captain said, glaring at Ning Yan.

Ning Yan closed his mouth. He appeared to be on the verge of tears as he smiled fawningly at the terrifying Nightshade that held him.

Chapter 452: It’s Fine? It’s Fine!

“Say, you’re really in the know, aren’t you?” the Captain said, looking intrigued.

“Alright, speak up. What’s the nightmare of the Woe-Immortals?”

Ning Yan shrank in on himself a bit, yet didn’t dare to refrain from answering the question. Voice trembling, he said, “Legend has it that after a pure-blooded Woe-Immortal died, the woe in their body would turn into a nightmare. Anyone who then disturbed their corpse would be trapped in that nightmare forever, unable to escape. Their flesh would gradually rot away until only their heart remained. And then their heart would become part of the nightmare.”

As Ning Yan spoke, Qing Qiu looked around with narrowed eyes.

Xu Qing’s expression was the same as ever as he also scanned the area.

Meanwhile, the Captain laughed softly. “So, you really are a descendant of the Woe-Immortals. You even know about Aalloh’s Nightmare Tribulation. Not bad. Not bad at all.”

Right then, a thumping sound reached them, like a heartbeat. The lands quivered and the mountains trembled, as if blood were pumping through them. They even started to glow with red light. As the sky grew increasingly red, Xu Qing and the others were covered with blood-colored light. Then, Xu Qing frowned as he realized that parts of his body were starting to disappear.

It started with a fist-sized chunk of flesh on his right leg. No blood flowed from that spot, nor was there any sensation of rotting. The flesh just disappeared. Xu Qing didn’t get flustered. After examining the wound, he activated his third heavenly palace, filling himself with taboo poison.

The others quickly discovered that they were also missing chunks of flesh. Qing Qiu had lost half of a hand. Ning Yan’s right ear and part of his face were gone.

“We’re finished!” Ning Yan wailed. “Done for!”

His eyes were full of terror and despair. And yet, as he cried out, the Captain pulled out something and stuffed it into Ning Yan's mouth.

Then he smacked Ning Yan's belly. Ning Yan's eyes went wide as he involuntarily swallowed whatever was in his mouth.

Shocked, he said, "W-w-what... what'd you give me?"

"That's a good boy," the Captain said with a mysterious grin. "You'll find out soon enough."

He looked at Xu Qing. Xu Qing looked back at him. The Captain's behavior so far had only confirmed Xu Qing's speculations about what was going on.

"Do you trust me, little Junior Brother?" the Captain projected.

Xu Qing nodded. He waved his hand, causing his violet moon heavenly palace to activate, which sent the aura of the violet moon into Qing Qiu. It wasn't a full invasion. It just flowed through her and helped her to dispel the power of this location. Afterward, Qing Qiu's expression was a mix of confusion and other emotions. Xu Qing looked back at the Captain.

"Eldest Brother, we need to stay here for a bit of time before leaving, right? How long?"

The Captain chuckled. Obviously Xu Qing understood the meaning behind his simple statement. Feeling very pleased, he replied, "I know you have a lot of questions, Little Junior Brother. Unfortunately, now's not the time for the answers. You've just got to trust me. Suffice it to say Duke Heaven Zenith was right. Getting into Ten Entrails of the True Immortal is like putting together a puzzle. You can't rush it. Shaabii's Zombies were one of the puzzle pieces. Aalloh's Nightmare is the second. Right now we need to wait about an hour. Two hours at the most. Then we'll be out of here."

Xu Qing nodded, then sat down cross-legged and continued sending the power of the violet moon into Qing Qiu.

Qing Qiu had very mixed emotions. This was not the first moment in which she had noticed this Nightshade treating her differently than before.

This evil Nightshade definitely has some sort of hidden agenda!

Time crept by. Pieces of the Captain's body went missing, but he obviously had a way to deal with it, as the speed with which it happened was even slower than for Xu Qing and Qing Qiu.

No one provided any further help to Ning Yan, yet strangely, he didn't seem affected.

That said, Ning Yan wasn't happy. Instead, he was trembling with fear as he realized that, though he didn't have parts of his body disappearing, something else was wrong. His abdomen was starting to expand. It was almost as if something was growing inside of him....

When he realized that, his face turned ashen. Eyes wide, he looked at the Captain and moaned, "Exalted one, what did you feed me? My belly feels really weird...."

Even as the words left his mouth, his abdomen expanded again, quite dramatically. Ning Yan looked extremely anxious.

Qing Qiu inhaled sharply, and Xu Qing had a strange look on his face as he suddenly found himself thinking about Wu Jianwu's beloved animals.

The Captain hurried over to Ning Yan, his eyes glittering with anticipation. "What does it feel like?" "Like there's something kicking me from the inside," Ning Yan replied, looking like he was about to start crying.

The Captain cleared his throat. "Just keep calm and let the little one keep growing."

Ning Yan wanted to start cursing but didn't dare. Beads of sweat were rolling down his forehead. Then he realized that his abdomen seemed to be moving, as if something was trying to pop out of his belly button.

"Exalted one, it-it-it..."

To Ning Yan's shock, something sharp was poking his daoist robe from the inside, at that exact spot.

Xu Qing, the Captain, and Qing Qiu were all watching closely. The Captain was clearly wrapped up in anticipation. Xu Qing seemed curious. Qing Qiu, meanwhile, shivered as she thought about how vicious these Nightshades were.

Ning Yan was nearly overwhelmed with terror as his daoist robe ripped, and something emerged from that spot. It was a thin green vine. Then another and another. The vines writhed as they expanded, growing longer and longer until they were fully nine meters in length. They were all green, and they all emanated an ancient aura.

"Winespirit vines?" Ning Yan blurted in alarm.

The Captain looked surprised. "Interesting. Turns out you know a lot of things, you little punk. Seriously, a lot!"

Meanwhile, once the vines reached nine meters in length, they curved around. Over the course of about ten breaths of time, they circled back to their starting point. There, they connected to each other, creating a large circle that resembled a door.

"Let's go!" the Captain said, and he dove into the circle.

Xu Qing didn't hesitate. Keeping his grip on Qing Qiu, he jumped into the circle. When they disappeared, Ning Yan looked extremely nervous. As he stood there, a hand stretched back in through the circle, grabbed the vines where they connected to Ning Yan, then yanked hard. Thus, Ning Yan was also pulled into the circular door. After Ning Yan was gone, the vines shrank down and down until they vanished without a trace.

The location the four had traveled to was still within the jungle of Ten Entrails of the True Immortal. However, they were nowhere near the woodpecker. Instead... they were in the very depths of the jungle. In fact, they were right beneath the Ten Entrails Tree.

Upon emerging, Xu Qing's heart started to pound when he realized how close he was to the tree. Each of the branching trunks of the tree were fully three hundred meters wide, and together, they occupied a space of about 3,000 meters. Several hundred meters above the surface of the ground, they stretched out in different directions. High in the clouds, they swayed back and forth.

Countless leaves grew on the tree, the veins of which contained magical laws and pulsed with spirit energy fluctuations. Each and every one of those leaves was likely extremely valuable.

There were also innumerable smaller branches that grew off of the tree and were obviously far more valuable than the leaves. They glowed like treasures, and contained not only the power of magical laws, but also, dao resonance. Obviously, each branch was a treasure of its own.

The bark of the tree was a dark green color, and every spot that did not have branches or leaves growing off of it was covered with bulging eyes. All of those eyes were looking at Xu Qing and the others. Meanwhile, a noxious odor filled the area, along with an astonishing pressure.

Anyone would get the sensation that the Ten Entrails Tree... was alive! Or perhaps this was a living 'true immortal.'

The pressure was so intense that Xu Qing's vision blurred. It was almost as if the Ten Entrails Tree had turned into a dancing figure surrounded by a sea of flames and a host of dancing cultivators. Xu Qing felt profoundly uncomfortable as his view of the world shifted back and forth between the tree and the vision.

Then he felt himself twitching, as if his own entrails were about to emerge from within him. Breathing heavily, he activated his third and fourth heavenly palaces, while simultaneously sending some power into Qing Qiu to drive away the vision. Qing Qiu's face was ashen and her eyes bloodshot. Gritting her teeth, she struggled to stay standing.

The Captain had also tapped into his cultivation, causing those faces to appear in his eyes, which helped him resist the pressure of the tree.

Only Ning Yan seemed to be suffering no ill effects. A metallic glow emanated off of him, and the vines attached to his belly swayed, seemingly in unison with the Ten Entrails Tree. He wanted to run, but the Captain had a firm grip on the vines. What was more, nothing he did seemed capable of severing the vines. All he could do was stand there scowling on the verge of tears.

Once Xu Qing cleared his thoughts, he surveyed his surroundings.

The soil underneath the tree was red. There were no leaves or branches lying around. Xu Qing shifted his gaze to the leaves and branches on the tree.

"There are so many branches and leaves! It should be fine to break off one or two." Xu Qing licked his lips and looked at the Captain. The Captain looked back. Both could see the excitement in each other's eyes.

Xu Qing burst into motion.

The Captain did the same, carrying the unwilling Ning Yan with him. It was hard to say who reached the tree first.

The Captain ripped off three leaves and stuffed them in his mouth.

Xu Qing tore off a branch and put it into his robe.

After that, they looked at each other again.

"It's fine?"

“It’s fine!”

Meanwhile, the Ten Entrails Tree started swaying forcefully, and it pulsed with fluctuations that made it seem like it might be waking up.

Ning Yan gasped and looked at Xu Qing and the Captain as if they were dead people. It was his first time coming to understand exactly how crazy these two were.

That was when Qing Qiu took action. Reaching out, she ripped off a leaf and ate it.

As the Ten Entrails Tree swayed with increasing vigor, Ning Yan’s eyes filled with terror. “Well shoot! You’re just like them!”

Chapter 453: The Godchild Shocks the Cathedral

After eating the leaf, Qing Qiu felt even more misgivings than before, and she looked suspiciously at Xu Qing and the Captain. For some reason, this entire situation felt vaguely familiar, and she suddenly found herself thinking about the detestable Ghost Hand and Mad Dog. But then she thought about how the Nightshade godchild had been treating her and decided there was no way he could be Ghost Hand. After all, she and Ghost Hand had never gotten along, and if he had the chance to kill her, he definitely wouldn’t hold back.

As Qing Qiu pondered the subject, Xu Qing was off to the side looking at the leaves and licking his lips. He was about to go grab one when the Ten Entrails Tree trembled even more intensely than before. The branches that extended into the sky swayed, creating a strong wind that swept through the area.

Seeing that, Xu Qing changed his mind.

Meanwhile, the Captain looked at Qing Qiu and chuckled. “You want some of this good fortune? Fine. Considering that you’re... ahem. Anyway, let’s just count you in for now.”

With that, the Captain waved his hand, and the evil ghost scythe appeared, which he tossed to Qing Qiu.

Stunned, Qing Qiu caught the scythe. Instantly, the evil ghost started wailing accusingly in her mind. She looked at the Captain and Xu Qing.

Xu Qing also waved his hand, sending her bag of holding flying out to her.

Breathing heavily, she caught it. The first thing she did was take out a new mask and put it on. Now she felt more suspicious than ever about Xu Qing and the Captain. In fact, she even reached out to the evil ghost in her mind, only to get no answer.

Finally, she just said, “Just who exactly are you two?”

The Captain glared at her. “How dare you speak to our godchild like that!”

Xu Qing, meanwhile, cleared his throat to remind the Captain not to hassle Qing Qiu.

The Captain chuckled darkly. Saying nothing further, he leaped onto the Ten Entrails Tree, then looked back and waved at Xu Qing for him to follow.

Ning Yan was visibly stunned, and was also starting to get suspicious about the situation. He looked at Xu Qing and the Captain thoughtfully. However, before much else could happen, the vines

attached to him yanked him into the air after the Captain. Grief and indignation swept the suspicion out of Ning Yan's mind.

Xu Qing's expression remained the same as ever as he flew onto the Ten Entrails Tree and started moving up.

Qing Qiu gritted her teeth and flew after them.

The Ten Entrails Tree seemed to get closer and closer to waking. As it swayed violently, the four of them flew up one of the main branches until they were about three hundred meters up. From that point, it was possible to look down at the jungle. However, they weren't high enough to be able to see the treeline itself.

Even as he was looking out at the jungle, Xu Qing suddenly felt the back of his right hand itching. When he looked down at it, his pupils constricted. Right on the back of his hand was a blister with a slit down the middle of it. And right when Xu Qing looked at it, it opened.

It was an eye! And it was looking right at him!

Right behind him, Qing Qiu was experiencing something similar as an eye appeared on her arm. It was the same with the Captain, as an eye appeared on the back of his head beneath his hair. Ning Yan seemed to have it better off in some respects. He just had small bumps on him that seemed like they would only eventually become eyes.

"Perfect!" the Captain said with a hearty laugh. "We're finally experiencing Beesah's Eye Tribulation!"

He looked back excitedly at Xu Qing. "Little Ah Qing, the amazing good fortune your Eldest Brother mentioned is about to appear!"

The Captain lifted his arm and bit off an eyeball that had just popped into place there. After a few chews, he swallowed, then continued moving up.

Ning Yan felt sick to his stomach at the sight of it, and was apparently recalling some bad memories. His anger intensified.

Looking at the eyeball on his hand, Xu Qing sent some taboo poison out. The eyeball immediately turned black. Next, he expressionlessly pulled out a dagger and started cutting into the rotten eye. With a few deft swishes of the dagger, he cut it out of his hand. Instead of tossing it to the side, he put it into his bag of holding. As he continued moving, more eyes appeared, and he used the same method to get rid of them. Considering how rapidly the eyes appeared, he was soon covered with wounds. He frowned as he realized the effect was only speeding up. A moment later, over a hundred bumps covered him, all of them turning into eyes. After about seven or eight breaths of time passed, his arms, legs, chest, neck, and even face had eyes on them.

As the eyes appeared, his sea of consciousness was thrown into chaos. It was as if mysterious and unknown souls had appeared inside of him. They looked like him, but were not part of him. However, they all had different facial expressions. Some were vicious, some wept. Some laughed, while others howled in grief. A few seemed decisive, while a few were cowardly.

When Xu Qing sensed the souls inside of him, his expression turned somber. As it turned out, each of the eyes related to one of the souls in his sea of consciousness. They weren't able to possess him,

and each had a different personality. It was as if they were independent entities that wanted to enter his own soul and influence him. If they succeeded, then he would transform into a person with multiple insane personalities.

Meanwhile, the Captain had a host of eyes all over him, as did Qing Qiu.

Only Ning Yan looked normal. He still didn't have any eyes on him, only bumps. The bumps had slits, yet apparently his skin was too tough, and thus they couldn't open and reveal the eyes beneath. Eventually, after the countless bumps realized they couldn't open, they disappeared on their own.

When Xu Qing sensed the unique nature of the souls, it was without the slightest hesitation that he called on the Ghost Emperor mountain to crush them. Xu Qing's Gruegloom Daoseizing Art was used to extract gold cores from enemies, which would bring along with them the impurities of those enemies' souls. The entire purpose of having the Ghost Emperor mountain was to crush those things.

Light glittered as the souls in his sea of consciousness collapsed one by one. As they collapsed, they actually provided some nice benefits to Xu Qing by nourishing and strengthening his own soul. That realization caused his eyes to light up, and instead of immediately attacking the eyes with poison, he let them grow a bit first.

The others were dealing with the eyes in their own ingenious ways.

The Captain started by plucking them out and eating them. But as the eyes proliferated, he used some unknown method to cause mouths to appear all over his body. They would slide across his skin, find the eyes, and then devour them.

Ning Yan was still in the same position. The bumps on his skin would eventually collapse on themselves in fury, and wouldn't even be able to turn into personality souls. Intrigued, the Captain used the vines to yank Ning Yan over to and look at him closely.

As for Qing Qiu... she actually didn't need to get rid of the souls. Personalities were good fortune for her. Her blood will domain required numerous personalities, and thus her eyes shone as she came to realize how much she was benefiting. At a certain point, she started pulsing with an aura that even Xu Qing found astonishing.

However, the eyes eventually reached a certain threshold. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, and they had climbed to a height of about 2,400 meters, the eyes stopped forming.

Feeling a bit disappointed, Xu Qing sent out his poison. Hundreds of eyes rotted, and black blood flowed down him.

It was around that time that the Captain stopped in place. While looking around he performed some calculations with his fingers. Then, to the surprise of everyone else, he shoved his hand into his belly, pulled out a rope-like intestine, then ripped off a piece and threw it onto the branch he was standing on.

As the entrails were sucked into the tree, the Captain looked back at Xu Qing, his eyes shining.

Xu Qing spent a few moments in thought, then sliced open his belly and calmly ripped out a chunk of his entrails to throw onto the tree.

As the tree absorbed the entrails, the Captain looked at Qing Qiu, anticipation in his eyes.

Now that she had her mask on, no one could tell if her facial expression was changing. However, after a moment, she looked away. Clearly she wasn't going to cut out her intestines.

The Captain seemed a bit disappointed.

Meanwhile, Ning Yan inhaled sharply. Though he had already experienced a lot of strange things, as of this moment, he was starting to think that these two Nightshades really were crazy. And that was because, as they continued on their way, the Nightshades would stop every few hundred meters and rip out more of their entrails. Considering that it wasn't even possible to see the top of the tree, an absurd thought suddenly occurred to Ning Yan.

Do they even have enough entrails? And if they run out, will they start ripping out mine? I should be fine. They won't be able to rip me open.... Wait! That Nightshade is obviously extremely dangerous. What if he actually does have a way to rip out my intestines?

The thought threw his mind into chaos and filled him with sorrow.

Thus, the four of them continued to climb higher and higher on the Ten Entrails Tree. It was hard to say how much time passed. Eventually, dawn broke, and the morning sun spread out like an endless burning fire.

Far over the horizon, a great distance away in the Holytide's kingdom of Heavengale, a cold wind blew across the lands. There was no sun in the dome of heaven, only a red glow like evening.

A black beam of light shot up from the center of the capital city, rising high into that red sky. The black light contained boundless power; it could devour all brightness, devour all magical law, and assimilate all radiance and light. What had once been a bright sky now turned into something pitch black. From a distance, the sky looked mottled; it was mostly black with only a few bits of red left behind.

Beneath that darkness was a temple. It was the Nightshade Cathedral!

Bells tolled in the cathedral, a sound like something from the most ancient past. At the same time, the mottled darkness up above turned into the massive face of a Nightshade. It was an old member of that species, with white hair and extremely wrinkled skin. Whatever redness remained in the sky was absorbed and became his eyelids.

All Holytides in the Heavengale capital city were shaken to the core, and quickly prostrated themselves reverently.

In the royal palace, the king and his ministers all bowed their heads and dropped to their knees. As they kowtowed, the face in the sky opened its eyes. The eyes were profound and contained countless dao lineaments. At the same time, the mottled darkness grew blurry, as if countless motes from different points in time were converging on the face.

In the surrounding sky, countless minor worlds formed and then spread out. Then the minor worlds turned into trillions of streams of black energy that swirled about, devouring all the light around them. They were like rivers, lands, and even living beings. From a distance, it looked like they were forming a major world. However, it was only a major world in embryonic form, not complete. That said, it was easy to imagine how, once that major world formed, it could rest on one's shoulders.

Once that happened, this individual wouldn't be in Void Returning. Rather, he would be... a living Smoldering God!

Everything went absolutely silent as all the people in the city bowed their heads. Shortly after, an ancient voice filled the city.

"Master Heavengale."

"Here!" the king responded.

"Bring the godchild here!"

"Your orders shall be followed!"

The wind... grew stronger.

Chapter 454: An Offering to Heaven!

Meanwhile, in Eastern Wasteland County, on the Ten Entrails Tree....

As the morning sun spilled light out everywhere, Xu Qing and the others were moving up the tree. The Captain continued to rip off chunks of his intestines and throw them onto the tree, his face a mixture of determination and madness.

Xu Qing gritted his teeth as he did the same. Although he wasn't exactly sure why the Captain was doing this, given everything he had experienced so far along his path of cultivation, he had long since come to realize that the Captain's actions after starting to climb the Ten Entrails Tree conformed to some sort of ritual. What was more, even after reaching their current height, they had not run into the dangers Duke Heaven Zenith had mentioned, those which involved space-time chaos, curses, and the like. It made Xu Qing think about the stories he had heard about the descendants of the Woe-Immortals.

Ten Entrails of the True Immortal contain endless dangers, like pieces of a puzzle. You can't just charge straight in. You have to know the right method to successfully enter.

Eyes narrowing, he looked at the Captain up ahead.

When we first entered the depths of this place, the Captain must have secretly employed some method to provoke the so-called Shaabii's Zombie Tribulation. That was probably the first puzzle piece. After the first puzzle piece came the second. That featherless woodpecker. Aalloh's Nightmare Tribulation. Then we reached the tree, which was when we encountered the third puzzle piece, just moments ago. Beesah's Eye Tribulation. After the third tribulation, the Captain started ripping out his intestines and putting them into the tree. In that case, I wonder if there's another tribulation coming.

With such thoughts on his mind, Xu Qing struggled onward, while simultaneously looking at the lands below.

They were already at a height of over 6,000 meters. The wind was very strong, and everything below looked miniature. It was possible to see the edges of the jungle, as well as the multi-colored cities of the thirty-six city-states.

What is this good fortune that the Captain mentioned?

Before he had a chance to put any more thought into the subject, his expression flickered and he shifted his gaze from the lands below to what was up above him on the tree. He wasn't the only one to react that way. The Captain stopped moving and looked further up the tree.

The dark green bark of the tree was wriggling. Then, only a moment later, the bark rose up in the form of fleshy sprouts.

The fleshy sprouts were each a bit more than a meter in length, and about a third of that in width. They were almost like snakes coming out of the tree. They were the same color as the tree, and their heads were like blooming flowers with five petals, except inside, there was blood-colored flesh and sharp fangs. What was more, viscous fluid dripped out of their opened mouths. They looked extremely ghastly.

Xu Qing's gaze hardened at the sight of the extraordinary fleshy sprouts. Ning Yan and Qing Qiu both had serious expressions on their faces. Only the Captain looked different. The craziness in his eyes grew stronger as he laughed heartily.

"We went in the right direction. This is the spot! Heaven's about to open!"

As the words left his mouth, the more than 100,000 fleshy sprouts on the tree all opened their mouths. Swaying in unison, they pointed up toward the dome of heaven and began to tremble. They seemed to be joining forces to cry out to the sky. Except, no sound could be heard. Their voices did not exist on the same auditory spectrum that cultivators could hear.

The scene wasn't just playing out on the tree trunk they were climbing. The same thing was happening on the other nine trunks. It was an extremely bizarre and grisly scene. Most grisly of all was the transformation to the sky that resulted from the howling of the over 1,000,000 fleshy sprouts.

High in the sky, a rift was forming.

Xu Qing felt shaken as he realized that he had seen this before in his vision. The rift in the sky was exactly the same. And he remembered the sensation he had experienced in the vision. It was the feeling that there was some unimaginable entity beyond that rift.

As he struggled to control his breathing, everything in the surroundings started twisting and distorting. Then the Captain shivered from head to toe, as if some invisible force had slammed into him. He staggered back several paces. He wasn't the only one affected. Ning Yan also shivered, and the evil ghost on Qing Qiu's scythe let loose a scream.

Then Xu Qing felt that invisible force. He wasn't sure what it was, but it felt like something had slammed into him. His mind buzzed, and pulses of pain shot through him. In the blink of an eye, he went numb, and he felt like a destructive force was trying to wipe out his life force.

"Lightning tribulation?" It only took a moment for Xu Qing to realize what was going on. He felt like he had just been struck by lightning!

Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior confirmed that. "Milord, it's lightning!" he shrieked. "It's really lightning! Strangely, though, it's not visible, and you can't sense it. What kind of lightning tribulation is this?"

Xu Qing's expression flickered as the same sensation struck him again, like he had been hit by invisible tribulation lightning. Even though he couldn't see or even sense it, it was blocking his path.

As everyone was forced to back up, the Captain laughed wildly.

“It's Tohjaah's Voice Tribulation! The Woe-Immortals believed that immortal ascension involved ripping open your belly and using your entrails to connect to heaven and earth.

“Similarly, their understanding of tribulation lightning was different from most other species. They believed that when heaven and earth were first born, an entity named Tohjaah wished to topple the dao of heaven. He ultimately failed, and was imprisoned in the void outside the world, to ensure that the people of the world forgot him and could never remember anything about him. From the perspective of the world, he was erased from existence.

“But Tohjaah wasn't willing to be erased, and therefore, he occasionally howls in anger out in the void. That sound is actually... Tohjaah's voice, and it can be found in every corner of heaven and earth.

“And that is how the Woe-Immortals understood electricity and lightning tribulations. In order to hide the truth, the dao of heaven attached Tohjaah's voice to the magical law of light, so that it was visible instead of invisible. After that, it was described with terms like lightning tribulation, lightning bolt, thunderbolt, or thunderclap. As a result, most species think they know what lightning is, while only the Woe-Immortals realized that it was actually the voice of Tohjaah.”

Xu Qing was more than a little surprised to hear this explanation of lightning. He was about to ask a question when the Captain tugged on the vines he was holding, causing Ning Yan to yelp and fly over to him. There, the Captain held him up in front of him like a shield.

Ning Yan was cursing up a storm in his heart, but didn't dare to utter a peep. Grief and rage simmered in him as the Captain hoisted him up and charged forward.

As a result, all of the invisible lightning hit Ning Yan instead of the Captain. Ning Yan yelped and howled. However, the toughness and durability of his skin was so impressive that Xu Qing was visibly moved. Despite the pummeling he was taking, he didn't seem truly hurt at all.

Eldest Brother was completely right! Ning Yan is fine!

Using Ning Yan as a shield, the Captain advanced past the area with the fleshy sprouts.

On the other side, he shouted, “Catch!”

Then he tossed Ning Yan down. Ning Yan plummeted until Xu Qing grabbed him.

Tears welled in Ning Yan's eyes as he looked pleadingly at Xu Qing. “Exalted Godchild, I—”

Before he could say anything else, Xu Qing followed the Captain's example, held Ning Yan like a shield, and rushed forward.

Ning Yan howled.

Soon, Xu Qing was across with the Captain. Marveling at Ning Yan's toughness, he tossed him down to Qing Qiu.

"Nooo! It hurts!" As of this moment, Ning Yan deeply regretted his personal defenses.

Meanwhile, Qing Qiu's eyes glittered as she grabbed the vines coming out of Ning Yan's belly, then held him aloft as she charged through the fleshy sprouts.

Thus, a few dozen breaths of time later, Qing Qiu reached Xu Qing and the Captain. There, she offered Ning Yan back to the Captain.

"Don't need him anymore," the Captain said, shaking his head.

Ning Yan felt like he had a new lease on life. But then, only a moment later, his heart sank with a very bad feeling.

"Little Junior Brother," the Captain said, "the good fortune I mentioned earlier is right there." The Captain pointed at the rift in the sky.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered brightly.

They were now more than 9,000 meters up the tree, and were still a good distance from the dome of heaven. However, by simply looking up, they could clearly see the rift.

"It's still not the time for explanations," the Captain said. "You'll understand everything soon enough!"

The Captain stepped forward, and his black clothing suddenly became white. It didn't look like a daoist robe, but rather, some unique godly robe. As the wind blew, he took nine steps forward, then threw both of his hands out and began to dance on the tree trunk.

It was a strange-looking dance, but it was very similar to what Xu Qing had seen in his vision. As Xu Qing watched, the Captain began to sing. Unlike the indistinct voice from the vision, the Captain's voice was very clear.

"Oh Supreme Heaven Above; Gaze Ye Down Upon Us; Gather All the Ancient Spirits; Summon Tribulation to Please the Ancestors.

"Shaabii's Corpse Tribulation; Bring Past and Present to Downfall.

"Aalloh's Nightmare Tribulation; Desolation for a Long Lonely Haul.

"Beesah's Eye Tribulation; Stand Aside in a Solemn Pall.

"Tohjaah's Voice Tribulation; a Secret to Bring Death to All."

Rumbling sounds filled the area, and illusory flames sprang up. Images of countless dancing figures then appeared all over the Ten Entrails Tree. From a distance, it was a grand scene, like hundreds of

thousands of Woe-Immortals all dancing to please heaven on high. It was like a joint offering to heaven! Winds screamed, and thunder crashed!

The Captain's dance unfolded, the rhythm of his movements bizarre. The singing became more impassioned, until he bowed to the sky and spoke in a voice that echoed out in all directions.

“The Tribulation Sacrifice Completes, the Line in Heaven is Opened; Revered Ancient Heavenly Dao, Accept This Offering as I Prostrate!”

The hundreds of thousands of surrounding Woe-Immortal figures all bowed in unison.

RUMBLE!

RUMBLE!!

RUMBLE!!!

A heaven-rending, earth-crushing rumbling sound echoed out, reaching deafening proportions as the rift in the dome of heaven slowly opened!

Chapter 455: Consummate Amazing Good Fortune!!

A rift was opening in the dome of heaven, like a distant, heavenly eye! What was inside the rift was blurry and difficult to see clearly. But out of it leaked the heaven-shaking, earth-shattering power of magical laws.¹

As a jailer from Unit C, Xu Qing had experienced months of the magical laws in the minor world there. As a result, he was very sensitive to magical laws. Beyond that, his heavenly dao bluegreen dragon was trembling and emitted a sensation of familiarity. [1]¹

It was as if the dragon and that heavenly eye had the same origin!¹

Mind reeling, Xu Qing looked at the dancing Captain. Though his white robe covered him completely, his dancing posture made Xu Qing feel like he was looking at an actual Woe-Immortal.⁰

Numerous thoughts were running through Xu Qing's mind.⁰

Off to the side, Qing Qiu was absolutely stupefied as she watched everything playing out. What was happening now surpassed just about anything she could remember in all the years she had lived. She had been captured by Nightshades and forced to serve as a handmaiden. But then the two Nightshades slowly started to view her with less suspicion, until they treated her more like an honored guest. Then she watched them enter the depths of Ten Entrails of the True Immortal, until... they offered a sacrifice to heaven right in front of her. Sacrifices to heaven were not something that just anybody was capable of. What was especially noteworthy were that the numerous Woe-Immortal projections were all centered on the Nightshades.⁵

Meanwhile, Ning Yan was completely flabbergasted.⁵

As the Captain danced, the surrounding hundreds of thousands of Woe-Immortals accompanied him, and the Ten Entrails Tree swayed vigorously. Then, at a certain point, an anguished howl echoed out from the very top of the tree.¹

“Cover me, little Junior Brother!” the Captain said.⁵

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing flew past the Captain and took a position in front of him. Expression serious, he sent out a mental command to the Nightshade divine likeness, which started speeding toward him.²

“His eyes are his weakness,” the Captain said anxiously. “Target the eyes!”⁰

A figure descended from the very top of the tree, moving with stupefying speed.⁰

As it approached, and Xu Qing got a glimpse of it, rumblings of shock filled his mind.⁰

This was no living being. It was a Woe-Immortal zombie, and it didn’t look like a human. Woe-Immortals had a totemic mark on their forehead that resembled writhing entrails or perhaps a snake. Taken in as a whole, the mark also resembled an eye.⁰

However, that wasn’t the most relevant thing. What really caused Xu Qing to reel was the general appearance of the Woe-Immortal. The zombie’s body was shriveled and emaciated, and emanated a strong aura of death. Its belly had been ripped open, and rotting entrails draped out of it. But based on how well Xu Qing knew the Captain, he could tell... that this Woe-Immortal’s facial features were very similar to the Captain’s! Especially noteworthy was the intense frigid energy that pulsed out from it in all directions. Xu Qing was also familiar with that coldness; it bore about an eighty percent similarity to the Captain’s.²⁹

Though Xu Qing was stunned, there was no time to think about the situation. As the zombie raced toward him, its lower half vanished, becoming like a spinning wind that helped it accelerate even faster.⁷

As an intense sensation of crisis filled Xu Qing, the Nightshade divine likeness arrived and took a defensive position in front of him. A massive boom echoed out in all directions, followed by an intense shockwave.⁰

Xu Qing shook from head to toe and coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. As he tumbled backward, he saw the huge statue blocking the path of the zombie. The zombie attacked it with devastating force.⁰

However, the Nightshade divine likeness stood in place as solid as a mountain.⁰

The zombie howled as it fought, pulsing with Spirit Trove fluctuations as it tried to force its way past the Nightshade divine likeness. However, the giant statue flickered with black light as it used both hands to stave off the zombie. It didn’t move an inch.⁵

There was a temporary deadlock, but that didn’t mean Xu Qing had time to catch his breath. Similar howls erupted from the other nine main trunks as figures appeared atop them as well. All started moving in the direction of Xu Qing and the Captain.⁰

Xu Qing’s expression flickered and his hands blurred in an incantation gesture. All of a sudden, a second, third, and fourth Nightshade divine likeness flew toward him. They came from three of the other thirty-six city-states, which had connections to the other three royal dynasties. Though Xu

Qing had never visited those other city-states, thanks to his connection to the statue from Heaven Zenith, he had expanded his ability to issue commands.⁴

These four statues were his trump card for this job in Ten Entrails of the True Immortal.⁰

The other three statues went all out to defend him. However, it was obvious they wouldn't last for very long. Thankfully, the Captain's offering was nearly over.⁰

As the crazy look in the Captain's eyes grew extremely intense, a scene played out that got Xu Qing's heart pounding.¹

The Captain waved his hand, causing numerous chunks of flesh to appear, all of them different sizes and colors. However, every single one of those chunks of flesh emanated shocking fluctuations of godliness. Xu Qing recognized one of those chunks of flesh. It was from Joine of the Merfolk. [2]⁹

There were a total of thirty-three chunks of flesh, all with different auras that indicated they came from different godly entities. However, there was more.³

Next, the Captain took out nine black bottles which he smashed, causing nine drops of godly blood to fly out. Xu Qing recognized one of those blood drops. It had the aura of August Spirit Nethersprite. [3]⁴

After that, the Captain smacked his forehead, causing himself to vomit up a clump of black clay. The clay rapidly swirled into the shape of a palm-sized statue. It resembled... a zombie ancestor divine likeness from the Seazombies! Things still weren't over though. The Captain continued to vomit, until there were eight additional small statues present. All of them looked different, and none had the aura of the Seazombies.⁹

Thirty-three chunks of godly flesh. Nine drops of godly blood. Nine astonishing divine likenesses.¹⁴

After accomplishing all of that, the Captain's eyes radiated a fanatical look as he shouted, "Wake up, son! Time to eat!"²³

He waved his hand again, and all of the items he had just produced rose up and converged on each other, forming into a huge sphere of flesh that shot toward the rift in the sky.⁰

The Captain bowed deeply at the waist, as did the hundreds of thousands of Woe-Immortals around him.¹

The sphere of flesh disappeared into the rift.⁰

Chewing sounds echoed out, and then a heaven-rending, earth-crushing rumbling emerged from the rift. It was opening further! This time, the rift opened until it was thousands of meters across!! And now it revealed more of what lay beyond.⁰

Inside the rift was a void, and inside that void was some colossally monstrous entity. It wasn't possible to see its entirety, but it was possible to see a vaguely humanoid shape. What was more, that humanoid shape's belly had been ripped open.⁰

Just looking at it caused Xu Qing's eyes to sting so badly he feared they might collapse. Only by infusing them with the power of his taboo poison and violet moon did he prevent them from being destroyed. That said, they still leaked blood.⁰

Next, the zombies that were fighting the Nightshade divine likenesses all turned and bowed toward the dome of heaven.0

Xu Qing simply watched, stunned. At the same time, the prostrating Captain looked up and saw the figure stirring beyond the rift, and his eyes filled with an absolutely crazy look. He laughed.0

“This is the biggest thing I’ve done in this life, little Junior Brother! And it’s all thanks to you! Without you, I would never have reached this point. The Holytides guard this place too tightly. I definitely would have failed, and then it would have taken another hundred years to get things ready again.4

“Now, I can finally tell you everything! Do you know what that is?” He pointed up into the sky. “It’s a heavenly dao! The Revered Ancient mainland has 100,000 heavenly daos, and every single one has complete power over a certain area. Above those heavenly daos are 99 ancient heavenly daos from remote antiquity!3

“What you’re looking at isn’t one of the 100,000 ordinary heavenly daos, nor one of the 99 ancient heavenly daos.0

“The Woe-Immortals are an amazing species that existed since the dawn of time. Their method of immortal ascension involved removing their entrails, and there’s a reason for that. They were one of the original 3,173 species of Revered Ancient. Each one of those species existed in a different time, but they all had the same mission!0

“And that was... to create heavenly daos!1

“Over 3,000 species, all scattered in different time periods, and all of them attempting to create a total of 100 ancient heavenly daos for Revered Ancient!0

“No one even knows how many epochs passed during which that was the state of affairs. Among the more than 3,000 species that existed before the Woe-Immortals, there was another species called the Ancient Spirits. Emperor Ancient Spirit came close to succeeding in that task, but ultimately failed, and the resulting backlash nearly wiped out his entire species. [4]0

“Later, the broken face of the god arrived, and calamity struck. The mission those more than 3,000 species had been working on for so many years faced an unexpected twist. The Woe-Immortals were the most recent successors of the mission, and had been building atop the failure of the Ancient Spirits. They were very, very close to succeeding!4

“The final step was to take the ten entrails of the final pureblooded member of their species who reached immortal ascension and put it into the body of that heavenly dao. They would become the entrails of the heavenly dao, connecting it permanently

to the Revered Ancient mainland. Once that connection was made, the heavenly dao would awaken!0

“That final missing step that the Woe-Immortals couldn’t complete is what I’m going to finish today!3

“The 99 ancient heavenly daos of Revered Ancient don’t have senses. They don’t have an objective consciousness. They exist in a state of chaos. This 100th ancient heavenly dao is the same. However, once it awakens, its consciousness will be in the control of whoever created it!11

“From ancient times until now, the more than 3,000 species involved in the mission are all considered fathers. Unfortunately, most have ceased to exist. As for us... since we put our own entrails into the Ten Entrails Tree, once the heavenly dao puts that tree into its body to become whole, then we will have accomplished that final step. As investors in that heavenly dao, we will become fathers to it!25

“What do you think, little Junior Brother? Does this count as heaven-shaking, earth-shattering consummate amazing good fortune?”8

The Captain threw his head back and laughed maniacally.4

Xu Qing was still reeling.2

Meanwhile, a deafening rumbling erupted from above, a hand as pure as snow-white jade emerged, emanating a shockingly fragrant aroma. Innumerable magical laws swept out from the hand, spreading far and wide. In the blink of an eye, they covered all of Eastern Wasteland County. Mountains, rivers, plants, vegetation, terrain features, all living beings. Everything was within it. The hearts of countless living beings raced as the massive hand descended, then grabbed the Ten Entrails Tree and wrenched it up!0

As the tree rocked, Xu Qing and the others staggered. That said, the trembling of the tree couldn’t compare to how much Xu Qing’s heart was pounding.0

The Captain’s words were still echoing in his mind.0

Xu Qing could hardly control his breathing.6

Off to the side, Qing Qiu and Ning Yan were equally astonished. Then, in almost the same moment, they moved to rip open their bellies and place their entrails on the tree.1

Chapter 456: Heavenly Dao Birth Certificate

A heavenly dao had come! From within that opened rift, a snow-white hand extended. The mere friction caused by its movement created a deafening sound that could shake heaven and earth. Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. Winds screamed. The earth was also affected. As the hand of the heavenly dao grabbed the Ten Entrails Tree and yanked it up, power from the heavenly dao spread out into the surrounding land.

The earth quaked, sending maroon soil erupting in all directions. Cracks snaked out in all directions, as if subterranean dragons were burrowing through the ground. The quaking was so violent that distant mountains began to crumble one after another.

Cracking sounds rang out from the jungle surrounding the Ten Entrails Tree. Trees fell, and soil collapsed as the roots of the giant tree were wrenched out from the ground. Deafening booms rang out everywhere. The affected area wasn't limited to the jungle surrounding the massive tree.

The thirty-six city-states were also affected. To those cities, this event was unprecedentedly apocalyptic. The Holytide cultivators in the city-states were all shocked to the core, yet none of them dared to do anything to interfere. The reason for that was because of the status of the Nightshades. And they didn't dare to approach the epicenter. The arrival of the heavenly dao's hand made that completely impossible, as the magical laws of heaven and earth were in absolute chaos.

Bolts of lightning smashed down randomly. Acid rain fell. Clouds of poisonous gas drifted about. Electromagnetic pulses erupted. Lands shook, and mountains rocked. Blustery, galeforce winds screamed everywhere.

Duke Heaven Zenith and Zhou Xingwu, as well as the hundreds of Black Guard cultivators, were all scared witless.

“Heavenly... heavenly dao!!”

“Don't tell me he really is a Nightshade godchild?”

The scene was simply too shocking, and seemed to be something that only a Nightshade godchild could do.

Zhou Xingwu was struck with intense incredulity.

Off to the side, Lin Yuandong's eyes shone with intense fervor. In fact, if the godchild suddenly appeared and demanded his life lamp, he wouldn't hesitate or feel angry at all to comply. The only thought that filled his mind was that if that exalted figure wanted his life lamp, it wouldn't be harmful. After all... that Nightshade was someone extremely important!

The shockwaves weren't limited to that specific area. They rolled out through the whole Holytide Region, and when they reached the various descendants of the Woe-Immortals, their blood surged. Though they were all located in different areas, they all turned in the direction of Ten Entrails of the True Immortal and bowed.

A series of explosive popping sounds rang out, and countless clumps of soil fell like rain from the boundless roots of the Ten Entrails Tree. At long last, the heavenly dao's hand had ripped up the entire tree. As the ground continued to quake, the huge tree rose into the air. From a distance, the tangled roots, some of which were thick, some of which were narrow, seemed like a massive web of magical laws, any one of which contained a dao resonance.

As the tree rose high into the sky, Qing Qiu gripped the bark of the tree as tightly as she could. At the same time, she felt like her mind was being struck by a million bolts of lightning. Even though she was personally experiencing and witnessing everything happening, she still felt like she couldn't believe it.

As for Ning Yan, he was so dumbstruck he couldn't move. After realizing it was pointless to rip open his belly, he had failed to hold onto the tree, and thus slipped off of it.

Thankfully for him, the Captain still held the vines attached to his belly, so his fall was halted and he swung back and forth in midair.

Xu Qing was also in a daze. Acting on instinct, he grabbed a tree branch, and as the massive Ten Entrails Tree swung back and forth, he looked at the Captain, who was still laughing crazily.

It was obvious that the Captain had done something major here. Back in the Merfolk Isles, he had lost half of his body to get Joine's flesh. In the Seazombie ancestral land, he had risked everything to absorb the elixir and get close enough to take a bite out of that statue. And then there was the Three-Spirits Dao-Suppressing Mountain.... Every single thing he did was massive. But compared to this, those things seemed like child's play to Xu Qing.

Become the father of a heavenly dao!

As Xu Qing reeled, the heavenly dao's hand inserted the very top of the tree into the rift, where it entered the belly.

The hand released the top of the tree and then dropped to grab the portion further down. A thump rang out, and the Ten Entrails Tree quivered as the heavenly dao's hand grabbed onto it and kept pushing it into its belly. As the tree merged into the heavenly dao's belly, it glittered brightly and transformed, changing from a tree shape into something that resembled entrails.

The Captain again laughed heartily. "Little Junior Brother, the upside to being fathers of a heavenly dao is about to come!"

The Captain's eyes shone with longing as two beams of prismatic light emerged from the rift. One of them shot toward the Captain, the other toward Xu Qing. They arrived at the same time, and completely enveloped both of them.

Xu Qing wasn't sure exactly what that prismatic light was, but he sensed that it contained magical laws of heaven and earth, as well as a boundless dao resonance and some unidentifiable will.

"This is the proof of our investment. Hahaha! Or you could call it our son's birth certificate! It's imprinted with our aura. I guess you could even say it's a fatherhood credential."

The Captain was virtually jumping up and down as everything around them shook. Then a boundless spirit energy rushed wildly toward them. The spirit energy was incredibly pure, without even a scrap of mutagen, and it poured directly into Xu Qing and the Captain.

"A heavenly dao benefaction!" Ning Yan blurted. A bitter expression overtook his face, and his heart filled with indescribable regret. If he could just go back to before, he wouldn't just rip out his intestines. He would rip out every organ in his body. As long as he could stay alive, he would sacrifice anything to become the father of a heavenly dao.

Who could ever have imagined that these two Nightshades would do something as absolutely crazy as this??

He felt like he was going mad from the sense of having missed such an amazing opportunity. Then, it was with bloodshot eyes that he opened his mouth and inhaled deeply. His hope was that, even though he wasn't the one being rewarded, he might still benefit some. After all, he was very, very close, and figured he could still get some scraps of energy.

Qing Qiu wasn't sure what the prismatic light was, but she could sense the incredible spirit energy. And after hearing Ning Yan's exclamation, she also tried to absorb some of the surrounding energy.

However, those who benefited the most were obviously the Captain and Xu Qing.

The Captain trembled as he madly absorbed the energy of heaven and earth, turning it into power to remove seals within him. Soon, his aura was climbing to incredible heights.

It was the same with Xu Qing. Using this unprecedentedly powerful energy of heaven and earth, it only took about ten breaths of time for his sixth heavenly palace to fully materialize. Rumbling sounds filled his mind, but there wasn't time to sit around thinking about what was going on. His thoughts immediately focused on the branch he had taken earlier. The branches of the Ten Entrails Tree were precious treasures on their own. But now that the tree was being absorbed by a heavenly dao, they naturally rose to a higher level. The first thing Xu Qing thought of was to put that Ten Entrails Tree branch into his sixth heavenly palace.

However, just before he was about to do it, he paused and looked up at the huge hand coming out of the rift. Then he glanced at the surrounding Ten Entrails Tree, and his eyes glittered.

Bluegreen dragon! he shouted inwardly.

He had been waiting for this moment so long that the sensation of longing from his bluegreen dragon was incredibly intense. It let loose a long, clear cry as it emerged from within him.

Without hesitation, he waved his hand and threw the branch toward the dragon. The bluegreen dragon's eyes glittered brightly as it devoured the branch. Immediately upon swallowing it, the dragon started trembling, then it unexpectedly shot high into the sky!

Off to the side, the Captain's eyes went wide, and for the first time since they arrived at the Ten Entrails Tree, he uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"An embryonic heavenly dao! H-h-how... how'd you do that? I've been trying to do that for years but never managed to pull it off! An embryonic heavenly dao running into an ancient heavenly dao... this, this... is something I could only dream about!"

The Captain's heart pounded as he stared at something that he had long dreamed about.

Meanwhile, the bluegreen dragon let loose a roar as it flew into the rift and shot toward the ancient heavenly dao.

The heavenly dao suddenly stopped pulling the Ten Entrails Tree into it.

Then it was as if two heavenly daos were looking at each other inside the rift. A moment later, the ancient heavenly dao shivered, then sent a stream of golden energy into the bluegreen dragon.

"Heavenly dao essence?" the Captain blurted loudly. "Did it just freaking adopt that embryonic heavenly dao as a son?"

The bluegreen dragon let loose a roar as it rapidly grew larger. Then, the heavenly dao fluctuations coming off it grew stronger.

After absorbing all of the golden energy, the bluegreen dragon glittered with golden light, and its eyes seemed extremely full of life. After offering a respectful nod to the ancient heavenly dao, it swished its tail and then shot out of the rift and back toward Xu Qing.

As the golden light shone out, the Captain's eyes filled with intense envy. Then the dragon shot into Xu Qing and entered his sixth heavenly palace! A moment later, that heavenly palace glittered with golden light. It was the light of a heavenly dao! It was a heavenly dao palace!

Xu Qing shivered as his cultivation base expanded. Unexpectedly, he also began to pulse with something like a dao resonance, something that connected with heaven and earth and shook everything in the area.

At the same time, the materialization of heavenly palaces within him continued. His seventh heavenly palace was now taking shape.

"We're fathers of an ancient heavenly dao," the Captain muttered bitterly. "And your bluegreen dragon is the adopted son of a heavenly dao. So does that make it your grandson or my grandson?"

Chapter 457: Hellspirit Bloodwing Lamp

Intense energy of heaven and earth surged like the tide. The sky rippled and distorted as if it were a sea of spirit energy. The ancient heavenly dao inside the rift again began pulling the Ten Entrails Tree and absorbing it.¹

Xu Qing, the Captain, Qing Qiu, and Ning Yan were all getting closer and closer to the rift.⁰

Xu Qing and the Captain weren't the only ones to benefit. Thanks to the overflow of energy, Ning Yan and Qing Qiu also felt their cultivation bases stirring.⁰

Meanwhile, Xu Qing just kept experiencing one astonishing situation after another. Right now, his senses were focused on his sixth heavenly palace. It was golden, and stationed within it was a heavenly dao. It was in the form of a huge sea, with the bluegreen dragon swimming within it, pulsing with fluctuations of a dao resonance. It was completely extraordinary.⁰

As the power of heaven and earth rushed toward Xu Qing, his heart raced. Longing filled him as he absorbed that power and used it to work on his seventh heavenly palace. After about a dozen breaths of time passed, he looked up, and his eyes shone with scintillating light. His seventh heavenly palace was more than half complete.⁰

Seventy percent. Eighty percent. Ninety percent....⁰

A moment later, he took a deep breath as his seventh heavenly palace reached a state of ninety-nine percent materialization.⁰

The black iron skewer and his shadow flashed through his mind before he dismissed them. Although both of them behaved perfectly well when he used them, he still didn't fully trust either one. There was simply no way he could station either one in a heavenly palace. He had magical treasure fragments in his bag of holding, but it didn't seem a good idea to station outside items in a heavenly palace.²

Without hesitation, he reached out to the Ghost Emperor mountain in his sea of consciousness, grabbed it, and put it in his seventh heavenly palace. The moment it entered, the heavenly palace started shaking violently. As it turned out, the seventh heavenly palace was actually rejecting the Ghost Emperor mountain.⁰

Xu Qing's gaze sharpened; this was not the first time he had experienced a rejection like this.³

Something similar happened with the taboo poison pill. The poison from that pill actually ravaged his body, and took a good amount of time to handle. He'd just needed to find ways to keep himself alive during the process. It was only after a lot of torment and bitterness that he managed to get the taboo poison pill to be part of his heavenly palace.⁰

That said, the violet moon, golden crow, and bluegreen dragon hadn't experienced rejection.⁰

Xu Qing knew that though the violet moon existed on a very high level, after he had plundered it, it became fully his own. The golden crow and bluegreen dragon were similar, which was why they weren't rejected.⁰

As for the Ghost Emperor mountain, though he had gained enlightenment of it, when all was said and done, it was an imitation. In many respects, it was an outside item, and not thoroughly his own. Therefore, if he wanted to make it part of his heavenly palace, it was no surprise it got rejected. Eyes glittering coldly, Xu Qing inhaled deeply, bringing in massive amounts of spirit energy into himself. He immediately sent it to the seventh heavenly palace and used it to speed up the fusion with the Ghost Emperor mountain.⁰

The mountain trembled as it slowly superimposed with the seventh heavenly palace.⁰

The process wasn't quick. But it wasn't extremely slow like the taboo poison pill had been. That was especially true considering the power of heaven and earth available. It flowed into him without any end in sight.¹

Time passed. As the Ten Entrails Tree slowly entered the crevice, the Ghost Emperor mountain fusion process continued.⁰

Thirty percent. Fifty percent. Seventy percent....⁰

Xu Qing sat down cross-legged and gripped the tree tightly. Once he was firmly in place, he opened all the pores on his body and absorbed every ounce of spirit energy around him. After about thirty

breaths of time passed, the Ghost Emperor mountain was fully fused with the heavenly palace. As rumbling sounds filled Xu Qing, he completed his seventh heavenly palace. The exterior looked less like a palace and more like a temple. Within that temple, the Ghost Emperor sat cross-legged, two sabers at his back, and the Supreme Beginning Netherflight Pillar resting on his knees. He emanated a shocking godly resonance, and though his eyes were closed, he resembled Xu Qing in every way!
7

The moment his seventh heavenly palace was complete, Xu Qing erupted with powerful fluctuations. His aura climbed to a higher level, and Xu Qing could sense himself getting stronger. This version of himself was poles apart from the version that had first arrived at Ten Entrails of the True Immortal.0

He opened his eyes. He could sense that the power of heaven and earth wouldn't last much longer, and that the assistance that came from completing the heavenly dao wouldn't continue forever.0

He extended his right hand, and within it appeared a life lamp shaped like a blood-colored wing. He performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, and the surrounding spirit power rushed into him and toward the life lamp. He was going to take advantage of the power of heaven and earth in the area to cleanse the lamp.0

Considering it had been given to him by the Holytides, there was no way he could just trust that it was safe to use. If there were some blemishes in the lamp, or some cleverly hidden traps, then using the power of heaven and earth to remove them seemed completely appropriate. In the blink of an eye, spirit energy flooded into the lamp, causing the blood-colored glow to increase in intensity, until it was almost blinding.0

Xu Qing cleansed it over and over again. Eyes narrowing, he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and tapped into his seventh heavenly palace. Then, he used the power of the Ghost Emperor to cleanse it yet again. Next he used the power of the golden crow to do the same, then the violet moon, and then the taboo poison. Finally, the bluegreen dragon exhaled golden light to do the same. Using all of those various methods, he cleansed the life lamp. Only then did he feel safe inserting it into himself.12

It vanished from his hand, and then, within the life mist in his sea of consciousness, where his other two life lamp heavenly palaces were... another heavenly palace appeared. The life mist roiled, and his sea of consciousness seethed. Blood-colored light pierced through the mist as his third life lamp turned into a heavenly palace. Instantly, he gained enlightenment of the details of that third lamp.0

It was a hellspirit bloodwing lamp. The blessing it provided was different from the other two life lamps. It did not boost defenses, nor did it focus on slaughter. Instead, this life lamp provided increased speed!6

Whoever had this life lamp could reach astonishing speeds that were many times faster than what they were previously capable of. It was part of a pair of lamps, and when used as a pair, the results would be even more terrifying, and would provide deadly assault power as well. But Xu Qing was pleased with even just this one wing. The sensation of speed he got made his heart swell.33

The gains he had made this time were beyond compare. Whether it was the military credits or the heavenly dao fatherhood, they were enough to make anyone's eyes completely bloodshot. Beyond that, he had gone from five heavenly palaces to eight.⁴

His eighth palace was made from a life lamp, and that meant that his total palace limit had increased. In the past, his top limit was ten palaces, but now it was eleven.⁵

What was more, as the energy of heaven and earth swirled around him, his ninth heavenly palace reached a state of about half materialization. By that point, their spot on the Ten Entrails Tree was only about 3,000 meters from the rift.⁰

Seeing that, Xu Qing realized it was time to leave. He looked at the Captain. The Captain's aura was obviously vastly superior to before. And even despite how much Xu Qing had advanced, he still couldn't assess the Captain. That said, Xu Qing was used to that.¹

"We should leave, Eldest Brother."⁰

When Qing Qiu and Ning Yan heard his voice, they opened their eyes.⁰

Ning Yan looked nervous. As for Qing Qiu, she was much more in-the-know than Ning Yan, and had already come to a conclusion about who Xu Qing and the Captain really were. Beneath her mask, her face was filled with mixed emotions.⁴

Licking his lips, the Captain pointed at the heavenly dao above. "Hold on one second."⁶

Xu Qing followed the Captain's gaze to the snow-white hand of the heavenly dao. Based on how well he knew the Captain, he had a good idea about what was going to happen next. It was no surprise. Whenever the Captain did something really big, he couldn't leave without taking a bite out of something.¹⁹

Noticing Xu Qing's expression, the Captain blinked a few times.⁰

"Little Junior Brother, this whole thing is going to cause a major stir. In the past, we've always had trouble making our getaway. But like I said before, I brought along a treasure this time.⁰

"Once I activate it, I can't really control it. Regardless of that, it'll perform a long-range teleportation in one general direction. I've already calibrated it to send us back toward Sea-Sealing County.³

"Unfortunately, using this treasure requires a massive power source. Therefore, I really have no choice. If we want to get out of here, I have to go say goodbye to my son."²

"Oh." Xu Qing nodded.¹

The Captain cleared his throat. "Ahem. If anything goes wrong, little Junior Brother, remember to give me a good kick into the range of the teleportation."²

The Captain's words caused Qing Qiu to look over at him silently.³

Ning Yan's expression flickered. Upon hearing Sea-Sealing County mentioned, he looked at Xu Qing and the Captain. Earlier, he had been completely ignorant of what was happening. However, he had eventually started to get suspicious about who Xu Qing and the Captain really were. But then events unfolded so quickly, and in such an astonishing fashion, that he had no time for contemplation. Now that things had calmed down, those suspicions were growing deeper. Then, just as he looked over at Xu Qing and the Captain, an absolutely crazy look appeared in the Captain's eyes.⁰

As the heavenly dao's hand relaxed and moved to the part of the tree only about three meters away from them, the Captain lunged forward like a hyena.⁰

"I wonder... what a heavenly dao tastes like."¹⁷

The Captain's eyes shone brightly as he shot toward the snow white hand of his 'son.' Wrapping his arm around one finger, he leaned his head back, opened his mouth as wide as he could, and then plunged his teeth into the finger.²¹

CRUNCH!

Chapter 458: Emperor of Heavengale

The heavenly dao's snow white hand emitted a strange, fragrant aroma that was somewhat similar to a fine cut of premium meat.

As Xu Qing looked at the huge hand, he licked his lips, then focused on the Captain.

The craziness in the Captain's eyes couldn't have been more intense, and at the same time, he moved with practiced fluidity. As he wrapped all four limbs around the finger, he sank his teeth in and took a vicious bite. Perhaps because he was a father to this heavenly dao, and also because of the blessing from moments before, he managed to successfully bite a mouthful and swallow it down. Then he started laughing uproariously.

"It was wor—"

Before he could finish speaking, it was to the shock of Qing Qiu and Ning Yan that the Captain's voice suddenly turned into a wail of anguish.

It was as if he had eaten some type of food that he couldn't digest, as his belly started swelling. Then, an instant later it exploded. Blood and gore sprayed everywhere, while the aura of a heavenly dao erupted along with his abdomen. And within all of that gore, there was a bit of golden skin.

The Captain's eyes went wide as he reached out to try to grab it. He wasn't fast enough. The destructive power hadn't abated yet, and was spreading through the rest of his body.

In the blink of an eye, his hands collapsed into nothing. His lower half was destroyed, including his entrails. His legs collapsed into pieces. Blood sprayed everywhere as his upper half also suffered. It exploded. His upper torso collapsed, his chest was ripped to shreds, all of his internal organs were eviscerated. Eventually, only his head was left intact.

For some reason, the Captain's head was unusually tough, and it managed to stay in one piece. What was more, despite the howl of anguish, the Captain somehow managed to get his head flying in the direction of that golden skin. Then he gobbled it up.

Instead of swallowing it, he kept it in his mouth. Eyes shining with craziness, he flicked his head so that his hair wrapped around a nearby tree branch. Then, as he chewed, he finished his sentence from before.

“—worth it!”

Qing Qiu inhaled sharply.

Ning Yan looked on, stunned. Ning Yan had seen people who courted death. But rarely had he seen anyone as suicidal as this. All of a sudden, he realized that the few bites he had sustained didn't count for much at all.

The heavenly dao apparently sensed the bite. The hand stopped moving, and a gaze emerged from the rift, and it seemed confused about what that head was doing. The hand itself was not injured. After all, what the Captain had bitten off was just some surface skin. Seemingly after a moment of thought, the heavenly dao kept pulling the Ten Entrails Tree into its belly cavity.

Seeing that, Xu Qing gave up any notions about taking a bite of his own. At the same time, the Captain's wild laughter rang out in all directions.

“Hahaha! I finally got to taste a heavenly dao! Alright, time to make our escape. I don't know where we'll all be teleported to, little Junior Brother. But the general destination is set. Alright everyone... good luck and stay safe!”

The Captain laughed as golden light appeared on his forehead. As it spread, it created a host of magical symbols that rapidly reached a number in the hundreds of thousands. As they spread out, they created four huge teleportation portals. The four portals were semitransparent and about 3,000 meters wide each. All pulsed with the aura of a heavenly dao. Apparently, the piece of skin the Captain munched down had done its job.

The moment the four teleportation portals took shape, a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering teleportation power surged within them. It turned into four beams of light. The two strongest beams focused on the Captain and Xu Qing.

The other two beams landed on Ning Yan and Qing Qiu.

Seeing that, Xu Qing realized he didn't need to do any kicking to ensure the Captain was on the portal.

As Qing Qiu and Ning Yan panted for breath, wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. Intense winds screamed left and right. Shocking fluctuations rolled out as the teleportations began!

A moment later, all four of them disappeared from the Ten Entrails Tree. After they were gone, the huge hand coming from the rift continued to pull the Ten Entrails Tree to it. Before long, the last 3,000 meters were inside the rift, roots and all. When the last root disappeared, the rift closed up, vanishing as if it had never been there.

Everything went back to normal.

Of course... the lands in the area were completely ravaged. Ten Entrails of the True Immortal, which had existed for countless years, was no longer there. The only thing left behind was a gaping hole, with numerous ravines stretching out from it. It looked almost like a huge spiderweb. It was a really shocking sight.

The thirty-six city-states were largely destroyed. The Holytides within them were deeply shaken.

Duke Heaven Zenith looked up into the sky, his heart pounding, and struggled to keep his right hand clenched into a fist instead of reaching out.

Next to him, Zhou Xingwu was shaken to the core, and just stood there quietly. It was Lin Yuandong who spoke first.

“How mighty the godchild!”

Zhou Xingwu seemed like he wanted to respond, but in the end, said nothing.

Duke Heaven Zenith finally relaxed his right hand. Eyes shining with determination, he clasped hands and bowed. “Safe journeys, Godchild!”

In response to his words, all Heaven Zenith cultivators clasped hands and bowed to the dome of heaven.

Finally, Zhou Xingwu inclined his head.

Then, just as it seemed everything would go back to normal, something else happened. A dazzling sea of light appeared overhead, spreading out far and wide.

A man wearing an imperial robe appeared. The golden robe emanated a holy might, and was embroidered with nine dragons that looked completely lifelike, as if they were real dragons that had been sealed inside the robe. They moved like flowing water across its surface, imparting a sense of incredible majesty.

He wore an emperor’s crown that was as red as the sun, and behind him was a bright-red halo. Most eye-catching of all were the tassels hanging from the front and back of his crown. There were a total of twenty-four of them, each of which was decorated with twelve pearls. Those tassels obscured his face, and the glow of the pearls made it even more impossible to make out his features. [1]

The only thing it was possible to determine was that the person in the imperial robe was a middle-aged man. The moment he appeared, the sky filled with strange colors, and the earth quaked. He emanated a power that could topple mountains and drain seas.

Zhou Xingwu immediately dropped to his knees and kowtowed.

“Emperor!”

Duke Heaven Zenith shivered and also dropped to his knees. The Black Guard cultivators and all the Holytides in the thirty-six city-states also kowtowed.

“Emperor!”

The so-called emperor of the Heavengale Dynasty was actually more like a king. What was more, the imperial dynasty that oversaw the four royal dynasties was ruled by a single ‘ancestral emperor.’

Obviously, this middle-aged man wasn’t the ancestral emperor, who hadn’t shown his face for ten thousand years. Instead, he was the ‘emperor’ of the royal Heavengale Dynasty, who had received orders from the Nightshade Cathedral to provide an escort for the godchild.

As he hovered in midair, his face expressionless, he looked at the crater where Ten Entrails of the True Immortal used to exist. Then he looked at the spot where the rift had just disappeared. A long moment passed.

“Mu Tianzheng.”

“Here, sir!” Duke Heaven Zenith said in a loud voice.

“Due to the service performed by your son Mu Ye in welcoming the godchild, he has been appointed by the cathedral as a godservant.”

The duke’s heart leapt, and he started trembling as he repeatedly kowtowed. “Your servant Mu Tianzheng offers thanks for your heavenly grace, Emperor!”

Emperor Heavengale looked at the duke and noted his expression of thanks. Then he looked off into the distance.

“Since the venerable godchild does not wish to see me, I’ll rely on you to track him down. Notify the godchild that the Nightshade Cathedral has summoned him.”

With that, Emperor Heavengale turned and took a step to leave. But then he paused, reached out in the direction where Xu Qing and the others had just teleported away, and closed his hand. Instantly, that area collapsed, and anything left behind was crushed, thus making it impossible to track those who had left, or even find any evidence of their departure.

With that, Emperor Heavengale expressionlessly vanished.

Down below, a thoughtful look appeared on Zhou Xingwu’s face.

The emperor really has good timing....

Duke Heaven Zenith’s expression was the same as ever as he watched what happened above. Then he stood and issued orders to his subordinates to scatter and look for the godchild. The search wouldn’t just be carried out in the immediate area. All government departments in the Heavengale Dynasty would participate. As the orders from Emperor Heavengale spread out, the search for the godchild began.

That said, to give time for the orders to reach everyone, the official start of the search was set for three days later.

It wasn’t just the Nightshade Cathedral in the Heavengale Dynasty that wanted the godchild found. The other three cathedrals in the other three Holytide royal dynasties also joined in the search.

Most spirited were the Redspirit Dynasty and the Moonmist Dynasty. They poured the entire resources of their respective nations into the search. And the forces of the Nightshade Cathedrals from those places, which had never even left the royal capital for many years, also joined. There were also countless species who were subservient to the Nightshades and Holytides who heard about the situation and also started searching.

And thus, the search for the godchild became a massive affair in the entire Holytide Region. In fact, martial law was imposed on the border regions. Things really started heating up.

As expected, the frenzy of activity was noticed in Sea-Sealing County. Many people there took advantage of their information networks to find out what was going on, and soon enough, the county capital was abuzz. The Swordsage Palace, as well as the other two palaces from the Celestial Division, were all in a bit of a commotion.

“Nightshade godchild?”

“The Ten Entrails Tree, which has stood for countless years, is gone? One of the Holytide’s most miraculous areas is no more?”

“The Nightshade Cathedrals from all four royal dynasties issued dharmic decrees?”

“The high priests from the Nightshade Cathedrals in the Redspirit Dynasty and the Moonmist Dynasty personally went out to help?”

“But why did the high priest from the Heavengale Dynasty’s cathedral issue orders but not actually join the search effort? And why did the high priest tacitly endorse Emperor Heavengale’s imposition of a three-day delay?”

The leadership in Sea-Sealing County convened an emergency legislative assembly. At the same time, large numbers of swordsages accepted missions to go to the border and keep order. The last thing they wanted was a Holytide uprising there.

Kong Xianglong and his friends took just such a mission. After they were out of the county capital, they exchanged glances. All could see the suspicious looks in each other’s eyes.

“There’s no way it could be them...” Sir Mountain-River said quietly.

Shivering, Wang Chen shook his head and said, “It’s impossible. They’re saying it’s a ‘godchild,’ but that’s probably just bullcrap to scare people.”

“Right. Hahaha!” Though Sir Mountain-River laughed, it sounded somewhat forced. “I’m just thinking into it too much. How could those two do something to rile up the entire Holytide species?”

Duskspirit hesitated for a moment, then said, “But don’t you remember what Xu Qing and Chen Erniu said before they left? They mentioned they were going to Ten Entrails of the True Immortal, and that they were going to do something really big....”

Everyone stood there silently.

A moment passed, and then Kong Xianglong forced himself to calm down.

“It was probably a different pair of Nightshades,” he said solemnly.

“That’s right,” Sir Mountain-River said. “That’s got to be it.” They all nodded. But then they didn’t say much else as they absent-mindedly continued on their journey.

Chapter 459: Straw-Hat Appears!

In Injustice Prefecture in Sea-Sealing County, the sun shone brightly in the azure sky. Down below,

multicolored fields covered the lands, making it look like a beautiful painting. If you looked closely, you would find that the patchwork fields were actually articles of clothing. There was clothing designed for men and women, young and old. There were also many accessories such as hats and gloves. These were the lands of the Garmentfolk. Occasionally, articles of children's clothing would fly up into the air and frolic with each other. It was a beautiful, peaceful scene.

But then a rift opened up over that lovely scene.

A loud clamor emerged from the rift, and then a head, which tumbled down and landed with a thump on the ground. It tumbled a few times before coming to a stop with the face on the bottom.

A host of garments flew into the air and floated curiously over. The head struggled to rise to an upright position, but was too weak. However, this head was the father of a heavenly dao, and couldn't be bested by a simple difficulty like that. It eventually stuck out its tongue and pushed hard against the ground, tipping it upright. Once in that position, it looked around.

"Garmentfolk?" The head was, of course, the Captain. He immediately felt excited upon realizing that he was, indeed, back in Sea-Sealing County. "Hey, I have a good friend who's a Garmentfolk!"

His energy fluctuations had already caught the attention of a lady's glove, which flew over and danced happily in front of him. It was none other than Lady Fivefingers.

The Captain laughed heartily upon recognizing her. He was about to say something when, all of a sudden, a group of hats flew in his direction, struggling with each other to be first in line to reach him. The Captain's expression flickered.

Thankfully, he had a good friend here. She flew over to the hats and, using whatever unknown means of communication the Garmentfolk favored, explained something to the hats. They ended up flying a few circles around the Captain before reluctantly leaving.

The Captain breathed a sigh of relief. Next, the glove grabbed him by the hair and flew up into the air so he could get a better look around. A pleased expression filled the Captain's face.

Ha HA! Things really went well this time. I wonder how little Ah Qing is doing. The brat's no simpleton, so he should be fine. Right now I need to focus on growing my body back. Then I can worry about other things.

It took some effort, but he managed to twist around and look at Lady Fivefingers. Licking his lips, he quietly said, "Say, little Righty, do you Garmentfolk have any food around here? I'd love to try it... Also, is there anything fun to do in this place? I'd also love to expand my horizons a bit."

One of the glove's fingers bent down a few times in a row as if nodding, then flew off into the distance with the Captain, whose eyes shone brightly.

A few provinces away was the very same desert the Seven Blood Eyes' flying ship had flown over on their way to the county capital. It was a place of scorching sun and burning flames. There was no vegetation anywhere, just rippling heat waves as far as the eye could see. There were no humans in this desert. There was only occasional patches of smoke that indicated the presence of lightscraggs or Smokewights.

At a certain point, a 300-meter-long dharmaship appeared in that desert, flying along. It was roughly oval-shaped, and had a very unique design; it had a dozen or so semitransparent sails that resembled both sabers and wings at the same time, and glittered with cold light. The ship itself was dark violet, and at the prow was an evil ghost totem. That was the soul body created by dharmia aperture souls which had been suppressed with balefire. Because of all that, the dharmaship radiated the aura of the Gold Core level.

In the cabin of the dharmaship, Xu Qing sat cross-legged, recuperating. He was back in human form.

Three days had passed since he had been teleported into this desert. Despite the vile climate, and the incredible heat that even cultivators couldn't endure for very long, he hadn't run into any dangers here, which had been a relief. He had immediately taken out his dharmaship and used it to escape the heat. And he had taken advantage of the past three days to assess how he had benefited recently.

My cultivation base rose from the five-palace level to the eight-palace level. And I even made some progress with my ninth heavenly palace. Big Bro Kong has ten-palace battle prowess and can kill early Nascent Soul cultivators. I could probably do the same thing if I went all-out....

His eyes glittered.

And even ordinary Nascent Soul cultivators wouldn't be beyond the realm of possibility! Now, I only have my ninth, tenth, and eleventh heavenly palaces to complete. That's only three. Once they're all materialized, then I can make an attempt at a Nascent Soul breakthrough!

Then he started thinking about the other things he had acquired.

3,142 dao fruits! A life lamp! All sorts of pill concocting and equipment forging ingredients, all of them bursting with spirit resonance! And I invested in a heavenly dao!

Feeling very pleased, he took some time to organize everything.

I wonder how Qing Qiu is doing.

He thought back to the teleportation event, and felt a bit anxious about her safety. That said, she wasn't some weak little girl. Only remarkable people could survive the opening of the god's eyes. After some consideration, he decided there was no reason to be worried.

He didn't spend any time thinking about Ning Yan.

As for the Captain.... Xu Qing had the feeling that even if he himself died, the Captain probably wouldn't. Even though the Captain only had his head left, he would surely be hopping and skipping soon enough.

I don't need to worry at all about Eldest Brother. He won't have any trouble getting back to the county capital. What I need to do is make haste there myself.

He looked down at the symbols Arch-Immortal Plumdark had painted onto him. They were rather large, and they had started out being bright red. But now they were pale and dull, so much so that they weren't easy to see unless you looked closely.

The three-month period isn't even up yet.... He sighed. Though the symbols seemed like they would expire early, it made sense. When that heavenly dao appeared, and he was infused with so much of

the energy of heaven and earth, the symbols had eroded significantly. They obviously wouldn't last much longer.

I need to get back as quickly as possible! Xu Qing looked out at the lands outside the dharmaship and mused that the events in Holytide territory had been nothing short of monumental. The Holytides would definitely be looking for them.

Though he was back in Sea-Sealing County, it wouldn't be long before the concealment effect vanished, and that made Xu Qing feel very uneasy. The feeling came from his sixth heavenly palace. It made him frown. Due to the distance from the county capital as well as the environment, he couldn't send messages with his command sword. Therefore, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and pushed down onto the dharmaship, causing it to accelerate. It also became partially invisible as it raced through the sky.

Feeling slightly more at ease, he closed his eyes and focused on regulating his breathing.

In that manner, three more days went by. At that point, the last of the concealment symbols vanished.

It was dark outside when it happened. Though there was no sun, it was still incredibly hot, and that heat even reached the interior of the dharmaship. Opening his eyes, he scanned himself, then rose and walked out of the cabin.

Once outside, the heat caused beads of sweat to appear on his forehead. In fact, he was quickly sweating from head to toe. Ignoring that, he examined the dharmaship's surroundings, his expression dour.

Something's off. The uneasy feeling I've had isn't going away. It's actually getting stronger. And once the concealment symbols wore off, I started feeling even more jumpy.

Within his sixth heavenly palace, his heavenly dao bluegreen dragon swam back and forth anxiously, a nervous look on its face.

This wasn't the first time he'd experienced an early warning sign from his heavenly dao bluegreen dragon. He clearly remembered the day he and the Captain had left the county capital for their big job. He'd experienced the same sensation back then.

It had stayed with him, though the feeling wasn't very intense. But just now, that uneasiness had skyrocketed.

He looked in the direction of the county capital. It was still quite a distance away, such that at his current speed, he would need about a month to get there. That said, he could actually move faster without the dharmaship. If he did that, the travel time would be reduced significantly.

"Ten days," he murmured. Then he looked in a different direction in the vast desert.

Thinking back to his swordsage training, he remembered that the desert filled this entire prefecture. Because the high heat made it unsuitable for humans, there were few human organizations here. There was a Swordsage Court, but it was located on the distant prefectural border. If he just kept traveling in a straight line, it would take days to reach the county capital.

Eyes narrowing, he stepped off his dharmaship, put the dharmaship away, and then started moving in a different direction.

The nearest human teleportation portal was too far away to be useful. But the uneasy feeling within him was getting so intense that he didn't want to just fly the rest of the way to the capital. He would go by a different route. He would do something unexpected and attempt to use a nonhuman teleportation portal.

After all, he was still in Sea-Sealing County, which was human territory. Therefore, it seemed unlikely that the inhabitants of this desert, the Smokewights, would cause unexpected trouble.

With that plan in mind, he sped across the desert.

He searched until dawn was nearing. Around then, he found a Smokewight city. When he neared, smoke rose up from within the city, and numerous streams of hostile divine sense locked onto him.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing took out his sword and clasped hands politely.

"Your humble servant is a human sword from the Corrections Division. I'm on an important military mission, and I can't afford any delays on the next leg of my journey. Therefore, I humbly request permission to use your Smokewight teleportation portal. I'll pay whatever fee is required, and will of course take note of the favor and inscribe the details in the Sword Palace records. I hope the Smokewights can be accommodating!"

The streams of Smokewight divine sense scanned his sword. A moment later, a voice spoke.

"Wait!"

Xu Qing respectfully bowed his head and waited.

After a bit more than two hours passed, and light was seeping over the horizon. Being very respectful, he inquired about his request.

"Keep waiting!" was the cold response.

"Might I ask how much longer it will be?" he said politely. "I'm really in a big hurry. I can't afford any delays."

"Unknown."

At that point, Xu Qing decided he couldn't wait any longer. Turning, he sped off feeling very irritated. It wouldn't have been surprising for them to refuse his request, and he would have understood. But to make him stand there waiting actually made him wonder if they had malicious intentions.

Taking a deep breath, he tapped into all the speed his cultivation base was capable of. The boost of speed from the red life lamp caused a red glow to spread around him. Accelerating dramatically, he became a beam of light that disappeared over the horizon.

Six days passed.

He used the hellspirit bloodwing lamp and didn't hold back from burning the spirit energy within him. As a result, he now only needed four more days until he reached the border of the county capital.

That six days of travel revealed how deep his reserves were, as he was still in top condition. The only exception was that he felt mentally fatigued because of the deep sense of unease. On a few occasions he considered finding a place to hide, thinking that the uneasiness might pass. But whenever he thought about that, the bluegreen dragon caused him to feel even more intensely uneasy.

When he was only about two hours away from the prefectural border, that uneasiness had not declined in the least bit. As he accelerated, he suddenly saw a figure pop up in front of him.

Someone was blocking his path!

It was a figure in a woven rush raincoat and a straw hat, with an icy cold aura.

"If you got any further you might have escaped," a voice said, deep and full of strong killing intent.

Chapter 460: Stress

Xu Qing reacted the moment he heard the cultivator in the straw hat speaking. Moving so fluidly it seemed like he had already planned to do so, he crushed the entropic teleportation talisman he had been holding in his hand for the past six days.

No teleportation fluctuations rolled out. Apparently, all of the surrounding heaven and earth was sealed, making teleportations impossible!

Xu Qing didn't buy cheap entropic teleportation talismans. Normally speaking, they would be able to break through any sealing magics. Unfortunately... this cultivator in the straw hat had spared no expense purchasing intelligence reports with the specific purpose of negating even the best entropic teleportation talismans.

Xu Qing didn't get flustered because the teleportation failed. Without a moment of hesitation, he fell back.

At the same time, all eight of his heavenly palaces flared to life. Three umbrellas appeared overhead. A seven-colored chanting wind surrounded him, protecting his fleshly body. A pitch-black canopy protected his soul. And a blood-red wing from hell boosted his speed.

Because of all that, he rocketed backward at incredible speed. At the same time, a violet moon appeared in his pupils, taboo poison spread out around him, and the Ghost Emperor mountain appeared, pulsing with incredible might. His heavenly dao bluegreen dragon appeared in the dome of heaven, swirling in flight as it howled. That howl caused the power of a heavenly dao to spread out and combat the sealing effect in the area.

Xu Qing reacted very quickly. From the moment he detected an enemy until now, only enough time had passed for a spark to fly off a piece of flint. He was moving quickly backward and up, hoping to take advantage of the bluegreen dragon's help to get free of the sealed area.

The cultivator in the straw hat snorted coldly, then shot up into the sky and performed an incantation gesture with his right hand.

When he shoved his hand down, countless symbols streamed down, locking down the dome of heaven and making it impossible for Xu Qing to flee.

Xu Qing's expression turned grim as he switched directions, hoping to be able to force a teleportation through the lockdown.

The cultivator in the straw hat threw out a handful of sand, which strengthened the sealing effect and blocked the teleportation.

However, things weren't over yet. The cultivator in the straw hat had been preparing a long time for this moment. Killing intent rising, he took further steps to make sure nothing unexpected happened. Biting the tip of his tongue, he spat out a drop of golden blood. The blood rose into the air and turned into a shimmering barrier that spread out through the sky. Rumbling sounds filled the dome of heaven, and any loosening effect on the sealing done by the bluegreen dragon was reversed.

Having done that, the cultivator turned to face Xu Qing.

"Long time no see, Xu Qing," he said in a raspy voice. "As of now, you can't get away. And for the time being, no one is going to bother us."

He removed his straw hat, revealing the weathered face of a middle-aged man. His most noteworthy feature was his eyes, which were a faint golden color, including pupil, iris, and sclera. Those two golden eyes made him seem somehow holy. What was more, he actually pulsed with fluctuations of godliness!

He was none other than Master Shengyun's father, Chu Tianqun!

And he was using the final experimental god body that the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan had left behind in Emperor-Receiving Prefecture! [1]

Back when Xu Qing left the Eight Sect Coalition, Chu Tianqun had stood at his beloved son's cenotaph and sworn to offer Xu Qing as a sacrifice there. [2]

However, because Xu Qing had mostly stayed in the county capital, Chu Tianqun had never had a chance to make a move against him. The Swordsage Palace posed too much of a risk.

As a result, he had waited outside of the borders of the county capital. On the occasion when Xu Qing and Kong Xianglong left, he had planned to make his move. However, for some unknown reason he ended up running into the terrifying bird Qingqin, an encounter that left him seriously injured. [3]

Though he escaped that situation with his life, he still hadn't fully recovered. That setback didn't reduce his resolve. He had spared no expense to keep track of Xu Qing's whereabouts. Recently, upon coming to realize that Xu Qing had left the county capital again, he had tapped into all of his godliness, as well as his god magics, coupled with Xu Qing's name, plus some of his blood and hair, to divine Xu Qing's position. Unless Xu Qing permanently used a method to conceal his aura, those divination methods would eventually reveal his location.

Chu Tianqun stared at Xu Qing with deep malice and loathing. His killing intent couldn't be matched. Although Chu Tianqun partly blamed himself for Master Shengyun's miserable fate, the biggest other factor was Xu Qing. And of even greater significance was the fact that Xu Qing had

been the one to kill his son. The desire for revenge burned in his heart day and night, and thus, as he looked at Xu Qing, he laughed maliciously.

The idea of avenging his son's death, and of brutally slaughtering the damnable Xu Qing, made him very pleased.

Xu Qing's expression flickered as he looked at Chu Tianqun. He obviously recognized him, and what was more, noticed the golden light and the aura of godliness that surrounded him.

Xu Qing had not forgotten Master Shengyun's experimental god body, and the immense power it had. Therefore, he didn't hesitate to continue to fall back, all the while performing a double-handed incantation gesture and tapping into all of his heavenly palaces.

When Chu Tianqun saw Xu Qing fleeing, he laughed. "You're a measly Gold Core cultivator! You think you can flee my godly sealing?"

As the words left his mouth, Chu Tianqun thrust his hands out and tapped into his cultivation base. Instantly, early Nascent Soul stage fluctuations rolled out in all directions. Rumbling sounds echoed out, causing the sandy ground to vibrate. Then he shot toward Xu Qing like an eagle, moving at incredible speed.

Xu Qing grimaced. That said, when he sensed Chu Tianqun's cultivation, especially as it compared to the Unit C jailers, he was surprised.

Early Nascent Soul?

It seemed suspicious, causing his guard to go up further. It seemed to him that it must be some sort of trick. There was no way Chu Tianqun was only in the early Nascent Soul stage.

Master Shengyun's experimental god body had only been partially complete, yet had unleashed astonishing power. Chu Tianqun was Master Shengyun's father, so logically speaking, he should be a lot stronger. From what Xu Qing remembered, he had been at the peak of Nascent Soul.

A crazy look appeared in Xu Qing's eyes.

My heavenly dao bluegreen dragon can break the sealing eventually, it just needs time. I might not be a match for him... but I can go for broke!

At this point, he knew he had no other chance than to put everything on the line. He needed to buy time. Therefore, as Chu Tianqun closed in, Xu Qing's energy and blood surged. His eight heavenly palaces erupted, and with his golden crow, he was able to unleash nine-palace battle prowess. In fact, it was very close to the ten-palace level.

Chu Tianqun arrived, and the two of them slammed into each other. A huge boom echoed out, shaking the surroundings. Xu Qing staggered backward several paces, but so did Chu Tianqun, who looked completely incredulous.

He's still faking it! Feeling more vigilant than ever, Xu Qing unveiled one of his trump cards. The poison from his third heavenly palace swept forth, filling the area and even causing the dome of heaven to ripple and distort. In addition to the taboo poison power, the area also surged with Xu Qing's personal mutagen, which created an even more deadly effect.

Chu Tianqun met the attack head on, and instantly started rotting thanks to the poison and mutagen. His expression flickered, and he quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture. His eyes glittered with golden light, and godly fluctuations rolled out of him to fight back.

Even now, he's still faking it! Xu Qing was convinced that Chu Tianqun must have some astonishing techniques, and was probably just toying with him. Eyes glittering coldly, he gritted his teeth and continued unleashing trump cards. The wave of his hand caused the golden crow to appear, dozens of tails fanning out to send fire sweeping everywhere. The golden crow attacked with abandon, letting loose a sharp cry as it rushed madly toward Chu Tianqun.

That wasn't it. The black iron skewer flew out, controlled by Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior, whose eyes glittered with devotion. He could sense the madness within Xu Qing, and was determined to put everything on the line. Unleashing all of the red tribulation lightning he could, he shot toward Chu Tianqun.

The shadow was also going all out. It stretched out from Xu Qing's feet, filling a 1,500-meter area, merging with the poison to create a huge shadowy domain. Countless eyes opened up within the darkness, and they glowed red as they stared at Chu Tianqun.

“Die! Die! Die!!”

Innumerable voices howled the same thing from within the shadowy domain, becoming like a curse that enveloped Chu Tianqun.

All of these things were like a wild tempest that swept over Chu Tianqun.

Chu Tianqun's face fell and he quickly performed an incantation gesture to unleash some divine abilities to defend himself. However, the poison was too strong, and Xu Qing just had too many other assets. Chu Tianqun was backing up!

There's no way. He's so strong, yet he's falling back? Maybe he's about to unleash some trump card!

Staying completely on guard, Xu Qing gritted his teeth and lifted his hand, putting it over his shoulder and behind his back. It was as if he were reaching back to grab the hilt of an invisible sword. Then he chopped that invisible sword down right toward the bedraggled Chu Tianqun.

That slashing movement caused bright light to fill the sky. A dazzling beam of sword light erupted from Xu Qing's hand, heading right toward Chu Tianqun with the power to destroy anything in its path.

From a distance, that sword light looked like a spectacular sword that emanated an imperial energy. It was domineering and tyrannical, like an emperor descended from above to slaughter all evil things in heaven and earth.

It was The Emperor's Sword!

Things weren't over yet. Before The Emperor's Sword could even fall, Xu Qing's violet moon heavenly palace trembled, causing violet moons to appear in his pupils. They became a beam of violet light that locked onto the fleeing Chu Tianqun's face. It created the image of a moon!

Xu Qing was ready for his opponent to unleash a trump card, and thus blue veins bulged out on his forehead. His hands both pointed out, and as the violet moon power reached Chu Tianqun's face, The Emperor's Sword unleashed its power.

Chu Tianqun shrieked as his body started to collapse.

Xu Qing's pupils constricted as he fused with his shadow to tap into peak fleshly body power.

With a terrifying fleshly body equivalent to ten palaces, he became like a lightning bolt that shot toward Chu Tianqun. A dagger appeared in his hand. All while waiting for a trump card to be released, he blurred past Chu Tianqun.

Along the way, his dagger slashed through Chu Tianqun's throat and came out the back of his neck. Chu Tianqun's head flew into the air, and his body, which couldn't sustain the force of everything else, exploded.

Gasping for breath, Xu Qing spun in place and looked back. His jaw nearly dropped.

"He's dead?"