

Timescape 561

Chapter 561: The Sun Comes Out Before Moonfall; an Emperor's Son Returns to the Starry River

The bronze coffin in the depths of the Heavenfire Sea remained silent. The red moon warding spells glittered, while the red glow of the lava seemed to flow in concert with the warding spells' fluctuations.

Xu Qing wasn't actually seated cross-legged outside the coffin. Although his senses were telling him he was seated some distance away, he was really on the edge of the crack leading into the abyss, with his back to the outside world. Right in front of him was an enormous pair of blue eyes, staring at him, as well as a gigantic mouth. Xu Qing was so close that if he got to his feet and took a step forward, he would be inside that mouth.

Xu Qing looked up at the blue eyes and quietly said, "Senior, I really don't taste good."

He continued to send poison swirling about him, while maintaining an utterly sincere attitude.

"Interesting. When did you realize it?"

The voice carried with it a noxious wind. That said, the noxious wind did not change Xu Qing's perception of his surroundings. He sighed. "Senior, when you altered my perceptions, making me think that I was moving away even though I was doing the opposite, well... I sensed that something was off."

"So," the voice replied in a tone that was hard to read, "you sat down cross-legged right there, only one pace away from me?"

"One pace closer, Senior," Xu Qing said calmly, "and you'd be poisoned."

The voice inside the coffin didn't respond. Xu Qing didn't add anything. A long moment passed.

Finally, the voice in the coffin said, "Since you stole the authority of Crimson Mother, boy, does that mean you can do more than just control the warding spells? Can you absorb them, too?"

Xu Qing looked down and rapidly analyzed the situation. He wasn't sure of the meaning behind the voice's questions. He got the sense he was being asked to prove his value. But it also felt like it might be some sort of trick, maybe to tempt him into reducing the restrictive power of the warding spells. It was hard to say for sure. And if he made a mistake, he could end up *damned by myriad tribulations*.

Instead of trying to weigh all the pros and cons, he decided to just respectfully give voice to his concerns. Many times, being direct was the best tactic. However, when you used that tactic, you had to have sound reasoning to back it. After a brief bit of silence from inside the coffin, laughter rang out.

"You're a lot more interesting than you seemed at first, boy. You're definitely a lot more cautious than that other person who came to see me. Ah, whatever. Once you're out, show me what you're capable of."

Xu Qing got to his feet. After a moment of consideration, he clasped hands and bowed. Then, without any hesitation, he took a step to the left. That step landed him, not one pace to the left, but one pace backward.

The eyes of the mysterious entity in the coffin glittered faintly.

Just like that, Xu Qing strode out of the crack leading to the abyss. The moment he was outside, his eyes went blank for a brief moment, then went back to normal. Fear still lingered within him, but he suppressed it. He knew full well that he had just been walking the line between life and death. If he hadn't handled everything perfectly, it would have meant the end of the line. The entity in the coffin spoke only in half-truths. Though it had agreed to let him leave, Xu Qing knew that it was a test to see if he could really pierce the fog of illusion that had surrounded him. Even though he had successfully stepped away, that didn't mean that the danger was completely past.

Xu Qing reached out and slowly clenched his hand into a fist. As he did, the power of the red moon warding spells swept toward him, gathered in his hand, and created a blinding ball of dazzling red light.

Shortly after, Xu Qing relaxed his grip. The violet moon nascent soul within him then inhaled deeply, and the red light in Xu Qing's hand became a host of threads that entered the violet moon. The violet moon immediately began to glow even more brightly. Xu Qing could indeed absorb the power of the warding spells. That said, he couldn't absorb that much.

"That's as much as I can do, Senior," he said quietly.

The voice in the coffin laughed. "That's all you can do? Or is it all you *dare* to do?"

"It's all I can do," Xu Qing said, sounding very serious.

The eyes looked deeply at Xu Qing, and then the entity exhaled. It contained heavenfate-filled energy from the woman in red who had been devoured earlier. As it swirled toward Xu Qing, it turned into a white piece of fruit.

"I need you to do something for me, boy. And this heavenfate is a down payment on that."

Xu Qing thought for a long moment, then took the heavenfate. "What are your instructions, Senior?"

"I won't get into the details now. I'll tell you later." With these very telling words having been spoken, the blue eyes slowly closed. Everything went back to normal.

Forcing himself to ignore his misgivings, Xu Qing backed up, then sped away. When he was some distance away, he finally breathed a sigh of relief. Inside of him, in D-132, another sigh of relief could be heard. It came from the god's finger.

"I just got scared half to death!" the god's finger grumbled. *"C-c-can't you... can't you just be happy with your lot in life? Do you always have to wake me up with such terrifying entities?"*

Xu Qing thought back to everything that had just played out, and could feel fear lingering within him. The whole reason he had been able to detect the change to his perception was that the finger

had been stimulated awake, and had screamed for him not to take a step forward. The finger had also been the one to tell him how to make his escape from the crack leading to the abyss.

“Your soul is too weak!” the finger said angrily. *“If you don’t do something to strengthen it, then considering your sense of judgement in these suicidal situations, sooner or later you’re going to end up dead!”*

Xu Qing nodded and responded, “Many thanks for your help, Senior. Sir, is there any chance you have some ideas for how to improve my soul?”

“If I did, then I wouldn’t be a clone!” the god’s finger snapped angrily. The reality was that it was feeling humiliated from being so scared. *“Hungry! I’m so hungry!”*

“I know,” Xu Qing said comfortingly. “I’ll find you something to eat.” He wasn’t bothered at all by the finger’s fury. After all, the god’s finger was a prisoner that Xu Qing himself had locked up. Yet the finger had still helped out. It only made sense for the finger to be somewhat emotional after all that.

“I want to eat live food!” the finger raged.

“Alright,” Xu Qing replied.

“And a lot of it!”

“Of course.”

“I want to eat—”

“Okay, okay. I’ll get it for you.”

Seeing how cooperative Xu Qing was being, the finger suddenly came to the realization that Xu Qing must be pulling some sort of scam. Going forward, it would make a lot more sense to just ignore the little punk!

With that, Xu Qing left the area with the coffin. As he sped through the lava, he mentally reviewed everything that had just happened.

He said I’m the second person outside of the Red Moon Cathedral to have come before him. I wonder who the first person was.

For some reason, Xu Qing’s first inclination was to wonder if it was his Eldest Brother in a past life. There was no evidence to point him to that conclusion. It was just a hunch.

The final words spoken by that being.... There was obviously some deep meaning in those words, although Xu Qing wasn’t exactly sure how to unpack it.

Sometime later, he took out the heavenfate he had been gifted, and inspected it carefully. However, even after confirming it was safe, he still didn’t feel at ease, and decided to consult the god’s finger.

The finger ignored him.

Expression the same as ever, Xu Qing coolly said, "Senior, do you mind helping me check to see if something is suspicious about this heavenfate? I'm worried the entity in that coffin might be thinking about you."

The finger sent out some divine sense. Clearly, it was very concerned about anything relating to itself. Shortly after, the finger confirmed that the heavenfate was clean.

Feeling a bit more at ease, Xu Qing absorbed it. A tremor passed through him. The heavenfate was so strong that Xu Qing's nascent souls all absorbed some, taking them even closer to the great circle of the one-tribulation level. Previously, only his Golden Crow Assimilates Myriad Spirits nascent soul had been at that level. Later, the violet moon nascent soul got very close, while the others were only in the early one-tribulation level. But now, all were making significant progress.

After taking stock of what was happening, Xu Qing took a deep breath and got moving again, all while making sure his violet crystal was doing the best possible to heal his soul.

In that manner, time passed.

In the east of the Moonrite Region, some distance away from the Twofold Alliance, a huge heart flew along with the Red Moon Cathedral church temple atop it.

The cultivators on the orbiting asteroids remained still and unmoving. However, it was possible to see a figure emerge from the temple itself, who then came to stand in front of the statue of Crimson Mother. It was a woman wearing a red robe.

She looked up into the sky with a face that seemed full of regret. It was almost as if she hadn't seen the sky for a very, very long time. Finally, she looked down at the statue, and her expression became zealous and pious. Yet, deep in her eyes was a venomous malice.

If Xu Qing could see that woman, he would be deeply shaken. It was the very same godservant he had shoved into the abyss to be devoured by the terrifying entity therein! She had clearly died, yet here she was right in the open.

Something is wrong with your senses, Crimson Mother. You failed to detect my escape. Granted, I'm only a clone. But normally speaking, you would have noticed.... That boy was very interesting. Very, very interesting. Thanks to him, I was able to devour a godservant and recover some of my strength.

When the woman in red smiled, her eyes glittered with some blue light. That blue light was exactly the same as that seen in the eyes of the figure in the bronze coffin! As it turned out, she was actually that same entity from within the coffin!

That entity had altered the perception of Xu Qing, and had done the same thing to the godherald who came to inspect the area. The godherald had perceived that the godservant took longer than usual because the feeding process went slowly. And the godservant had apparently been enjoying the process of toying with the entity in the coffin. The godherald offered a reprimand, then brought the godservant back with him.

However unusual that was, the change to his perceptions made him think his actions were perfectly reasonable.

Chapter 562: The Wind Can't Blow Out the Fireflies

Ten days later, Xu Qing burst out of the lava in the Heavenfire Sea. The glow of the fire reflected down from the dome of heaven onto him, causing him to shine dazzlingly. His eyes were particularly resplendent. His cultivation base was now far beyond its previous point. Among his thirteen nascent souls the golden crow and violet moon versions had progressed the farthest. Although they weren't quite at the great circle of one tribulation, they were very close.

That collection of heavenfate was priceless.

His eyes shone as he considered that if he had a few more bits of heavenfate like that, he would probably be able to get all of his nascent souls into the great circle of one tribulation.

The heavenfate of a Spirit Trove cultivator lives up to its reputation. Maybe she was only in the dao begetting and dawnstar raising phase, but that heavenfate is far stronger than anything from the Nascent Soul level.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered brightly; the damage to his soul had recovered in the ten days that had passed. Furthermore, he could tell that, not only had his soul recovered, but it had actually become a bit stronger.

In that case... I'll return the eyeball and then start traveling again!

He looked down at the Heavenfire Sea and thought about what other secrets must be hidden in those depths. For example, were there other sealed areas down there? Or what about that area in the depths where fire emerged from the rift in the dome of heaven?

Now's not the time to explore those things. The better part of a year has already passed. I need to hurry up to meet with Eldest Brother.

He looked down at his wrist, and the mark that encircled it. That was Ling'er. After leaving the human city hidden beneath the abandoned mine, he had come to an agreement with Ling'er. Because he had been planning to go to some dangerous areas in the Heavenfire Sea, he wanted her to remain sleeping in that seal. That had seemed the safest. But now that the danger had passed, and the time had come to return to the abandoned mine briefly, Xu Qing smiled and tapped on the symbol.

"Ling'er, wake up. We're going back to that mine."

The symbol flickered, then Ling'er poked her head out, blinking blearily. When she heard Xu Qing's words, her eyes glittered. "We're going back? Awesome! Big Bro Xu Qing, do you think we can stay there again for a little bit?"

When Xu Qing saw the anticipation on Ling'er's face, he thought about it briefly and then nodded. "How about for half a month?"

Laughing happily, Ling'er climbed up to Xu Qing's shoulder and coiled next to his ear.

Her happy laughter caused him to relax a bit. He wasn't as nervous as he had been at the bottom of the Heavenfire Sea, but he still kept his guard up. He knew that he had to be very careful about revealing the position of that human city. Therefore, as he flew along, he kept a close eye on his surroundings.

After he was sure he wasn't being followed, he left the Heavenfire Sea and flew toward the mine.

At one point, he stopped and looked down. Below, he saw a red flower growing out of a crack in the ground. It was one lonely flower blowing back and forth in the wind. This was the first vegetation Xu Qing had seen in this area. It wasn't easy for most plants to survive, given the climate. But there were some special plants that would actually bloom after the Heavenfire Skycrossing. This little flower was one of them. It was no ordinary plant, but rather, a very precious medicinal plant.

In Grandmaster Bai's medicinal codex, this flower was called a firespirit tulip. Surprised, Xu Qing harvested the flower and put it into a transparent bottle.

I remember Panyan asking about this flower. Smiling, he continued on his way.

Staying in concealment the entire time, it took three days before he spotted the mine in the distance. Thinking about Duanmu Zang and his apprentice Shi Panyan caused Xu Qing to sigh in his heart.

It's too bad I can't dispel that curse. But give me enough time, and I can do some experimenting.

When he was about 3,000 meters away from the mine, he stopped in place. Pupils constricting, he looked around the area. Things seemed different. Before, the mine entrance had a lot of loose rocks piled around it. That rock had been melted together during the Heavenfire Skycrossing, leaving only a small opening to be squeezed through. But now, the mine entrance looked completely collapsed. A tremor passed through Xu Qing.

Ling'er swayed back and forth as she took everything in. But then she stopped swaying. Voice trembling, she said, "Big Bro Xu Qing...."

Eyes shining with vigilance, Xu Qing shot forward. It took him three breaths of time to reach the entrance.

As he neared, he smelled blood wafting out of the mine. Ling'er sensed the same thing, and she shivered. Breathing heavily, Xu Qing tapped into his cultivation base, then raced into the mine.

The smell of blood grew stronger. Heart racing, Xu Qing flew along for a few dozen breaths of time. He stopped when he ran into a pile of seven or eight corpses. He took a few steps closer and examined them. He recognized them. They were guards from the city who had low level cultivation bases.

Xu Qing closed his eyes briefly. When he opened them, they were as cold as ice. He pressed on. More and more corpses became visible until at last he reached a large cave temple. It was the first level of the tomb, and it was in complete disarray. Evidence of fighting was everywhere. The floor in the middle of the cave had caved in. Down below was a silent city.

The blue canopy that made the sky had been ripped up mercilessly. Tattered bits of it fell down into the city. It was the same with the white clouds.

Hundreds of corpses lay scattered about the city. They included men, women, and children. They had died horribly. Some had been chopped in half. Others had been largely crushed into bloody paste. Still others had been dismembered violently. Before, this place had been alive with laughter, but now it was as quiet as death. The warmth and companionship of memory had become like ice. The tomb... had truly become a tomb. Buildings had collapsed, and the odor of blood and decay filled the place.

Ling'er flew out and raced toward the city. The Spike of Misfortune trembled as Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior sent it flying in the same direction. After they were in the city, both of them lurched to a stop.

Ling'er began weeping, and the patriarch simply looked around, the eyes of his projected body completely bloodshot.

Xu Qing quietly walked forward. He looked around at the familiar city and everything in it, and his heart hurt. And a terrifying howl was building in his mind.

Xu Qing had seen death. A lot of death. But he couldn't get used to things like this. He wasn't capable of it. He thought back to the three months he had lived here, and everything that happened. Those memories were now a source of immense pain.

"Big Bro Xu Qing, they... th-th-they..." Ling'er wept in pure grief. Among the corpses were some of the women she had befriended. She just couldn't accept that the people who had laughed with her as they taught her to cook and sew were now mutilated corpses.

Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior returned to Xu Qing's side and looked at him. His expression was one of fury, and also... pleading. He had also spotted corpses who had once come to listen to his stories.

Xu Qing's face was expressionless, but something boundlessly cold was rising up within him. Without a word, he took some time to carefully inspect his surroundings and determine when these people had died.

More than a hundred thousand people lived here. But there aren't even a thousand corpses. That seems to indicate most everyone else survived. Whoever captured them won't have an easy time moving so many mortals. They can't be far.

Given the state of decomposition, these people died no more than five days ago. Considering Duanmu Zang's cultivation base, and the safety precautions he'd put in place, the only group in this area who could have broken inside and taken everybody away is the Twofold Alliance.

The Red Moon Cathedral is in the area.... Duanmu Zang said that the cathedral comes regularly to demand offerings from the local species....

Xu Qing turned and waved his hand, causing Ling'er and Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior to fly back to him. Then he shot back toward the exit.

Ling'er, her heart almost overwhelmed with grief and anxiety, said, "Big Bro Xu Qing, we—"

"We're going to find them," Xu Qing said softly, his eyes turning colder and colder.

He soon sped out of the mine and was able to start looking for clues.

In the five days that had passed, the heat levels were dropping slowly, and thus, much of the evidence was gone. There seemed only one likely destination, and that was Holy City.

Unfortunately, there wasn't just one path to Holy City. What was more, it wasn't possible to guarantee that they were taking the humans there. If Xu Qing made an error in judgment, he would lose precious time. And every bit of time mattered in trying to carry out this rescue operation.

As Xu Qing pondered the situation, Ling'er wiped her eyes. Looking suddenly determined, she said, "Big Bro Xu Qing, let me look for some clues. This is an Ancient Spirit tomb, and they lived here for years. If they have even a scrap of Ancient Spirit aura on them, I can probably find them!"

Ling'er flew up into midair, where she suddenly erupted with a seven-colored glow. As it swirled around her, she began to change shape. She turned human, but didn't stop there. Within moments, she was even taller and more impressive than an ordinary human. Because of the light, it wasn't possible to see her clearly, but Xu Qing could see a dragon and a snake encircling her.

"South!" Ling'er said in an echoey voice.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing grabbed her and started moving south.

Some 5,000 kilometers in that same direction was a long caravan flying along at low altitude. The caravan included ten huge iron cages, each of which was like a small mountain being dragged along by huge beasts of burden. The cages were packed with people. Countless humans were visible, some of whom, on the bottom of the cages, had been crushed to death. However, there were plenty who were alive.

That said, those who still lived had numb expressions. They were already living lives worse than death, and were less human than animal.

The caravan was being led by cultivators from the Twofold Alliance. In order to make sure that as many mortals survived as possible, they couldn't move too quickly. Teleportations were a possibility, but there was no way the two species would pay for a luxury like that simply to save some time.

The cultivator in charge sat atop one of the carts looking cold and indifferent. "We'll be in Holy City soon. It will take about seven days."

"This job has been a lot of work. That said, who could have guessed there would be so many humans?"

"That's a good thing. With an offering like this, plus the other species we got from other places, we should be fine."

The Skyfaces pulled out a few human corpses and began viciously eating them.

The sound of tearing flesh and snapping bones echoed out brutally into the evening.

Chapter 563: The Goose Cannot Fly Out of the Moonlight (part 1)

The glow of the Heavenfire Sea lit the sky, making it nearly as red as blood. It definitely felt inauspicious. However, the sky was so far away from the sea that the light which reached it was faint. The darkness swallowed up everything else, making everything gloomy. The ground beneath the cages was so dark that the blood which dripped onto it didn't register.

The caravan left a trail of blood behind it. Surrounding the cages were members of the Twofold Alliance, who had greedy expressions on their faces as they licked their lips and eyed the cages. As far as they were concerned, the humans locked in the cages were delicious morsels of food. At the

same time, they were sacrificial offerings, live food that could be offered to the cathedral for safety going forward. Arrangements such as this had existed in ancient times, and they still did now.

It wasn't just humans who found themselves in such a plight. Throughout this part of the Moonrite Region, lesser species were all suffering the same fate. They either became food to other species, or they became sacrificial offerings. *The weak are the prey of the strong.* That maxim was more true here than anywhere else on the outside.

However, there are some instances in which 'the strong' end up running into someone even stronger than they are. And in that case, they turn into 'the weak.' It was simply impossible for all species to be considered paramount among all species.

That rule even applied to the Red Moon Cathedral. Perhaps that was just the rhythm that the music of fate played to.

Right now, the wind whimpered as it carried heat through the lands, causing imperceptible ripples to roll through the sky. And the ash on the ground after the Heavenfire Skycrossing turned into fine dust that blew everywhere. Within that ashy dust was a killing intent that seemed to be getting stronger and stronger. It became an ambassador of death, hefting a blood-soaked scythe as it neared with explosive speed!

The source of that killing intent was Xu Qing! He didn't speak at all. His eyes pulsed with something profoundly somber and desolate, and not even the surrounding heat could soften the frigid coldness of his expression. With Ling'er as his guide, he went south at top speed, tapping fully into his life lamps, as well as all of the blessings built into his cultivation base. He was obviously moving much faster than the caravan. What was more, he soon saw the blood on the ground, providing a clear trail to follow.

This is the way, he thought, speeding up.

Now he didn't need Ling'er's help. Following the blood, he sped along, kicking up a stiff wind as he got closer and closer to his target.

2,500 kilometers. 1,500 kilometers. 500 kilometers. 250 kilometers....

During four days' time, he traveled nearly 5,000 kilometers. On the evening of the fourth day, the wind caused by his passage was a rumbling tempest that reached the ears of the caravan guards. There were over a hundred members of the Twofold Alliance in charge of the caravan, and when they heard the sound, they looked off into the distance toward what seemed like thunder on the horizon.

"What's going on?"

The caravan's beasts of burden stirred restlessly. The cultivators atop them stood, then looked off into the distance, frowning.

Suddenly, Xu Qing appeared. He had finally caught up! When he saw the caravan, and the ten huge cages, his heart filled with pain. He saw the people stuffed into the cages like livestock. They were clearly numb and suffering. The aura of rot and death spread out from the cages, causing Xu Qing's eyes to turn bloodshot, and sending icy killing intent raging uncontrollably through him.

He became a prismatic streak of light filled with endless lightning bolts as he closed in on the caravan at top speed. A deafening boom rang out when Xu Qing slammed right into the caravan! The ground shook violently, and dust shot out in all directions.

The caravan stopped moving. The beasts of burden could sense the icy killing intent, and they shivered visibly. Meanwhile, the cultivators from the Twofold Alliance rushed out to defend the caravan.

“Who’s there?”

“What gall! I can’t believe you would actually attack the Twofold Alliance!”

“What species is this guy?”

As the cultivators from the Twofold Alliance angrily cursed Xu Qing, the killing intent in his eyes grew more intense. Without hesitation, he shot toward the Skyface cultivator right in front of him. The terrifying fluctuations coming off Xu Qing caused the Skyface to blanch. Before it could even think of dodging, Xu Qing was there, using the intense power of his fleshly body in full force. A thump rang out as the huge Skyface cultivator’s chest caved in, then exploded as Xu Qing shot through his entire torso. After that, the Skyface’s entire body collapsed.

Xu Qing didn’t pause for a second. Waving his hand, he sent daybreak light out in ten streams that swept out and covered the cages. Next, he explosively unleashed his taboo poison. The air pulsed as boundless mutagen provoked miserable shrieks and screams among the enemy.

Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior was there, madly smashing into the enemy in the form of a red bolt of lightning.

Ling’er bared her teeth, and her eyes gleamed with vicious light as she also launched attacks here and there.

The shadow could sense Xu Qing’s rage and Ling’er’s grief. That caused the shadow to get angry as well, and it stretched out protectively around Ling’er, where it would help her launch attacks.

Of course, none of them could match Xu Qing’s brutality. As he accelerated even more dramatically, a dagger appeared in his right hand. He closed in on a Mirrorling cultivator, and punched it with his left hand. A crash could be heard as the Mirrorling’s body shattered. Then Xu Qing sent poison roiling out of his fist, and another agonized scream could be heard. Xu Qing spun, then body-slammed a Skyface cultivator who was behind him. Then his dagger seemed to come alive, slashing and stabbing, sending blood everywhere. Finally, it viciously swept through the Skyface’s throat. A head flew through the air.

The golden crow rose up, then exhaled, causing heavenfire to fall onto the shocked and fleeing cultivators of the Twofold Alliance. All they could do was scream as they were incinerated.

Xu Qing’s face was expressionless, but his eyes were bloodshot and he was soaked with blood from head to toe. He pressed the attack, closing in on a Mirrorling cultivator.

This cultivator was in the Nascent Soul level, and he had a furious expression on his face. He was actually shaken by Xu Qing’s killing intent, and tried to fall back. He was too slow. Xu Qing attacked with astonishing speed. When they clashed, the Nascent Soul Mirrorling quickly used an

incantation gesture to summon a sharp blade. He also sent ghostfire swirling out to make demonic ghost flowers that surrounded Xu Qing and tried to devour his life force.

Xu Qing couldn't have cared less about that. His fleshly body was so powerful, and his violet crystal could heal him so well, that unless he was attacked by some force that he truly couldn't deal with, then he would always default to his normal fighting style, which was to sustain damage to inflict fatalities.

As he closed in, rumbling sounds echoed out. Xu Qing allowed the enemy's magical techniques to hit him. Eyes shining brutally, he simply chomped up the ghost flowers. Poison raged out, destroying everything it touched. The dagger stabbed and slashed. The Nascent Soul cultivator wanted to struggle free, but such efforts were to no avail. Screams escaped his lips, along with sprays of blood. It only took a few breaths of time to devastate his enemy's body, and ultimately slash open his throat.

Then Xu Qing launched himself backward, right into the two other enemy cultivators who had been charging from that direction. He quickly performed a left-handed incantation gesture and shoved his hand out in front of him. A massive group of heavenfiend clones appeared behind him, which then rushed forward, snapping their jaws ravenously.

The nearby members of the Twofold Alliance were already terrified and scrambling backward to flee. None of them got more than a few paces before their bodies crumbled, and they fell to the ground screaming. The other cultivators present trembled as they madly fled. To them, Xu Qing seemed like a harvester of souls that couldn't be stopped. Wherever he looked, the shadow of death descended. It was especially frightening considering his garment was now blood-red. Combined with the glow of the golden crow's fire, he looked astounding.

Although there were over a hundred cultivators in the caravan, the majority were in Gold Core and Foundation Establishment. There were only six in Nascent Soul.

After all, this was their territory. Transporting a shipment of mortal humans wouldn't require a bunch of top experts to stand guard. Besides, Duanmu Zang had already been taken away by the royal preceptor and his people. Therefore, the cultivators assigned to this territory didn't have any reason to believe that someone would come and try to save the captives. There were no other top experts among humans who would do so.

Not one of the more than 100,000 residents of the human city had mentioned Xu Qing. The kindness and love of one human for another would become especially prominent during times of adversity.

As for Xu Qing, he had been very careful during his entire time in this region, and thus, no one in the Twofold Alliance had any idea about his true identity or level of strength.

The end result was that when Xu Qing attacked the caravan, they fell like dry weeds in front of him. That was especially true considering how terrifying his poisons were. The Foundation Establishment cultivators were the first to succumb, and screamed shrilly as they rotted away.

Not even the Mirrorlings' special bodies were immune to this poison.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing's slaughter continued. Next, he closed in on a Skyface cultivator in the Nascent Soul level. They clashed for about four or five breaths of time. Then blood sprayed out of

the Skyface's mouth before his head tumbled off his shoulders. His nascent souls then exploded before being devoured by Xu Qing. He didn't have time right now to fully assimilate them.

Ignoring any injuries he had sustained, Xu Qing turned to survey the area. Thanks to his taboo poison, the entire area was a region of death. And Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior and the shadow had inflicted even more casualties.

Seeing Ling'er launching attacks made Xu Qing think back to years ago in the Merfolk Isles. He knew now more than ever that though Ling'er seemed soft and weak, she was actually very experienced at fighting. Ling'er had taken human form, and was wearing a suit of armor. Illusory dragons and snakes curled around her, and she had a long spear in her hand. Despite looking so petite, she erupted with stupefying battle prowess.

The slaughter didn't last for very long. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the last of the enemy cultivators was put to death, and silence reigned. Even the beasts of burden pulling the cages had been decapitated by the enraged Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior.

After everything was over, tears flowed down Ling'er's cheeks. The patriarch looked furious. And everyone was looking at the cages, which were still wrapped protectively in daybreak light.

The people in the cages still looked numb. After the days of torment they had endured, their minds were on the verge of collapse. They didn't even react when seeing Xu Qing and the others.

Ling'er approached the nearest cage, looked inside, and then tremulously said, "Big Sis Li... Auntie Chen...."

Xu Qing walked over. With a wave of his hand, he dispersed the daybreak light, then opened the cage. People tumbled out like cargo. However, Xu Qing was careful to facilitate their exit from the cage so that no one was hurt.

Seeing the conditions in the cages caused Xu Qing's mood to sink further. At the bottom of the cages, dead bodies had been crushed so badly their facial features weren't even identifiable.

Panyan. Where's Panyan...?

Chapter 563: The Goose Cannot Fly Out of the Moonlight (part 2)

Xu Qing went to the next cage and opened it. He looked at the familiar faces, and then the mangled corpses at the bottom of the cage, and the grief in his heart grew more intense. He had seen the misery and bitterness that existed in the world. Yet not even he could remain unaffected by this hellish scene.

Two months ago, Xu Qing had seen how guileless and kind-hearted these wonderful people were. On a dark, cold night, they offered to share some of their own warmth with a shivering fellow human.

But now....

Xu Qing closed his eyes. The killing intent in his heart had not been reduced at all because of the slaughter from moments ago. Instead, it had grown stronger, building up more and more until the perverse energy within him was so strong he struggled to breathe steadily.

The reason for that was... he had just spotted half of a face in the bloody sludge at the bottom of the cage. It was Shi Panguì's wife, who had been so skilled at making delicious pastries.... Her body had mostly been crushed into a pulp.

Xu Qing walked away quietly to open the next cage. As the people tumbled out, he spotted something at the bottom of the cage off in the corner.

It was the edge of a book.

When he saw it, he started trembling uncontrollably. He waved his hand, dispersing all of the blood and gore, to reveal a girl. Her clothing was mashed with blood and gore. Only about half of her tiny body was intact. Her arms were clasped tightly around a medicinal codex. She had clearly been holding it with all of her strength. It was as if it represented her strongest desire, and her deepest hope. She lay on the bottom of the cage, and because there wasn't any blood on her face, she almost looked like she was sleeping.

Xu Qing felt profound pain building his chest. He struggled to take in a breath, but couldn't stop shaking. In his mind, he thought back to the scene from two months ago.

A scrawny figure appeared, timidly, holding a sweet potato, heart full of questions about plants and vegetation. Next, she came with a little plant that she asked about. He could see her eyes, shining with the thirst for knowledge. It left such a deep impression on him that he gave her his own medicinal codex and accepted her as his first apprentice in the dao of medicine.

"Teacher, will I ever see you again?"

That was the last thing Shi Panyan ever said to him.

It was almost as if the girl laying there in front of him had looked up and asked him that question.

"As long as we don't die, we'll meet again," he murmured. It was a wonderful saying, except... it also meant that if you died, you wouldn't meet again.

He stood there for a very long time. Eventually, he was roused by the sound of Ling'er's weeping and Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior's fury. Clearing his thoughts, he returned to reality.

"Ling'er..." he said hoarsely, turning to look at her.

She ran over and wrapped trembling arms around him. She had little experience witnessing death on this scale, and it was difficult for her to handle.

Slowly but surely, the captives began to regain their senses. The sounds of rage and sorrow began to grow. Eventually, a figure staggered over and dropped to his knees in front of Xu Qing.

"Senior...?" It was Shi Panguì. He was weak, his eyes bloodshot and his cheeks stained with tears. His expression was twisted on the verge of madness as he looked at Xu Qing. He knew that his wife and sister were dead. And his eyes also seemed dead, although he had forced himself to endure to this point. He knew that he had to tell Xu Qing where the chancellor had been taken. "Senior, please, you have to save the chancellor... He was taken to Holy City by the royal preceptor of the two-species

alliance. I heard them say they'd refine his blood into a material to repair their mirror treasure."

Xu Qing looked at Shi Pangu, and then turned to look at Shi Panyan.

Shi Pangu followed his gaze and then started trembling even more violently. He clenched his hands tightly into fists until the grief in his heart grew so intense that he coughed up a mouthful of blood. Then he laughed bitterly.

Xu Qing quietly walked back to Shi Panyan's corpse. Kneeling down, he gently closed her eyes.

"Pangu, your sister is sleeping. Please don't disturb her. All of you... wait here for me. I'm going to go get your chancellor and bring him back." He stood. "Ling'er, can you keep everyone safe while I'm gone?"

"Yes!" she said, wiping the tears from her face.

Xu Qing said nothing else. He had the shadow stay to help, and even summoned the stone lion and the head from D-132 to do the same. Finally he covered the entire perimeter with taboo poison, effectively sealing the area. Having done all that, Xu Qing took a deep breath, then reached out and clasped Shi Pangu's shoulder.

"Wait until I return, Pangu." With that, he looked in the direction of Holy City. It was as if he was looking at a land of the dead. His heart did not pound. He was just filled with an increasingly strong will of death that eventually spread out around him. Without a word, he took a few steps forward, then flew up into the air where he summoned his spirit cruiser.

An enormous old woman in a black cloak appeared in midair. Xu Qing stood on her head, while her face pulsed with death and killing intent. Then, they blurred off into the distance. Xu Qing looked down. As he sped along at top speed, he sent taboo poison spilling out of himself.

He didn't scatter it, but rather, had it converge on him. More and more of it. Gradually, a black miasma built up around him. The miasma contained taboo poison, and caused strange colors to flash. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the miasma grew bigger and stronger. As he continued to converge poison, his taboo poison nascent soul augmented the effort, so that the poison he was producing grew increasingly formidable.

Xu Qing rarely unleashed all of the potential of his poison. But right now, the pressure and killing intent within him ensured that he wasn't holding anything back.

Three days passed by in a flash.

About 500 kilometers away from Holy City, a sandstorm appeared that seemed to stretch a good 50 kilometers. It connected the sky and the land, and was filled with both endless lightning bolts and boundless mutagen. Within the boundless dark desert, the image of a huge old woman appeared, and atop her head... stood Xu Qing, his face completely expressionless.

During the past three days, he had attempted to summon the god's finger from D-132. However, the finger didn't respond to any of his calls. That said, Xu Qing knew it wasn't asleep. Since the finger wasn't responding, Xu Qing didn't continue his efforts. He didn't even frown. He knew that he was

heading into extreme danger. Given the level of his cultivation base, he couldn't easily deal with Spirit Trove opponents.

There was little need to mention that the Twofold Alliance had six Spirit Trove experts. Of that group, two had finished their first secret trove.

As far as Xu Qing was concerned, though, it didn't matter how dangerous this situation was going to be. It was something he simply had to do. As long as he could deal with those six Spirit Trove enemies, then the remaining Nascent Soul cultivators shouldn't be too difficult to wipe out.

The price to pay would be high.

My apprentice is dead. As her Master, I have to avenge her death. I ate so many of her sister-in-law's pastries.... I have to do something. Also... I borrowed something from Duanmu Zang. Without him around, how can I return what I borrowed?

His eyes only got colder and colder. And the 50-kilometer sandstorm full of poison that surrounded him spun slowly as he neared Holy City.

500 kilometers away in Holy City, members of the Twofold Alliance were having a big celebration. Everyone had heard about the capture of the humans. What was more, quite a few lesser species had already been dragged back to Holy City. They were definitely going to meet the quota for the sacrificial offering this time. That meant that when the next day of sacrifice came, both species would be safe. The two species were very delighted, and the sounds of laughter and celebration filled the city.

The city had taken some damage during Heavenfire Skycrossing, but thankfully, their spell formations had mostly held tight. As a result, the city was already back to normal. One thing that added to the bustle was a scene playing out in an open square located between the Twofold Alliance's royal palaces.

There was an assimilation event happening there, and it was almost over. The person doing the assimilating was the Mirrorling's royal preceptor. The person being assimilated was Duanmu Zang. A lot of cultivators in the Twofold Alliance knew who Duanmu Zang was. Over the years, investigations indicated that many of their fellow species members who went missing had connections to him. Therefore, many members of the Twofold Alliance had been watching this assimilation process.

Duanmu Zang had been nailed onto a huge mirror that now floated above the square. White energy seeped out of his body and entered into the mirror. The mirror was the very same one that had been cracked not too long ago. The spirit automaton inside had been destroyed, and now they were making a new one.

Blood oozed down Duanmu Zang. The process of having one's life force assimilated was painful, and he constantly twitched and writhed. If you looked closely, you would see that the bones throughout his body had been shattered, and his tendons had been ripped apart.

His nascent souls were locked down, and were currently being gnawed upon by hosts of grisly maggots. His collapsed secret trove pulsed with an aura of death, causing evil souls to converge to feast on it. He had obviously endured horrendous torture. Yet despite all of that pain, he didn't howl

or scream. Even at the end of the line, the courageous spirit of the humans still showed. He just grinned, all while refusing to betray any sign of weakness.

Glaring at the figure hovering cross-legged in front of him, he spoke in a raspy voice, "I can't believe it's taking you this long to assimilate me. You Mirrorlings really are useless pieces of trash."

The person seated cross-legged in front of him was an old man made of stone. He was the royal preceptor of the Mirrorlings. Eyes cold, he glared at Duanmu Zang and said, "Just wait until you become our mirror spirit. Then I'll have you personally devour your fellow humans. You'll love the flavor."

Chapter 564: Fierce Star Melts the Sun and Shatters the Sky (part 1)

Because of the Heavenfire Sea, and the hot environment it created, there weren't many species that occupied the eastern part of the Moonrite Region. The Mirrorlings and Skyfaces were essentially the dominant species.

However, because the heavenfire crystals from the Heavenfire Sea were one of the many items required by the Red Moon Cathedral for sacrificial offerings, it wasn't uncommon for species from other areas to come to harvest the crystals. In order to defend against such invaders, the two species had banded together and formed their alliance.

Together, they occupied Holy City. That city had stood for a thousand years already, and was a safe haven for countless members of the two species during the Heavenfire Skycrossing. Although some of the buildings had been destroyed recently, they had already been rebuilt. To the two species, this city had profound significance. They believed that the city was a testament to the long history of their alliance, and proof that it would last far into the future.

In contrast, that city was a place of despair to all the lesser species in the Heavenfire Sea area. Whether it was humans or other species, they were like prey, living in lands full of death and evil. In fact, there were actually more nonhumans who had died here than had been given as offerings to the Red Moon Cathedral. Brutality was built into the very bones of the two species. Living in despair in the Moonrite Region, they loved seeing the looks of even greater despair in the eyes of their victims. That was the only way for them to feel superior, and thus, they turned it into a joy of life.

Although the city was filled with the sound of laughter and rejoicing, mixed into that was weeping and wailing. The sounds of whips, screams, and sadistic brutality also echoed in every corner. The city ran red with blood; each and every household had corpses piled outside the main entrance. Their food didn't just consist of humans.

Whenever the big harvest came, the first goal was to meet the quota provided by the Red Moon Cathedral. Anything beyond the quota was given out as food and playthings.

Members of the Twofold Alliance could purchase the captive members of the lesser species. The latter would live lives worse than death, and would suffer horrific torment. But most would end up giving their lives in pain so that the members of the two species could survive.

On this day, a great rumbling sound was building on the horizon. Within the brutal city, the reveling members of the Twofold Alliance suddenly began to quiet down. Stunned, they looked off into the distance. On the horizon was a 50-kilometer sandstorm, like a huge shadow getting closer and closer to them. It filled the sky as it pulsed with shocking energy. The size of the sandstorm wasn't

the only impressive thing about it. Countless lightning bolts danced within it, sending out deafening crashing sounds, and shaking the earth so much that dust floated up into the air. The dark sky rippled and distorted as a powerful mutagen spread out. Everything turned even darker, making the atmosphere horrifying.

It was possible to spot a figure within the sandstorm. A person in a black robe screamed through the air, as if the ambassador of death had heard the curses of the living beings here, and had descended into the mortal world in response.

The scene attracted the attention of many of the members of the Twofold Alliance. Gradually, the city went quiet.

The royal preceptor of the Mirrorlings, who was still in the middle of assimilating Duanmu Zang, suddenly looked up. Turning in the direction of the horizon, he sent out terrified fluctuations of divine sense. Rumbling sounds filled the dome of heaven as he appeared in projected form over the city, in a form just as massive as the black-cloaked old woman in the sandstorm.

“Halt!” he said, his voice resounding like heavenly thunder.

At the same time, three streams of divine sense shot out from Holy City. All of them were in the same level of strength as the preceptor. As they manifested above the city, they stared coldly at the sandstorm. There were four of them, and all emitted the fluctuations of Spirit Trove. Though none had developed heavenly daos, the strength of the dao begetting and dawnstar raising phase was still formidable.

Duanmu Zang, who was wracked with pain and hovering on the brink of death, looked up. When he saw that huge figure in the sandstorm, he could just barely make out someone on top of its head. And that figure wasn’t human! It had gray skin, a large head, and spikes for hair. It was a Nightshade!

As the majestic sandstorm got closer to Holy City, the members of the Twofold Alliance were increasingly shaken. However, the storm stopped about 5 kilometers away from the city. That distance wasn’t enough to reduce the deafening sound of the storm. Nor was it enough to prevent the spread of taboo poison. As billowing miasma spread like a hazy fog, it covered Holy City, causing the defensive spell formations to sizzle as they melted. Deafening booms rang out.

“He’s just trying to pull a fast one!” the Mirrorling royal preceptor growled. He waved his right hand. The fog of miasma that had been building in the city was sent swirling off to the side. However, it didn’t dissipate. In fact, after it was sent to the side, it just slowly drifted back to its original place.

Seeing that caused the Mirrorling royal preceptor’s heart to sink. Frowning, he looked out of the city. Five kilometers away was the sandstorm formed from taboo poison miasma. The spirit cruiser, shaped like an old woman, stepped out of it. Standing on the head was Xu Qing. His face was expressionless as he looked at Holy City for a moment. Then he sent some divine will into D-132.

“*You’re really not going to eat?*” he asked the god’s finger.

“Nope, I’m not,” the finger replied with conviction. “I’m definitely not eating! These are freaking sacrificial offerings to Crimson Mother! I wouldn’t dare eat them. They’re cursed! Eat them, and it’ll turn you rotten. Are you gonna eat?”

Xu Qing ignored the finger. Along the way here, he had consumed one of the shadeheaven demonmoon pills that he and the captain had acquired from the Holytides. That pill, coupled with some other medicines Xu Qing had on hand, had transformed him into a Nightshade.

Keeping his eyes on Holy City, he raised his hand toward the canopy of heaven and pointed out with his index finger. The sky trembled as a violet moon suddenly appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. When the violet moon came, everything transformed. The entire city became covered in the color violet. It was the same with heaven and earth. The whole city, as far as the eye could see, was violet!

Godly might spread out, filled with the authority of Crimson Mother, in a way that surpassed even the godheralds. It was as if a godchild had arrived, and it caused the entire city to distort so dramatically it became blurry. Mutagen flourished in the city, rising up in the buildings and exploding into the members of the Twofold Alliance. Gasps, shrieks, and cries of astonishment erupted from countless mouths. Individuals from both species were visibly astonished.

At the same time, it was a familiar feeling, causing many of the Twofold Alliance cultivators to drop and kowtow.

Equally stunned were the four Spirit Trove experts, including the royal preceptors. They were trembling violently, and couldn’t prevent their facial expression from revealing their shock. All living beings in the Moonrite Region had the curse of the red moon in them. It was passed down by blood from generation to generation, and made it impossible for any native species to leave the region. What was more, it also made it possible for them to feel the majestic pressure of a god when they dealt with the Red Moon Cathedral. Granted, the curse was usually dormant. It would only activate if they tried to flee the Moonrite Region.

Yet right now, the Spirit Trove experts as well as all the other members of their two species could feel that curse waking up within them. The curse wasn’t fully awake. But they could sense it, as faint as the vibration of the strings on a musical instrument before it was played. And it was like a death knell in their minds.

Five kilometers away, Xu Qing stood atop the spirit cruiser and looked down at everything below. Then he said one single thing.

“All Spirit Trove cultivators from the Twofold Alliance will step forward immediately to receive me!”

As the words left his mouth, violet light flared, and the godly might grew more intense. Heaven and earth rippled and distorted, and everything trembled. Some mortals from the two species couldn’t handle the pressure, and screamed in agony. Some of them began to mutate as the curse in their blood went out of control. They shrieked miserably as they withered up.

Everyone in the Twofold Alliance trembled in terror. Meanwhile, the royal preceptor and the other three Spirit Trove experts instinctively flew out toward Xu Qing.

In the two royal palaces in the city, there were two sets of fluctuations that surpassed the other four Spirit Trove experts. They came from the two chancellors, who were also called patriarchs. They were shocked, but also a bit suspicious. There were obviously some differences between this violet moon and the red moon they were used to. That said, the aura and godly might was exactly the same. Regardless, they didn't dare to do anything offensive. They joined the other four Spirit Trove cultivators, except they didn't dare to get too close to Xu Qing. They stopped about 3,000 meters away.

“Greetings, Godherald!” the two patriarchs said in unison, clasping hands and bowing.

Xu Qing's expression didn't change. This was actually playing perfectly into the plan he had come up with along the way. All six of them were in one place! It hadn't been hard to make that happen. All he had to do was call on the authority of the cathedral.

The first step was complete. As all of them bowed, the violet moon in the sky rumbled as it floated into position above the six Spirit Trove experts. Then it started weighing down on them. This was step two.

Xu Qing knew that Spirit Trove cultivators couldn't possibly be idiots. It would be especially important not to underestimate the patriarchs. It wouldn't take them long to see through his disguise, and it was hard to say what would happen after that. Therefore, he couldn't afford to draw things out. He needed to take advantage of their shock to resolve the situation in the shortest time possible.

Step two required the power of the violet moon to suppress them and leave them a bit dazed. As the pressure of the violet moon weighed down, the six Spirit Trove experts reacted with visible surprise. Within them, the power of the curse stirred even more dramatically. However, their cultivation bases allowed them to have some control, and prevent the curse from exploding out of control.

As they began to grumble angrily, Xu Qing unhesitatingly pulled the gnomons out from all five of his sundials. This was step three. The daze created in step two wasn't enough. Step three had to be added for step four to work properly!

Chapter 564: Fierce Star Melts the Sun and Shatters the Sky (part 2)

The moment the gnomons were removed, the five sundials erupted with the power of Time Lag. As a result, time stopped around all six of the Spirit Trove experts.

Next, the heavenly dao bluegreen dragon appeared, and even as the Spirit Trove experts struggled against the daze inflicted by the violet moon, it lunged toward them with gaping maw. In one gulp, it swallowed both the violet moon and the six cultivators!

This was step four. And it was going to come with a heavy price. Xu Qing's five sundials collapsed into pieces. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his body withered. However, his cultivation base didn't change at all, and that was because the true life lamps made from his blood were actually the five gnomons!

The sundials came from the violet crystal, and after what Xu Qing had experienced in the Heavenfire Sea, he knew that they would recover given enough time.

Using the power of the sundials was step four in his plan. The violet moon vanished, as did the six Spirit Trove experts. The bluegreen dragon let loose a howl of pain, and then began to expand, all while rumbling sounds echoed within it. It wouldn't be able to hold out for very long. Although the bluegreen dragon was very unique, and had a heavenly dao blessing, it was still too weak. Even with the help of the violet moon, it couldn't keep the six Spirit Trove experts trapped for long. What was more, Xu Qing didn't have enough godly authority to fully activate the curse within them. He could only push the curse from its sleeping state toward a state of being awake.

Truth be told, even doing just that was completely spectacular. After all, he was doing this all with his own powers and abilities. In contrast, godheralds could only do it by making themselves vessels to channel the strength of a god. The outcome looked the same, but they were fundamentally different.

“Hold out for an incense stick of time!” Xu Qing said to the bluegreen dragon. Then he turned to the city, his eyes raging with uncontrollable killing intent.

He strode toward the city, his voice rumbling out in all directions. “Last month, the Mirrorlings brazenly harmed a Nightshade godherald. It is a crime worthy of the death penalty, and as a result, this species will be exterminated!”

Xu Qing lifted his right hand, then shoved it downward. Instantly, a red bolt of lightning shot out from the miasma behind Xu Qing. It headed straight toward the city with such incredible speed that it left behind a string of thunderous booms.

That red lightning bolt was none other than Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior, whose eyes were bloodshot as killing intent raged in his heart. Having followed Xu Qing all this time, he often fought on Xu Qing's behalf. Usually, he was a passive participant. But this time, he was the one who took initiative. He was here to avenge the deaths of his audience! When he thought back to the looks in the eyes of his fans, and their voices, it caused rage to burn within the depths of the patriarch's being.

“DIE!” the patriarch howled, sending the unstoppable Spike of Misfortune viciously slamming into Holy City's defenses.

Those defenses had just endured Heavenfire Skycrossing, and were already damaged to the point of falling apart. Though a few months of work had gone into repairing them, they were not back to their peak condition. They quickly dimmed, making it obvious they couldn't stand up to the piercing power of the Spike of Misfortune. Then, a boom echoed out as the fish bone spike, surrounded by red lightning, pierced through the city's defenses, leaving behind a tiny hole!

That hole created a chain reaction, causing cracks to spread out from that spot in all directions. Holy City's defenses were extraordinary. Despite being weakened, and breached, they already glittered with light as they began to self-repair.

However, on his way here, Xu Qing had already thought out all of his plans. Therefore, as soon as the patriarch pierced through the shield, and before it could do anything to repair itself, a deafening rumbling swept through the dome of heaven. A massive mountain suddenly appeared in midair. From a distance, it resembled a figure seated in meditation. That figure looked like Xu Qing, except that it shouldered two major worlds, though they were dim and faint. Either way, the figure emanated shocking pressure. It was none other than Xu Qing's Ghost Emperor mountain!

As soon as the mountain was out in the open, it dropped down viciously onto the city's defensive shield. The ground shook as the city's defenses quivered. Their repair functions had no choice but to slow down and stop, as the entire glimmering shield began to sink in on itself! That said, it managed to hold strong, though cracks spread out continuously from where the Ghost Emperor mountain had landed, and the spot where the Spike of Misfortune had stabbed through.

Right then, a sound erupted above Xu Qing that could shake the highest heavens. A pitch-black golden crow flew out, rapidly growing larger as it did. In the blink of an eye, it was 3,000 meters in size, with 200 tail feathers. It looked like a black phoenix, its wings spread out through the sky as it shot toward Holy City.

A moment later, it was directly over the city, looking down with cold eyes. It let loose a piercing cry, then opened its mouth, aimed toward the cracked and crumbling defensive shield, and exhaled... heavenfire!

It was formed from the lava the golden crow had consumed in the Heavenfire Sea, and it was unsurpassably hot. As it flew, it breathed fire, causing massive flames to spread out everywhere. From a distance, it looked like the whole city was covered in heavenfire.

It was almost as if Heavenfire Skycrossing had once again begun!

All of this takes some time to describe, but the reality is that from the moment Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior flew out until the golden crow started breathing fire, only about four or five breaths of time had passed.

Holy City's defensive shield couldn't last any longer. Popping sounds echoed out, then it collapsed. The Ghost Emperor mountain slammed down, shaking the city. Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior flew forward, killing anyone in his path. The flames from above couldn't be stopped, and they began burning the city.

All light dimmed in heaven and earth!

The members of the Twofold Alliance in Holy City had just personally witnessed their leaders swallowed up by a bluegreen dragon. That alone was shocking.

But even more astonishing was how the curse within them was stirring. And more than that, Xu Qing's status as a godherald left them shaken to the core. Only a few breaths of time had passed, yet the defensive shield had collapsed, heavenfire was spreading everywhere. All of them felt like they were facing a brutal catastrophe.

That said, though the Twofold Alliance's Spirit Trove experts had been captured, they still had many Nascent Soul cultivators as well as plenty in Gold Core as well. After the initial shocking development, those cultivators reacted, and shot out toward Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's expression was cold as he hovered in midair. Reaching out with his right hand, he pushed it down in the direction of the city. The dust storm full of poison became a shadowy haze that swept over the city. Each particle within the haze was backed by unstoppable momentum, and contained extremely high concentrations of poison. It also had mutagen.

The cultivators who had been attacking Xu Qing were hit first, and the bits of sand provoked roars of rage from them. Because of the taboo poison, their skin started melting. However, the sound of the poison dust storm was so intense that their agonized howls were hardly noticeable.

The storm raged with heaven-rending, earth-crushing power.

The city walls collapsed first, and then buildings in the city started falling apart. Members of the Twofold Alliance began dropping like flies. In the shortest of moments, the entire city was covered over by the 50-kilometer storm. From a distance, it looked like a case of a god exacting punishment!

Up in the sky, Xu Qing hovered, the god who was openly unveiling his godly might. Wherever he looked, the poison miasma covering the city brought about more death!

One scream might not be very noticeable. But when many of them combined, it was a different story. Cries of grief and agony echoed out in all directions. This was an unmitigated disaster for the Twofold Alliance.

And yet, there were still some of them who managed to break free of the poison storm. Even as their bodies rotted, they charged angrily toward Xu Qing. Their facial expressions were vicious, and their hearts pulsed with rage. In their eyes, he was a heinous, irredeemable fiend.

Xu Qing felt the same about them.

A moment later, they clashed.

The coldness in Xu Qing's eyes surged as a dagger appeared in his right hand. He stepped forward, and before his opponent could unleash any magical technique, he attacked. He raised his hand. The blade fell. Blood sprayed as a head tumbled to the ground.

Five umbrellas appeared over Xu Qing's head, which merged together to make a violet throne. That was the true manifestation of Xu Qing's bloodline life lamp. When the throne appeared, winds screamed, and the power of blood sent out fluctuations that became mighty pressure. Everything around Xu Qing distorted.

Due to the boost to speed and strength, the enemy cultivators were like pieces of paper. They couldn't stand up to any of his attacks. Corpses fell out of the sky left and right.

Screams filled the city as Xu Qing became a blur of afterimages. He appeared in front of a Skyface cultivator, then his dagger flashed as it slit the enemy's throat. However, this enemy cultivator was no simpleton. He didn't die. Reaching out with both hands, he grabbed Xu Qing. Meanwhile, the other surrounding cultivators unleashed attacks.

Seeing how dangerous the situation was, Xu Qing took the throne of umbrellas down to surround him. Booms rang out. The throne blurred, turning into five spikes that stabbed out in five directions. Screams resulted as the spikes flew out, circled around, and then formed the throne again.

Xu Qing burst into motion, his dagger slashing through the throat of a Skyface.

Just then, three figures appeared, racing toward Xu Qing, all of them pulsing with fluctuations of the great circle of Nascent Soul.

Xu Qing was knocked out of the sky. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his internal organs vibrated painfully. Thankfully, he had a very tough physical body. Although he couldn't match this level of strength, he could endure it without collapsing.

As the three enemies gave chase, Xu Qing blurred, turning semitransparent as he melted into the haze that filled the city. In that state, his aura would remain completely hidden. At some point, a

blood-red mask had appeared on his face. The mask offered a peak level of concealment, and allowed Xu Qing to be like a specter, a dagger-wielding assassin that slipped through the haze, undetectable.

Whenever he saw any cultivators from the Twofold Alliance, he slit their throats. If that wasn't convenient, he would stab their heart, or whatever other vital spot presented itself. He encountered some powerful experts. Those he could kill, he killed. Those he couldn't kill, he fled from.

And of course, those Nascent Soul cultivators he killed provided some very nourishing nascent souls. After extracting and crushing them, he would absorb their heavenfate. At the same time, he sent his heavenfiend clones out into the miasma, both to distract the top experts and also to kill whoever they could.

Rotting corpses fell to the ground constantly. Miserable shrieks filled the haze. The top experts from the Twofold Alliance had no choice but to desperately charge through the haze.

One group shot toward the heavenly dao bluegreen dragon in the hopes of freeing their patriarchs. Even fewer flew up into midair and unleashed techniques that they hoped would clear the haze of the storm. Unfortunately, no such techniques could do that in a short time.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was an elusive shadow of death that cut down everyone he encountered.

This was the plan he had come up with on the way. This was the battlefield he had prepared for himself!

When he encountered cultivators weaker than himself, he slaughtered them ruthlessly. When he encountered enemies stronger than himself, he would avoid them and let the poison continue to take its toll. If no cultivators got close to him, he would target the mortals. There was no way any of these enemies would be able to escape. The poison haze was too deadly, and any infected by it were marked for death.

In summary, Xu Qing had passed the death sentence on everyone and anything here! This was the battlefield he had created, and he roved about it like an invisible god of death! He was so ruthless and difficult to deal with that the cultivators from the Twofold Alliance were shaken to the core.

This was what it looked like when Xu Qing exacted revenge!

Chapter 565: Add In You, And It Should Be More Than Enough (part 1)

The 50-kilometer taboo poison sandstorm covered all of Holy City. From a distance, the city which had long borne witness to the history of the Twofold Alliance now looked as blurry as if the end of days had come. The invasion of mutagen caused countless residences to dry up and crumble. Innumerable living beings withered up, or even worse, mutated. Many members of those two species reached and passed critical points in terms of mutagen levels. As a result, either their blood collapsed, or they mutated into howling beasts. People dropped dead everywhere.

In comparison, the taboo poison was even more dramatic. Whether it was mutant beasts or members of the Twofold Alliance, and whether they were dead or alive, they showed how powerful the poison was. It was the same with the buildings. The Mirrorlings' mirrors turned black, and lost their reflective qualities. The Skyfaces' hulking frames melted into bloody sludges, and their life force faded. Howls of grief and bitter shrieks merged together to make something that sounded like a funeral dirge. The sound drifted past Xu Qing as he slipped like a spectral assassin through the city.

Whenever he attacked, it added a new musical note to the dirge. Every instance of slaughter added a new rhythm to the lyrics. His dagger was not stained with blood. And that was because every slash of his dagger sent blood spraying onto his arms and clothes. By now, his robe was drenched with so much blood it stuck to his skin.

Xu Qing had long since grown used to that feeling. He crouched in the haze as he took one life after another. He ignored those wailing in agony. He wasn't the type to give in charity, and thus, he wouldn't give them the mercy of ending their pain.

He couldn't stop thinking about that city that had been like a host of fireflies in the darkness and gloom. The images flitted through his mind, going faster and faster. And when he thought of the gore at the bottom of those cages, it made him grip his dagger even more tightly. The scenes reached images of Panyan, and Xu Qing sped past a Skyface. Blood sprayed all over his arm.

"Still not enough," he murmured, suddenly backing up. A moment later, six figures landed on the spot he had occupied moments before.

All were four- or five-tribulation Nascent Soul experts. Every one had vicious expressions of hatred that mixed brutality and rage. They were supposed to be tracking down Xu Qing to kill him. But the taboo poison in the city was so strong they hadn't been able to pick up on his trail. It was only by the occasional fluctuations that they were able to gradually find him.

All the while, they were struggling to resist the invasion of the taboo poison. Thankfully, the situation hadn't lasted very long so far, otherwise, they wouldn't be able to stave off the decay.

Xu Qing hadn't bothered to fight them. He had a very clear goal, and that was the open square between the two royal palaces. That was where Duanmu Zang was.

Xu Qing's Nightshade disguise, plus the words he had spoken at the outset, were all attempts to hide his true species and goal. That was his only chance at catching the enemy completely unprepared. He needed to save Duanmu Zang and make his escape, not create a situation in which Duanmu Zang was used as a hostage.

After all, it would be completely ridiculous to try to use a human to threaten a Nightshade.

Of course, time was still the most crucial element. If the Twofold Alliance were given the chance to study him and realize his true identity, then things could go bad. It wasn't a completely perfect plan. But it was perfect enough.

Xu Qing sped through the haze, getting closer and closer to the public square. By means of the poison haze, he could sense Duanmu Zang there, gasping for breath.

A haze as dense as this wasn't something Xu Qing could control easily. As a result, Duanmu Zang also had to deal with the invasion of the poison. Thankfully, he had some big advantages. He had been poisoned by Xu Qing in the past, and Xu Qing had later extruded that poison. Because of that, Duanmu Zang had a level of resistance that the cultivators of the two species couldn't possibly have.

Though that resistance couldn't stave off all the effects of the poison, it would at least help him to last a bit longer. It wasn't really possible to come up with a foolproof plan in the middle of chaotic circumstances.

Though Xu Qing was in disguise, the fact was that he had shown up right in the middle of Duanmu Zang being assimilated. The cultivators of the Twofold Alliance would likely have considered that the two events were related, and could very well be hiding around Duanmu Zang, *guarding a tree stump waiting for rabbits*. That said, given that they had no idea what was really going on, and also had to deal with the taboo poison invasion, at least they wouldn't be able to have a huge group of cultivators waiting in ambush.

Xu Qing's eyes flickered with cold light as he noted a few figures moving through the haze ahead of him.

Eyes narrowing to cover any glitter in his eyes, he sped forward. Moving in a blur, he soon appeared behind a Mirrorling cultivator moving through the haze. Without a sound, Xu Qing lifted his hand to cover the Mirrorling's forehead.

The Mirrorling sensed him, but before it could fight back, Xu Qing shoved hard. A crack rang out, and the mirror shattered. The Mirrorling was about to scream, but Xu Qing clamped his hand down over its mouth. The scream turned into a mild whimper.

Xu Qing sent taboo poison roiling out of him and into the Mirrorling. Only after the thing went still in death did he relax his grip, drop the corpse, and then spring back into motion.

There was one less figure in the haze. Over the course of the following ten breaths of time, yet another figure dropped. By now, the surviving cultivators realized what was going on. The next time he attacked, a dozen enemy cultivators sprang out of hiding.

Xu Qing's expression didn't change. Inside, he was calculating how much time had passed. This time, he didn't avoid the fight. He shifted from his Gruegloom state, and instead tapped into the golden threads within him. He suddenly grew larger. The Nightshade disguise vanished, and he revealed human features. But now, instead of being his normal height, he was nine meters tall.

He looked like a devilish fiend, sending out godly fluctuations into the poison haze. This was the most powerful fleshly body state Xu Qing could utilize, and it caused a vortex to appear around him.

He burst into motion, slamming into three Skyfaces that were right in front of him. A boom resounded as the three Skyface cultivators, being completely incapable of mounting a defense, were sent tumbling backward, blood spraying out of their mouths. One of them physically exploded.

Each of Xu Qing's abilities was more stupefying than the last. He didn't slow down a bit. Spreading his arms wide, he jumped, passing the two Skyfaces and grabbing them along the way. Then he hurled them over his shoulders and slammed them into the ground.

A string of booms rang out as the two Skyfaces exploded into hazes of blood. However, there were still more Skyfaces and Mirrorlings closing in.

In the lead was a four-tribulation Nascent Soul cultivator.

As they neared, daybreak light with its multitude of transformations erupted from Xu Qing and swirled around. It shot toward the cultivators from the Twofold Alliance, and they were forced to back away. However, the four-tribulation Nascent Soul expert decided to hold nothing back. Bursting with killing intent, and ignoring the flare-ups of poison within him, he shot toward Xu Qing.

“Die!”

Blood sprayed out of Xu Qing’s mouth, and his nascent souls vibrated painfully as he staggered backward. Before he could get his footing, the enemy launched another attack, this time performing an incantation gesture that summoned an evil ghost that lunged toward Xu Qing.

As soon as that evil ghost made contact with Xu Qing’s godly pressure, it shrieked and tumbled away.

Yet the four-tribulation cultivator wasn’t going to stop until one of them was dead. Clearly, he knew he couldn’t do anything about the poison, and wanted to kill Xu Qing before his own body rotted away.

Seeing that the evil ghost didn’t work, he bit his tongue and spat out some blood, causing the ghost to go completely berserk. He also produced a bottle gourd, which he used to release even more evil ghosts. Finally, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a golden bell to fly out into the open.

The sound of the bell stabbed into Xu Qing’s soul, all while the evil ghosts snapped at him. Trembling, he tumbled back again and then retreated. The enemy pursued him. Xu Qing wasn’t a match in speed, and without his Gruegloom state, it didn’t take long for the enemy to catch up.

The rumbling booms from the combat were noticed by more enemy cultivators, who started moving in that direction.

About a dozen breaths of time later, Xu Qing was blasted thirty meters backward by the four-tribulation cultivator. The four-tribulation cultivator was about to press the attack when he realized his body wasn’t complete. His legs were almost completely rotted away, leaving only his torso hovering in midair. And his nascent souls were decaying as the taboo poison filled him.

“I...” the cultivator growled defiantly. He had gone all out, yet the human enemy’s body seemed capable of absorbing even immense amounts of damage. He hadn’t been able to deliver a death blow. What was more, because of the seven-colored light that he could unleash, the human was incredibly hard to capture. Even as despair filled him, a red bolt of lightning shot out of nowhere and stabbed into his forehead. The cultivator flopped to the ground, dead in body and soul.

Xu Qing struggled to his feet. He was covered with bite marks from the evil ghosts.

Now that the four-tribulation cultivator was dead, those evil ghosts were dispersing. However, some of them, having come out of that bottle gourd, didn’t just dissipate. Though they collapsed because of the mere aura of Xu Qing’s body, that took time, and as long as they could move, they still tried to ravenously devour him.

Xu Qing ignored them. As of now, he knew that he wasn’t a match for a four-tribulation cultivator. That said, he wasn’t worried. He controlled this battlefield, and though his battle prowess wasn’t sufficient to take out every enemy, his defenses were incredibly strong.

Besides, even enemies who he couldn’t take out with an attack would still die eventually because of the poison. The dead cultivators piling up around Xu Qing ensured that those survivors didn’t dare to keep fighting him. Instead, they flew up into the air in the hopes of escaping the poison.

Xu Qing paid them no heed. Gasping for breath, he continued his approach to the public square.

He had trapped six Spirit Trove enemies, shattered the city's defensive shields, poisoned at least 100,000 members of the Twofold Alliance, killed hundreds of Gold Core enemies, and killed dozens of Nascent Soul experts. That was about the limit of what he could do.

He couldn't push himself any harder as he finally reached the public square, and saw Duanmu Zang there, struggling to breathe.

Chapter 565: Add In You, And It Should Be More Than Enough (part 2)

Duanmu Zang had clearly been deeply affected by the poison, and his body was starting to decay. When he spotted Xu Qing, he opened his mouth as if to speak, yet didn't seem capable of mustering the energy. Xu Qing smiled, reached out, and put his hand on Duanmu Zang. The poison inside him immediately left him and returned to Xu Qing. Xu Qing placed some daybreak light onto Duanmu Zang, creating a barrier between him and the taboo poison as well as the warding spells that had been set up to restrain him.

Duanmu Zang shivered as the poison left him and the effects of the warding spells faded. He immediately began to heal, however, his wounds were so serious that it was a struggle for him to do more than sit up. He smiled bitterly at Xu Qing.

"You shouldn't have come." He had seen Xu Qing's violet moon rising, but right now, he didn't ask any questions about that.

Xu Qing sat down next to Duanmu Zang and tried to catch his breath. Based on the fluctuations he could sense, he had an idea of what was going on. The powerful experts from both species were gathering nearby. It wouldn't be long before they made a move. He could sense the plaintive call of his bluegreen dragon, which made it clear that it wouldn't be long before the Spirit Trove experts broke free.

Even the violet moon and my heavenly dao working together can't last longer than an incense stick's worth of time. Not that impressive.

Xu Qing sighed as he looked up into the sky. Crimson Mother was sleeping, which meant that he was much freer than before to use the power of the violet moon. The main thing he needed to be on guard about was the Red Moon Cathedral. That said, with the heavenly dao and his taboo poison to cover the traces of the violet moon, as long as he didn't use it dramatically right out in the open, he should be fine.

Xu Qing looked at Duanmu Zang. "Want a drink?"

Duanmu Zang nodded.

Xu Qing took out two jugs of alcohol, one of which he gave to Duanmu Zang. The other he put to his lips, then threw his head back and took a long drink.

Duanmu Zang took the alcohol and noted the rumbling in the sky, as well as the roars of rage that sent winds whipping about. The ground trembled, and the entire city rocked back and forth. The haze stirred as if it might spread beyond the bounds of the city.

The bluegreen dragon finally let loose a howl of grief as its body collapsed, and the six Spirit Trove experts burst out into the open.

As soon as they appeared, the curse in their blood stirred as if it might awaken. They suppressed it violently. And then they noticed the bodies littering the city, and all the other catastrophes, and their rage built. All of them unleashed various magics, causing heaven and earth to shake violently. They suppressed the heavenfire and began to disperse the poison haze. Meanwhile, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior raced back to Xu Qing.

Hope appeared in the eyes of the surviving Twofold Alliance cultivators.

Seeing everything that was happening, Duanmu Zang's eyes hardened with determination. After taking a long drink, he prepared to stand. Xu Qing put out a hand to stop him.

"There's no rush," Xu Qing said, smiling.

Duanmu Zang looked at the smile on Xu Qing's face, and noted the bite marks all over him from the evil ghosts. Fear lingering in his heart, Duanmu Zang said, "What about all that...?"

"This isn't even my real body," Xu Qing replied. "It's fine. They can bite away."

When the words left his mouth, certain vibrations coming from D-132 went away.

Xu Qing ignored that and looked around. "Senior, I saved most of the people from the city. But there were some... who I wasn't able to save."

Duanmu Zang sighed softly.

The haze around them stirred as the six Spirit Trove experts appeared overhead. Because of their presence, a wind kicked up, spreading everywhere and reducing the effects of the poison haze and all the sand. The golden crow had already done all it could do, so it returned. The heavenfire in the city went out.

Finally, the city became visible again within the scattering haze. It was more than seventy percent destroyed. Most of the buildings had collapsed. Some succumbed to fire, others were destroyed by mutant beasts, and some yet were dissolved by poison. As for corpses... there actually weren't very many. Dead people couldn't exactly flee poison, and thus, they melted into gory pools of sludge that eventually evaporated into noxious fumes. Weeping, howls of grief, and shouts of rage drifted about.

The surviving members of the Twofold Alliance trembled as they took it all in. They couldn't have been more enraged. The Spirit Trove experts above had bloodshot eyes as they focused on Xu Qing drinking alcohol as he sat in the square.

"Just who exactly are you?!"

"Your godherald," Xu Qing said coolly, looking up at them.

The six Spirit Trove experts pondered his response. It wasn't possible to fake the awakening of the curse, which meant that they had already begun to suspect who Xu Qing was.

A godherald from another region.

That was what all of them were thinking, and it made them feel both humiliated and murderous. Their aura caused the dome of heaven to ripple, and resulted in a huge vortex spinning above them. Within it were six faces.

None of them would ever dare to kill a Moonrite godherald. However, if this was a godherald from another region, that made things a bit different. They could theoretically capture him and turn him over to the Red Moon Cathedral. For all they knew, they might be rewarded with an extremely rare medicinal pill called a painquelling lozenge, which could temporarily alleviate the pain of the Moonrite Region curse. That pain only got worse as one's cultivation base increased, so such pills were precious.

They exchanged glances. Then, at the direction of the Mirrorling patriarch, the royal preceptor descended toward Xu Qing. He didn't move too quickly. He could tell that this sudden interloper had many abilities, all of them incomparably gruish. Therefore, he needed to maintain caution.

Seeing that, Xu Qing got to his feet, all while reaching out to the god's finger with divine will.

"I've already reduced their number with my poison. Because of my violet moon and heavenly dao, the meat is still fresh. If you don't eat now, you're going to be hungry later. I'm planning to stay in Moonrite for quite a while."

"I'm sleeping!" the finger said proudly, suppressing the gnawing hunger within it. *"You don't get hungry when you're asleep! What, you're going to threaten to end my life? Believe me, that won't work. Crimson Mother is asleep and won't wake up anytime soon. You've used that excuse a few too many times. I can tell that you're afraid of dying, you little punk. So what now? If I die, you die. And I'll die before eating!"*

Hearing that, Xu Qing calmly looked up at the Mirrorling royal preceptor. Then he took out the spirit abyss talisman from Emperor Ancient Spirit.

The moment that talisman appeared, the god's finger shivered. *"What are you doing?"*

"I'm getting ready to take them to Emperor Ancient Spirit as an offering." Xu Qing took a step up into the air, his eyes flashing with resolve.

The stunned finger was starting to feel very uneasy. *"Didn't Emperor Ancient Spirit tell you that you had to bring a crippled god? These Spirit Trove cultivators definitely aren't good enough."* [1]

"Add in you, and it should be enough," Xu Qing said coldly.

As he fixed his eyes on the royal preceptor, the god's finger started shrieking.

"Y-y-you're... you're completely devoid of conscience! I've saved you so many times!!"

The finger was furious. However, it also realized it had miscalculated. Then it thought back to the terrifying gaze of Emperor Ancient Spirit, and the sound of the emperor swallowing. The finger shivered. *"Why bother the exalted Emperor Ancient Spirit with something as trivial as this? I'll handle it!"*

The god's finger burst out of D-132, looking sullen and resentful as it started augmenting Xu Qing's body. Godly fluctuations that surpassed anything from before erupted from Xu Qing! The dark sky rippled as a vortex appeared, rumbling loudly and emanating terrifying pressure.

The faces of the six Spirit Trove experts flickered in shock. The Mirrorling royal preceptor stopped moving and looked up.

“What’s this...?”

“Impossible!!”

As they devolved into a panic, the fluctuations coming off Xu Qing caused the sky to lose any color, and physically shook the entire city. Loud cracking sounds rang out from inside Xu Qing, each of them like thunder. The golden threads inside of him emanated golden light that spread out to completely cover him. As a result, Xu Qing’s physical body once again began to grow dramatically. In the blink of an eye, he reached a height of 90 meters. He loomed over the lands like a giant mountain peak.

As the overhead vortex spun, rifts opened up, as well as one lightning bolt after another. Then the lightning bolts focused on Xu Qing. The aura of a god was on full display. The power of mutagen raged everywhere, distorting the air and making it difficult to see clearly.

The city trembled. Buildings collapsed. More cries of anguish echoed out. Meanwhile, the six Spirit Trove experts up above felt immeasurably intense sensations of deadly crisis. It screamed at them from their flesh, blood, and even their souls. Every fiber of their being seemed to be joining forces to scream at them.

“A god!!”

Earlier, Xu Qing’s use of the taboo poison had left them suspicious, but now... they were downright terrified. Xu Qing’s current aura surpassed anything remotely mortal.

As of now, he had become hē!

A cry of rage erupted from Xu Qing’s mouth and spread out along with the cosmic fluctuations filling the sky.

The six Spirit Trove experts, whether they had real secret troves or were just in the dao begetting phase, were stunned by the howl of rage, and lost any ability to fight back. They were like mortals who had heard the roar of a tiger, and were overwhelmed with sensations of panic. It was a terror that formed because of the vast difference between them. It was the crushing pressure that mortals felt in the presence of a higher life level, a god.

Even though the god’s finger was weak, it was still a god!

As for Xu Qing, hē was now completely golden in color. Golden light flared and godly might weighed down as hē took a step toward the six Spirit Trove cultivators! His single step landed, and was right in front of the Mirrorling royal preceptor.

The royal preceptor had a high rank in his species, and had parasitized a body made of pure rock. But now he was like a mortal. The mirror on his face shone with pure terror, and he was powerless to do anything. Xu Qing’s hand reached out and latched around his neck.

The finger began to absorb. Bloodcurdling screams erupted from the royal preceptor’s mouth as his body withered. Only a moment later, he collapsed into ash, while streams of white energy streamed into the god’s finger.

“*Disgusting! It’s rotten! Absolutely revolting!*” The god’s finger made some retching sounds. Furious, it decided not to eat anything further. But then it realized how

incredibly hungry it was. Given that state of starvation, it didn't think that flavor was that important. *"Fine, no need to be picky! I'll eat first, then worry about everything else later!"*

Chapter 566: Godly Authority of Misfortune (part 1)

The vortex spun in the dark sky, but eventually stopped growing after it covered all of Holy City. Catastrophe was once again about to strike the place. The members of the Twofold Alliance had already dealt with a curse resurgence, taboo poison, and scorching heavenfire. Things were already miserable. Their captured patriarchs had been freed, which brought some hope. But then a god arrived, and that hope was shredded to pieces. Despair filled the city.

Also filled with despair were the surviving five Spirit Trove experts. Three of them, those in dao begetting, were shaken to the point of being dazed. The godly might of the god's finger had bereft them of any hope of defending themselves. They were so terrified their minds were blank.

The patriarchs both had secret troves that had produced heavenly daos. Although the violet moon had awoken the curse within them, they could still cling to lucidity. In fact, it was that very lucidity that caused them to be filled with so much astonishment and terror that it slowly became pure despair. In the final analysis, each of them had only a single secret trove. Perhaps if they had five, placing them in the great circle of Spirit Trove, then they might have a chance of surviving.

But they didn't have that many secret troves. Therefore, they could do nothing but watch as the 90-meter-tall figure devoured the Mirrorling royal preceptor. Then that figure took a step in their direction. It was like a fierce tiger taking a step toward a trembling deer.

The Skyface Spirit Trove cultivator stood there blankly as the finger approached. Then the finger directed Xu Qing's hand to land atop the Skyface's head.

He's Xu Qing. He's Xu Qing! I'm eating Xu Qing!

A shocking gravitational force erupted, latching onto the dao begetting cultivator, causing him to rapidly wither up until he was dust.

White energy poured into the god's finger. It was disgusting, and caused the finger to start violently retching.

In that moment, the patriarchs of the Twofold Alliance suddenly erupted with shocking fluctuations. After some struggle, they had finally managed to reveal their secret troves. There was no time to use magical techniques. They were just hoping that a blast of pure power would break them free from the god's finger. What was more, their personal heavenly daos were in their secret troves, and they were targeting the god's finger.

"Detonate!" the patriarchs screamed, and then they fled like mad in the opposite direction.

Their secret troves rolled toward the finger, pulsing with terrifying fluctuations. Cracks spread out onto their surfaces, and then they exploded. Around that time, the other two dao begetting cultivators recovered their senses. Trembling, they unleashed their own incomplete secret troves and sent them flying toward the god's finger. An intense boom rang out as the two illusory secret troves detonated. The terrifying shock wave that resulted swept over the 90-meter-tall body.

At that point, it was without any hesitation whatsoever that the four Spirit Trove experts fled. They were so deeply shaken that they couldn't care less about the survival of their species. They just wanted to get to safety. In the blink of an eye, they became beams of prismatic light that shot off over the horizon.

Yet right then, a very gruish scene played out.

It started with the Skyface's royal preceptor, who was in the dao begetting phase. He had flown about 3,000 meters away when, as his secret trove exploded behind him, he pulled out a special treasure. It was a very rare item that was the most powerful object he possessed. Not only could it provide a huge blessing of speed, but also, he was capable of long-range teleportations. In fact, it was a range that surpassed any sort of ordinary teleportation talisman.

Without any hesitation, he activated the treasure.

And yet, that treasure, which had always worked perfectly for him, failed to activate. Apparently, the general chaos, plus the detonation of the secret troves, caused its magical power to malfunction.

If that were all there were to the situation, it might not have been a big deal. Not even very gruish things would surprise this royal preceptor. But after his treasure failed to activate, it started cracking. An instant later, it exploded. It was only an explosion of a treasure. However, the royal preceptor had already hung the talisman around his neck, and thus bore the full brunt of the detonation.

The shockwave swept over him. A scream rang out as he slammed onto the ground, seriously injured. He had already been weakened by the secret trove explosion, and now his treasure detonated, leaving him even more deeply wounded.

Confused, he tried to struggle to his feet. Most gruish of all was that a Mirrorling general up above suddenly turned in place, then raced toward the spot where the secret troves had detonated.

Given that the Mirrorling had the same cultivation base as the Skyface royal preceptor, it was no wonder he reached that spot in the blink of an eye, then disappeared....

Meanwhile, something horrendously gruish was happening to the Skyface patriarch. As he was fleeing like mad, a stream of heavenfire suddenly appeared in the sky above him.

Heavenfire Skycrossing had just been going on barely a month before, so it wasn't unheard of for stray bits of heavenfire to appear here and there. But they usually wouldn't be very destructive, and would only affect a small area. That was especially true considering how massive the Moonrite Region was. As a result, the statistical probability of lingering bits of heavenfire landing on inhabited areas was extremely remote. But right now... a massive, 300-meter-wide swath of heavenfire had appeared right over the Skyface patriarch's head. The astonishingly powerful heavenfire fell.

The Skyface patriarch had an extraordinary physical body, and despite detonating his secret trove, still had a lot of strength left. Heart filled with fear, he burst into motion, heading around the falling heavenfire. Thanks to his quick reaction, he avoided most of the heavenfire, though he did receive a few random burns in the process.

Once safe, he looked down at the fire, wondering what exactly was going on. However, there were more grisly things to come. Strange heavenly lightning had somehow gathered in the canopy of heaven, and then it fell. Well over 10,000 lightning bolts were all heading in his direction.

Fundamentally speaking, the chances of this happening were so small as to be nonexistent. Yet it was very clearly happening.

The Skyface patriarch's pupils constricted, and he madly tried to fight back. However, a series of booms echoed out, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He staggered, hit over and over again before managing to flee the affected area. Before he could even breathe a sigh of relief, he suddenly stopped in place. Scowling, he looked down at his body to see that it was withering up.

He had suppressed the curse inside of him, but apparently, the shock waves from the secret trove detonations had caused it to awaken. The curse of Crimson Mother would kill you beyond the shadow of a doubt. A moment later, his withering body collapsed into dust. The last thing he saw before he died was that nothing like this was happening to any of his compatriots....

Down below, the struggling Skyface royal preceptor saw what happened, and it filled him with intense terror.

"Misfortune!!" he said. At the same time, the fluctuations of teleportation power appeared in a different direction in the sky.

It was the Mirrorling patriarch, who had moved quickly enough to avoid the misfortune. As a result, nothing unusual happened when he activated his teleportation talisman and vanished.

After all of that, the god's finger let loose another wave of godly might. The finger's 90-meter-tall god body then stepped out of the area affected by the secret trove detonations. The body didn't look any different from before. It still glowed with golden light, and didn't seem to be injured at all. It was almost as if the detonation of the secret troves were like nothing more than sparks to it.

The reality was... its body was starting to shrivel. In order to protect its body, it had wasted a lot of god power. Considering it had been hungry before, that resulted in it being downright starving now.

"Hungry. Hungry! So hungry!!"

The god's finger was essentially salivating like mad. With a burst of speed, it arrived in front of the despairing Skyface royal preceptor and devoured him. The finger felt more starved than ever, though, and it was so empty its pangs of hunger resounded like thunder. The finger turned and looked at Holy City. its expression became one of struggle. In the end, it didn't matter how disgusting the food was. When you were starving, you didn't worry about such things.

it blurred into motion, appearing right over the city. The surviving members of the Twofold Alliance therein could only look on in despair as the finger inhaled deeply. Instantly, the huge vortex overhead sank down and enveloped the city. Innumerable howls of grief and screams of pain spread out. Countless members of the two species were sucked up and devoured. The process was slow. After half the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the huge city... was basically emptied out.

"Disgusting! Revolting. So gross!" the finger spat angrily.

Back down in the public square, Duanmu Zang looked at what was happening and seemed completely taken aback.

Have humans on the outside really become this strong?

Although Duanmu Zang was certain there were things he didn't understand about the situation, he couldn't help but wonder about what it indicated about humankind in general.

Thankfully, the finger had some level of intelligence, and steered clear of Duanmu Zang. Then, at a certain point, it seemed to sense something, and suddenly opened its mouth wide and looked up into the sky, as if waiting for something.

Before long, teleportation fluctuations spread out, and someone popped out right in front of the finger's god body.

He was in really bad shape. He had lost half of his body. The parasitized host was falling apart, his true form mirror was almost completely shattered, and his expression was one of despair. He had indeed escaped successfully via teleportation. But then he appeared beneath the surface of the Heavenfire Sea. However, he had paid a heavy price for the teleportation, and then, as he tried to leave the Heavenfire Sea, he was attacked by a mutant beast.

He had been so outmatched that, despite knowing he was dealing with the threat of misfortune, he had been forced to teleport back to stay alive. That second teleportation was what brought him here.

Heart full of grief and indignation, he could do nothing as the god body of the finger opened its mouth, inhaled, and reduced the patriarch to ashes. The finger's god body then bent over and retched loudly, all while looking vaguely resentful. Then it descended on the city below.

As its feet landed on the ground, the body shrank down. It went from 90 meters to 30. And before long it was normal sized again. The golden color faded away, and the golden light disappeared from the eyes.

Xu Qing was back in his normal body, his eyes shining as he walked across the square.

In his sea of consciousness, the god's finger pulsed with the aura of a curse, and it was bitterly grumbling.

"Food in the Moonrite Region is all marked! It doesn't matter if you kill them or eat them. Your karma ends up suffering from Crimson Mother's curse! I said I wasn't going to eat! No eating. No, no, no! Now we're finished. Once Crimson Mother wakes up, we'll be the first meal! I need to sleep. I have to sleep! And no matter how you yell at me next time, I'm not going to wake up!!"

Xu Qing made an attempt to placate the finger, but the finger just ignored him, went into D-132, and went to sleep.

Chapter 566: Godly Authority of Misfortune (part 2)

Seeing that there was nothing more he could do on that front, Xu Qing ignored the finger and walked up to Duanmu Zang.

Duanmu Zang instinctively edged away from him a bit before smiling wryly. "Is that... is that you?"

Xu Qing nodded, then surveyed the area.

Holy City was now empty. If there were any survivors, they would succumb to the taboo poison soon enough.

Duanmu Zang was stunned. In the past, he had dreamed of wiping out the Twofold Alliance, but it wasn't something he could accomplish on his own. But now he had witnessed it actually happening. Duanmu Zang took a deep breath, and his eyes once again began to shine. He was the leader of a small nation of humans, and had experienced many things in life. As such, he knew that one of the most pressing matters was to start figuring out what to do going forward.

He looked at Xu Qing. "Xu Qing, we need this city! Can you help me to clear the place out? After that, I'll bring my people here."

Xu Qing nodded. "Sure." After telling Duanmu Zang where everyone else was, Xu Qing thought for a moment and then asked, "What about the Red Moon Cathedral...?"

Duanmu Zang stood, his eyes flashing. He had now shoved aside all distractions and was starting to analyze the situation. He shook his head.

"The Red Moon Cathedral is so important that the life or death of these two tiny species won't matter much. All they want are their offerings. Therefore, we need to prepare an offering for them. Only the elites of this species lived in Holy City. There are plenty more on the outside. Probably numbering more than 500,000. Leave it to me. They have no idea what happened here. I'll go take care of things, and then we'll have our offering ready!"

As Duanmu Zang checked the status of his cultivation base, Xu Qing took some medicinal pills out of his bag of holding and handed them over.

After accepting the pills, Duanmu Zang grinned and looked around. "There's no time to lose! I'll take over for now, Xu Qing!"

Throwing some medicinal pills into his mouth, Duanmu Zang flew off into the sky.

After he was gone, Xu Qing stood in the square quietly for a while.

There was no need for him to oversee Duanmu Zang. Considering the vile surroundings, the fact that Duanmu Zang had set up a place of refuge and also reached a high level of cultivation, went to show he was capable of many things.

After a time, Xu Qing started walking through the city. As he proceeded, he collected all remaining scraps of taboo poison, as well as any lingering bits of mutagen. He occasionally encountered some member of the Twofold Alliance who had not been devoured, but were slowly succumbing to poison. Xu Qing didn't need to give any orders. Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior immediately appeared and struck them dead.

Two days later, the city's tribulation was over. It had been cleansed of evil, and was now empty. Xu Qing, who sat on the roof of one of the royal palaces, felt unusually calm.

His cultivation base had risen significantly.

The finger had devoured nearly everything in the city, and thus, Xu Qing didn't benefit much from that. But in the slaughter before that point, he had unwittingly pushed all of his nascent souls to the point where they could summon the second heavenfate tribulation.

"It won't be long now," he murmured.

It was a clear night with no moon. Heaven and earth were both dark. As Xu Qing sat there quietly, he thought back to the gory paste at the bottoms of those cages. And he thought about Panyan. After a while, he took out a violet-colored flute, put it to his lips, and played the song Plumdark had taught him. The whimpering of the flute drifted to and fro in the city.

Time passed. Ten days later, the humans arrived.

As Xu Qing caught sight of the procession of more than 100,000 humans, he saw a flash of white appear in their midst. That flash became a young woman who rushed toward him.

“Big Bro Xu Qing!” Ling’er said. Hurrying up, she wrapped her arms around him.

Xu Qing gently stroked her hair, and a smile broke out onto his previously expressionless face. Behind Ling’er were the shadow, the stone lion, and the head.

Before the head could say anything, Xu Qing threw it and the lion back into D-132. The shadow obediently returned to its spot beneath his feet.

“Come on,” he said softly. “Let’s go receive them.” He led the way toward the incoming procession.

Nothing unusual happened in the following days.

The humans brought new life to the city. Their sorrow remained in their memories, but hope for the future became a seed that would grow in their hearts. Buildings were going back up, and the city wall was being repaired. Gradually, laughter could be heard in the city. The sounds of joy filled the streets.

Duanmu Zang returned a month later.

Somehow, he had acquired over a thousand iron cages, into which had been crammed numerous members of the Twofold Alliance. Because Skyfaces were so large, it wasn’t possible to fit as many of them into the cages. However, overall, it seemed that there were well over the required 500,000 offerings. Their despairing, numb gazes looked exactly like the gazes of the human victims they had treated like nothing more than food.

Xu Qing felt no pity for these people from the Twofold Alliance.

The cages were plopped down outside the city, and there they waited for their doom to be sealed.

Duanmu Zang’s return brought new life to the city and the repair work. Soon, the spell formations were back in working order. When the defensive shield was activated, the 100,000 humans jumped for joy. Ling’er did the same. They had lived desperate lives in the bottom of an abandoned mine, just waiting to become food. Given that, this new set of circumstances felt much safer.

As Xu Qing watched from the city wall, he felt happy. Then he looked at the distant horizon. It was time to leave.

It’s too bad I still don’t have a way to remove that curse.

He turned to the side, where Duanmu Zang had materialized next to him. Handing Xu Qing a jug of alcohol, he sat down, looked at the people below, and sighed.

“Thank you, Xu Qing,” he said softly.

Xu Qing nodded and took a drink. "I just did what I had to do."

Duanmu Zang looked deeply at Xu Qing, but in the end, decided not to ask any questions about how everything played out. It was all the past now. He knew that everyone had secrets, and that sometimes, it was best not to pry.

Taking a drink, he said, "By the way, I asked around about the Doorites. Most sightings have been in the central district here in the east. That's where offerings are delivered to the Red Moon Cathedral. After all, this time of year is a busy season for the Doorites. They do a lot of business in times like this."

Xu Qing nodded. He had previously asked Duanmu Zang about long-range teleportation portals. He needed to get to Mount Heavenly Ox, which was in the south of the Moonrite Region. That was a very, very long way away.

During his entire time near the Heavenfire Sea, Xu Qing hadn't spotted a single teleportation portal the likes of which were common in Sea-Sealing County. There wasn't even a teleportation portal in Holy City. It was possible to buy teleportation talismans, but most of them were the entropic variety that teleported you to a random place.

Duanmu Zang had explained to him that, in the Moonrite Region, only the biggest species had teleportation portals.

Normally speaking, anyone else who wanted to teleport somewhere would need to enlist the help of the Doorites.

The Doorites were an unusual species who were born with an innate and permanent connection to a specific and unique door. As a species, they did not have any one area that they called home. What was more, when members of their species became adults, they would leave to travel about the region. The species' innate ability was that they could make a record in their door of any location they had visited. Later on, they could teleport people back to that spot. The range depended on the level of cultivation base involved.

That was how the Doorites earned a living. And whenever the Red Moon Cathedral went somewhere to demand offerings, the Doorites would have plenty of customers to do business with among the species who didn't control teleportation portals.

"If you want," Duanmu Zang continued, "you can come with me to the east. I need to leave soon anyway to deliver our offering to the cathedral."

Xu Qing thought about it. If he didn't use teleportation portals, it would take far too long to travel to Mount Heavenly Ox. The appointed time to meet up with the Captain had already passed. Given that they had no way to communicate, Xu Qing made his decision quickly. Based on experience, he knew that the Red Moon Cathedral apparently had no way to detect his violet moon. So he nodded.

Thus, three days later at dawn, Xu Qing and Ling'er left along with Duanmu Zang and all the cages. When they left, the 100,000 humans in the city all stepped out at the same time. Looking at Xu Qing, they got to their knees and kowtowed. Their eyes were full of blessings, and they all prayed that Xu Qing would be safe on his journeys.

Xu Qing looked back. Moved, he clasped hands and bowed.

The sky was dark, and a stiff wind blew, reducing visibility. But there was nothing that could mask the hope in the city.

Xu Qing turned and left with the caravan.

Later, as the wind blew, Duanmu Zang spoke in a hoarse voice. “Xu Qing, there’s a legend in the Moonrite Region. Supposedly, because of the curse, the souls of people who die in this region cannot enter the cycle of reincarnation. Instead, they return to the Red Moon Cathedral.

“When Crimson Mother comes to enjoy hēr offerings, those souls become seeds that are reincarnated in the region. It’s an endless cycle, and is why this place is also called the Red Moon Spirit Garden. People from here live and die over and over again, always living lives of bitterness, unable to escape Moonrite.

“The point is... Panyan might be dead. But her soul should still be there at the Red Moon Cathedral.”

Chapter 567: An Agreement Reached Beneath the Heavenfire Sea (part 1)

A great wind blew over the desolate lands of the Moonrite Region. It was like a solemn dirge recounting the distant past. Dust rose up into the wind, spreading out into all heaven and earth, becoming a part of the duskiess that filled everything.

Just barely visible within the hazy darkness was a caravan. It was made of giant metal cages, within which were innumerable Mirrorlings and Skyfaces.

On a cart up front were two people who were a generation apart in age. The old man wore a mask, as did the young person. The masks featured very dramatic facial expressions full of piety and devotion. They almost looked worshipful.

“Anyone who goes to the Red Moon Cathedral to provide offerings is required to wear masks like this,” Duanmu Zang explained. “It’s one of the ceremonial requirements. Thankfully, I did this before when I was younger.

“Here in the Moonrite Region, the destruction of the Twofold Alliance isn’t going to cause any waves. To the majestic Red Moon Cathedral, two minor species getting wiped out isn’t worth paying attention to. That’s especially true toward the end of one of the Red Moon Cathedral’s visits. Countless species have been stockpiling offerings for many years. People really start to go crazy. We need to be ready for anything, but don’t worry, I can handle all the details.”

Xu Qing nodded, while simultaneously reaching up to touch the mask he wore. He was actually already familiar with some of these things thanks to the intelligence reports from the Captain.

They were now nine days away from Holy City. It would take another half a month to reach the spot where the Red Moon Cathedral was waiting for offerings. Over the past few days, Xu Qing had been putting a lot of thought into the matter that Duanmu Zang mentioned when they first set out.

Duanmu Zang looked at Xu Qing. “You’re still thinking about the dead souls in the cathedral?”

Xu Qing looked up at the dusky dome of heaven and quietly replied, "From ancient times until now, has there ever been anyone who managed to free themselves from the curse of the Moonrite Region, as well as its cycle of reincarnation?"

Duanmu Zang shook his head. "Never."

Xu Qing thought back to the Captain's previous lives.

"But," Duanmu Zang suddenly continued, "there are some people who have tried very hard to do so. And they're still trying." Duanmu Zang looked meaningfully at Xu Qing, as if feeling him out. "*The red moon is by no means eternal...*"

Xu Qing looked back at Duanmu Zang and nodded. The words sounded like some sort of code phrase, except he didn't know the follow-up response.

Duanmu Zang looked at him for a moment, then couldn't help but say, "Aren't you going to respond?"

"*The red moon is by no means eternal,*" Xu Qing said in a low voice.

Duanmu Zang said nothing at first. A moment passed, and he sighed, took off his mask, and massaged the bridge of his nose. "Xu Qing, have you heard of the Moonrebel Congregation?"

Xu Qing's gaze sharpened. He had never heard of any such organization, not even in the Captain's intelligence reports. He shook his head.

The moment Duanmu Zang said 'Moonrebel Congregation,' his gaze remained focused on Xu Qing's eyes, as if he were looking for something. After noting Xu Qing's reaction, he didn't say anything further.

Xu Qing didn't ask any questions. He could tell that this 'Moonrebel Congregation' was obviously very secretive, and probing for more information could lead to a misunderstanding.

The caravan moved on.

Over the course of the next seven days, they left the plains, went through some mountains, and got very close to the center of the eastern part of the region. At one point when they were resting on a mountaintop, Duanmu Zang took a drink of alcohol, and then seemed to finally make a decision.

"Xu Qing, I trust that you're not working with the Red Moon Cathedral."

Xu Qing looked at him.

"The Moonrebel Congregation is a secret society that's existed for a very long time in the Moonrite Region. In fact, it goes back just as long as the Red Moon Cathedral.

"No one knows how exactly it got started. And it's been wiped out many times. However, whenever Crimson Mother completes a harvest, and the survivors start to rebuild, the organization will grow back."

Xu Qing's eyes glittered. If this Moonrebel Congregation had been around for as long as the Red Moon Cathedral, it went to show it was extraordinary in some way. It seemed particularly

astonishing that it would grow stronger after the destruction that regularly occurred in the Red Moon Spirit Garden.

Although Crimson Mother was currently sleeping, that state of affairs wouldn't continue forever.

Duanmu Zang continued, "The Moonrebel Congregation attracts people in the Moonrite Region who wish to fight back. They dream of one day removing the ancient curse, and turning everything around. Although it's a very vague dream, at least it provides some hope.

"And a lot of hard work has gone into that dream. Though individual members of the Moonrebel Congregation can't really work together in the open, there's plenty of research going on about how to dispel the curse."

Xu Qing's heart surged at those words. He had done some of his own research into the curse while in the city beneath the mine, but didn't have much to show for it. He needed to do a lot more deep study.

There was some emotion in Duanmu Zang's voice that Xu Qing could sense.

"Every member of the Moonrebel Congregation keeps their identity secret. No one knows who they are, except for they themselves. The first major rule for members is that they not reveal who they are.

"As you can imagine, the Red Moon Cathedral is constantly trying to find members of the Moonrebel Congregation. Likewise, there are members of the Moonrebel Congregation who have infiltrated the Red Moon Cathedral."

Duanmu Zang took a deep breath and looked at Xu Qing.

"The red moon is by no means eternal, hope exists from time immemorial and into forever. Xu Qing, you might not be a member of the Moonrebel Congregation. But I have a feeling that one day you'll have dealings with them. If you want to get to the Moonrebel Congregation, you can start by traveling to the Bitter Life Mountains...."

Duanmu Zang said nothing after that. He closed his eyes, and they continued on their way.

Xu Qing could tell Duanmu Zang didn't want to talk about the matter any further, so he didn't ask any questions. It seemed highly likely that Duanmu Zang was a member of the Moonrebel Congregation. Considering what he had already revealed, it was obvious that he trusted Xu Qing a lot. Xu Qing contemplated everything Duanmu Zang had told him.

Just like that, days passed. Eight days later, they reached their destination.

Off in the distance was a huge valley. The mountains on either side were taller than any mountain Xu Qing had ever seen. In the dusky light, the grotesquely-shaped jagged rocks that covered their surface seemed like demonic monsters.

The valley between them looked almost like the entrance to the Yellow Springs. Not only was it shocking in appearance, but also, the wind that blew out of it carried with it sounds like the wailing of ghosts and howling of wolves.

Floating right in the middle of the valley was a huge, blood-red heart, the beating of which caused thumping sounds to spread out in all directions, and made the atmosphere around the valley even more gruish. The church temple and the statue atop the heart both emanated astonishing pressure. Quite a few asteroids still orbited around the heart, and the figures seated cross-legged atop them were as unmoving as they'd been last time Xu Qing saw them.

There were doors scattered about, made from different materials, some large, others small, some round, others square. All of them pulsed with teleportation fluctuations. Crowds emerged from the doors almost nonstop. As a result, the valley was a bustling place.

There were all sorts of strange species present, some with physical bodies, others who were in illusory form. All of them wore the same type of masks that Duanmu Zang had provided. These were species from throughout the eastern part of Moonrite Region, who were here to bring offerings to the Red Moon Cathedral.

"See those doors, Xu Qing?" Duanmu Zang said quietly. "Those are the Doorites. Go talk to them, and you should be able to arrange teleportation to the south. They usually accept payments in spirit stones or heavenfire crystals. As for the church temple up in the air, don't look at it directly." As a local, Duanmu Zang was familiar with how everything worked. After giving a few more pieces of advice, he solemnly said, "And finally, have a safe journey!"

With that, he led the caravan away.

After watching Duanmu Zang disappear into the crowd, Xu Qing took a deep breath and did the same.

There were all sorts of species present, and people were hurrying around everywhere. The church temple above didn't seem to be paying attention to what happened below. As long as they got their offerings, they let things play out naturally.

When enough people gathered in one place, it would result in a bustling atmosphere. And that was how things were now. It was even possible to see people engaged in business transactions here and there. It was very loud.

As Xu Qing walked along, he chose not to go to one of the very large doors. Instead, he picked a smaller door. It was made from wood, and was only about three meters tall. Seeing that no one was coming out of it, Xu Qing prepared to walk over. Before he could, the chatter of the crowd caused him to stop in place.

"Did you hear? Something huge went down recently in the west!"

"You're talking about what happened to the Lonesun species about five months ago? Apparently they issued a region-wide arrest warrant."

"Oh yeah, I heard about that. I guess they lost some sort of precious treasure."

"Precious treasure? Seriously? That's what you're going to call it? It was an artificial sun!"

“The Lonesuns are the biggest species in the west. Didn’t they create an actual sun a few years back, which they hung above their lands? Because of that, it’s not dark over there. Except, five months ago, somebody stole that sun....”

“Someone stole their sun right out from under their noses? What crazy species did that?”

“I’m not sure. Apparently the Lonesun’s aren’t sure either. That said, their arrest warrant did mention a name. Unqing Jianyan. The thief was really bold, as he left that name carved into the ground after he left. No matter how you look at it, that name is really strange.”

“Everybody is talking about this Unqing Jianyan.”

When Xu Qing heard all the talk, a strange expression appeared on his face beneath his mask.

“Unqing Jianyan?” he murmured. It seemed highly likely that the Captain was behind this. Xu Qing remembered that, when they parted, the Captain had proudly said that his alias, Master Unfinished, would be famous everywhere.

If you combined the first syllable of Unfinished with characters from Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan’s names, then added in Qing from Xu Qing, it made it very obvious what Unqing Jianyan was referring to. The Captain had obviously put a lot of thought into combining the four characters into a name. Even though Xu Qing hadn’t participated in the heist, the Captain had still included his name.

Xu Qing sighed and walked toward the wooden door.

Chapter 567: An Agreement Reached Beneath the Heavenfire Sea (part 2)

High above the valley atop the beating heart, a woman in red walked out of the church temple. This person was actually the entity from the coffin at the bottom of the Heavenfire Sea, and was actually a man, not a woman. His expression was reserved as he looked down at the lands below. A faint, mysterious smile appeared on his face. [1]

“This boy has a very strong baleful aura.” Behind him in the church temple, the godherald sat as unmoving as a statue.

No one in the valley could sense what was happening above. In fact, even if people below had looked up, they wouldn’t have seen a woman in red. Everyone’s senses had been secretly altered.

In D-132, inside of Xu Qing, the god’s finger, who had been so deeply affected by the curse, was in the middle of retching. Suddenly it shivered. Then it pretended nothing had happened and continued retching.

Xu Qing didn’t detect anything abnormal. After talking with the Doorite and finding that it couldn’t teleport him to the south, he moved on and patiently tried to find another Doorite. He talked to a few dozen until he found an unusually short door. It was barely more than a meter tall, and was in very bad condition. As Xu Qing neared, the door frame suddenly twisted like a wriggling snake. A face appeared on the door itself, which looked at Xu Qing.

“Hello, Fellow Daoist,” Xu Qing said calmly. “Can you perform teleportations to the south?”

The face in the door looked Xu Qing up and down, then smiled. “100,000 spirit stones!”

Xu Qing looked at the face. The stated price was excessively high. Xu Qing had given most of his spirit stones to Duanmu Zang, and didn’t have many left.

“Don’t even think of complaining that the price is too high,” the face said coolly. “We’re in the busy season right now. Species from all over are bringing offerings here. If it wasn’t for the fact that I was already planning to head south myself, I wouldn’t take you there even if you did give me 100,000.”

After mulling the matter over, Xu Qing nodded. “Can I pay in heavenfire crystals?”

The face’s eyes lit up. Clearly, it really liked heavenfire crystals. “No problem. Either a thousand white crystals or a single red one.”

Xu Qing nodded. However, after they started discussing the deal in more detail, he found that the Doorite couldn’t take him south immediately; it had a few groups of customers that hadn’t teleported in yet, and thus needed to wait until later that night.

Xu Qing frowned. He wanted to leave immediately if he could. Therefore, he made inquiries of other Doorites, only to find that none of them could send him south any sooner than three days. In the end, Xu Qing chose to seal the deal with the small wooden door.

It was about six hours until evening. Rather than wandering around aimlessly, Xu Qing found a quiet corner where he could sit down cross-legged to meditate.

Time passed. A few hours later, he happened to see Duanmu Zang walking through the crowd.

Duanmu Zang noticed him and approached.

“You didn’t find a Doorite that could help you?” he asked.

“I did. I’ll leave in a little bit.” Xu Qing noted that there was no sign of the caravan.

Noticing his gaze, Duanmu Zang sat down next to him. “I already handed the caravan over to the cathedral. Everything is settled, so you don’t need to worry. You can leave with a clear head.”

Although Duanmu Zang’s facial expression looked no different than normal, the truth was that he was feeling very anxious. The reason wasn’t because of how he’d wiped out the Twofold Alliance. The Red Moon Cathedral really didn’t care about that kind of thing. Rather, he was anxious because of the demands the cathedral had made. They told him to go back and prepare another 500,000 offerings. That wasn’t going to be easy, but Duanmu Zang didn’t intend to tell Xu Qing about the situation. As far as he was concerned, Xu Qing had already done enough. Duanmu Zang needed to handle his own issues.

Xu Qing looked at Duanmu Zang.

Duanmu Zang smiled. Given everything he had experienced, and of course his age, he was a shrewd person, and not the type Xu Qing could easily read. That was especially true when he was intentionally hiding things.

“What, don’t believe me?” Duanmu Zang said with a chuckle. “Oh, you! You’re too suspicious. I just figured I would wait until you’d teleported away before I headed back.”

Xu Qing really hadn’t picked up on any clues that something else was going on. He nodded. When evening fell, he stood and said farewell to Duanmu Zang.

“If you have free time, remember to come back and visit us,” Duanmu Zang said, looking a bit sad.

“Definitely!” Xu Qing whispered.

“Most definitely!” Ling’er said from within his sleeve.

Duanmu Zang gave a nod in response.

Xu Qing turned and headed toward the short wooden door. Once he arrived, he took out the heavenfire crystals.

The face inhaled, sucking the crystals in. Then the door glittered with the light of teleportation as a vortex appeared. Xu Qing took a deep breath and prepared to step in.

Just before he did, someone spoke from behind him in a low voice, almost a growl.

“Shut the door.”

Xu Qing’s face fell. He wanted to simply jump into the vortex, but before he could, the door closed, and the teleportation fluctuations ceased. Scowling, he looked over his shoulder to see who was approaching from behind. His pupils constricted.

It was a woman wearing red, emanating Spirit Trove fluctuations. No one in the area seemed to register her presence, as if they didn’t notice her. Not even Duanmu Zang reacted. It was as if their perceptions had been altered. But Xu Qing’s had not.

Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed. “Well met, Senior.”

He recognized this person as the godservant he had thrown into that coffin at the bottom of the Heavenfire Sea. When a dead person suddenly showed up like this, it made it easy to theorize about who they really were. That was especially true considering that no one in the area seemed to notice what was happening. That lent even more certainty as to their identity.

It was easy to explain why the people in the church temple above, even the godherald, hadn’t noticed anything unusual happening.

The entity from that coffin could alter one’s perceptions. With that ability, it was no wonder the godherald was fooled. And then that entity had used some unknown method to create a clone. Everything made sense. This was not the woman he had fought. It was the entity from the coffin.

With those thoughts on his mind, Xu Qing made sure to keep a very respectful expression on his face.

The entity smiled enigmatically. Then, as Xu Qing felt pressure mounting, he approached and stopped right in front of him. Seeing Xu Qing’s attitude caused the entity to smile. It was no surprise at all that Xu Qing had recognized this form he was wearing.

“You’re always so polite, boy. It makes it hard to have any malicious thoughts.”

“Senior,” Xu Qing replied solemnly, “you’re clearly majestic and noble. I’m only behaving in kind. That’s how my Master taught me to act.”

“You’re bringing up your Master again?” the entity asked, smiling profoundly.

Xu Qing’s expression flickered, and he bowed again. “Since you don’t like me bringing it up, Senior, I won’t bring it up again.”

The entity looked Xu Qing up and down before shaking his head and smiling. “I know you have an extraordinary background. Your Master is probably some almighty individual. However, we’re in the Moonrite Region right now.”

He looked up into the sky.

Xu Qing didn’t say anything.

A moment later, the entity spoke again. “Boy, do you remember the agreement we made at the bottom of the Heavenfire Sea?”

“I remember!” Xu Qing said, nodding seriously.

“In that case, I want you to come with me to the frozen north of the Moonrite Region. My older sister is being suppressed there. And I have a little brother who’s interred beneath a glacier.”

The entity’s voice seemed to contain reminiscence and melancholy.

Xu Qing hesitated. For one thing, he had no way to tell if what this person was saying was true. And regardless, if he went north, he knew without a doubt that things would get even more dangerous than they already were. Given his level of strength, getting involved in things like this could be very risky. And if the reward was just heavenfate, then it didn’t seem worth it.

Xu Qing didn’t hide his hesitancy. Instead he let it show on his face. He was confident that whatever almighty entity he was dealing with, they would surely understand what that expression meant. It was one of the ways the weak could make demands of the strong. Although he wasn’t sure what would result, he needed to try.

“Did your Master teach you that too?” the entity asked coolly, his voice calm but imposing, and his facial expression similar. In his memories, he remembered that speaking in this way, and using this facial expression, would usually leave people trembling and ready to agree to anything he demanded.

Xu Qing looked embarrassed, which actually served to relax the atmosphere.

Seeing that, the entity’s eyes glittered with a strange light. After some thought, he said, “This is a business transaction, and I want you to do exactly as I ask. You can benefit in three ways.

“One. You can get some heavenfate.

“Two. The humans by Heavenfire Sea will receive an official decree from the cathedral exempting them from the need to provide further offerings. What’s more, the decree will keep them safe all the way until the next call for offerings.

“Three. After you’ve followed all of my instructions, you’ll receive a mysterious gift.

“Now, what’s your decision?”

Xu Qing turned to look at Duanmu Zang.

Duanmu Zang was actually walking off into the distance. As far as he knew, Xu Qing was already gone. He looked bleak and lonely. Clearly, the anxiety he had been hiding from Xu Qing was growing.

“I agree,” Xu Qing said quietly, looking back at the entity in red. Saying no would have been dangerous. Besides, the possible risks and rewards seemed balanced.

The entity smiled. He liked polite, intelligent people, and therefore, was very pleased with Xu Qing. When people cooperated, it made it possible for him to avoid killing.

“I’ve always kept my word, boy. So don’t worry. Now, come with me.” With that, the entity floated up into the air, going in the direction of the heart.

Xu Qing took a deep breath and followed.

The entity stopped in front of the church temple. When Xu Qing landed in the same spot, he looked at the statue of Crimson Mother. The statue struck fear into his heart.

“Your Master has some skills. After all, he managed to find a High God for Crimson Mother to devour, thus putting her in a deep sleep.” The entity looked at him with a mysterious and knowing smile.

Xu Qing blinked a few times and chose not to respond. He looked at the church temple, and could see through the open door that all the people inside were as unmoving as statues.

“They tasted good,” the entity said, licking his lips. “Rest up. The act needs to be fully played out. In three days, when the sacrificial offerings are over, we’ll leave.”

Hearing that, Xu Qing sat down and looked at the bleak Duanmu Zang off in the distance.

The entity waved a hand, and a streak of red light shot out of the cathedral. It turned into a command medallion that headed toward Duanmu Zang.

Down below, the increasingly anxious Duanmu Zang looked surprised as he reached up and caught the command medallion. He could sense the aura of protection in it, and when he realized it negated the orders to bring more offerings, he spun to look in the direction of the church temple. He saw nothing. Eventually, he looked back and continued on his way.

Was it him? Just who exactly is he?

Xu Qing looked at Duanmu Zang leaving the area, and wished him well. "Please... stay safe."

Chapter 568: Secrets of Revered Ancient (part 1)

Three days later, as the days of offerings came to an end, the Red Moon Cathedral burst with crimson light as it screamed off over the horizon. The dozens of asteroids continued to orbit around it as it left.

Whatever people from various species remained in the valley all prostrated on the ground with masks on their faces. After the cathedral was gone, they all breathed sighs of relief in their hearts. Now that the offerings had been given, it would be years before they needed to consider doing it again. Though everyone was relieved, most people also felt internal pressure building up within them.

According to calculations, the red moon would be coming very soon. There was no fixed schedule governing the coming and going of the red moon in the Moonrite Region. However, there was a special way to get a good idea of the timetable. And that was by keeping track of when the cathedral came for the harvest of offerings. When the interval switched to once every three to five years, that indicated the red moon... would appear soon. At that time, when life for most people was about to end, evil would proliferate and everything would devolve into chaos and war.

This time it would be no different.

"The Moonrite Region is about to become a scene straight out of hell," said the entity in red as he stood atop the heart and looked out at the lands below.

Xu Qing stood next to him. First he looked over his shoulder at the valley getting smaller behind him, then he turned back and focused on what he stood atop. Over the course of the past three days, he had examined the heart in quite a bit of detail. It was fantastically bizarre. It had life force, and was even beating, sending out thunderous booms that could shake one to the core.

Noticing what Xu Qing was looking at, the entity said, "All of the Red Moon Cathedral's mobile church temples are built on organs."

"Do you happen to know whose organs they are, Senior?" Xu Qing asked.

The entity shook his head. "I looked into that myself, and could only confirm that they don't belong to any of my brothers or sisters. What's more, the organs all have evidence of having been sacrificed.

"I've been sealed for so long that my understanding of the outside world is outdated. Only by eating some of the people in the church temple was I able to get a bit of information. Sadly, they aren't important enough to have information about who the organs come from."

Xu Qing nodded. Earlier, he had changed into one of the ceremonial red robes worn by certain members of the Red Moon Cathedral. As of now, Xu Qing wasn't just a member of the Yin-Yang Betwixt Flowers Sect; he had also been appointed as a godslave.

Xu Qing thought for a moment, then finally decided to answer the big question he'd been wondering about. "Senior, in some ancient records I read once, I read about how your father waged war against the red moon. And there are a lot of stories about the Penitence Steppes...." [1]

He wanted to know Crimson Mother's true origin.

The entity in red stood there for a moment before responding.

“Crimson Mother died once before. Killed by my father. That obviously led to a big grudge. By the time she returned, she had already reached godly ascension. And I heard my father mention that shē was returning from Revered Ancient's earthworld.”
As if to emphasize the entity's words, thunder rumbled on the horizon.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing's heart was racing. This was his first time hearing about any of Crimson Mother's story. As a result, he couldn't hold back from asking, “Crimson Mother wasn't always a god? And what's Revered Ancient's earthworld?”

The entity didn't answer immediately. He looked up at the dome of heaven, reminiscence in his eyes. Then he turned to Xu Qing.

“Some gods are born as gods. Some become gods by means of cultivation, which we call postheaven gods. Still others come from beyond the heavens. And there are some who come from the depths of the lands.”

Thunder once again crashed. It seemed to Xu Qing that something unusual was going on. And then, fog sprang up around them, after which it started raining heavily. In the distance, it looked like it was snowing. The sudden transformations to heaven and earth made Xu Qing think about heavenly daos and magical laws.

“Do you dare to listen to more?” the entity asked, looking at Xu Qing deeply.

Xu Qing looked into the sky and could sense his shattered bluegreen dragon, which was slowly healing. Thinking back to everything that happened at the Ten Entrails Tree, he nodded.

The entity chuckled. “Even still, you dare to listen further...? Ah, whatever. Let's just see how much you can take.”

“The history of what exists beneath Revered Ancient has mostly been wiped out by successive generations of Ancient Emperors. Because of that, few people are aware that... in the most ancient times, that place was called Brilliant Heaven. According to some stories, the very first species to inhabit the Revered Ancient mainland came from there. And it continued to be called that until Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity started calling it an earthworld.” [3]

The sound filling the sky grew more intense. Everything in the area rippled and distorted, and terrifying pressure weighed down from above as an immense will became apparent.

That immense will caused Xu Qing's face to drain of blood. His heart raced as he realized that heaven and earth were apparently telling him that these were taboo matters relating to Revered Ancient. The heavenly daos of the Revered Ancient mainland wouldn't allow him to spread word of these things.

“Interesting,” the entity said, measuring up Xu Qing curiously. “The heavenly daos didn’t release any of their powers of silence or amnesia. These heavenly daos really like you, boy.”

Xu Qing struggled to keep his facial expression neutral, but the rising will left him feeling jumpy.

Looking amused, the entity continued, “In that case, I’ll let you in on another secret. The so-called gods... well, they have a goal. And that is to....”

Xu Qing’s pupils constricted as he realized he couldn’t hear the entity speaking anymore. Everything else sounded normal, but he couldn’t hear any voice.

The entity seemed to notice that, and thus ceased speaking.

An hour later, Xu Qing recovered, and his heart pounded with lingering fear.

Days passed as the Red Moon Cathedral’s mobile church flew north.

Xu Qing asked for clarification about what they had been discussing earlier. However, whenever it came time for the key information to be spoken, he couldn’t hear anything. Thanks to experimentation, though, he was able to get some basic information. That included details about the cultivation level above Smoldering God.

“So, godfire...” Xu Qing murmured. As of now, he had heard the name ‘godfire’ but didn’t know much about what it was. [2]

A month later, the land ahead turned white from cold, and a stiff wind picked up.

Xu Qing soon saw the black glaciers of the frozen north. Virtually all of the lands in the north were covered in glaciers. There was no soil, just thick ice that covered everything. The mountains were also made of ice, making the entire place seem lacking in life.

Hovering over the glaciers, the entity in red looked around with a gleam of reminiscence in his eyes. Then he said, “We’re here, boy. Follow me.”

The entity dropped off the huge heart and started walking. Xu Qing followed.

The Red Moon Cathedral’s mobile church changed directions and shot off into the distance.

Xu Qing turned to look at it go.

“Inside of that thing is a gift for an old friend of mine in the Red Moon Cathedral.”

The entity proceeded across the glaciers, keeping his senses spread out around them as if he was looking for something.

Xu Qing didn’t say anything. He just kept pace.

They walked through the cold wind for several days. At one point, Xu Qing spotted a sect off in the distance. It was fairly large, with quite a few disciples coming and going.

“Those are the Gloomite people. They serve the Red Moon Cathedral, and performed such amazing services in the past that they were given the right to send disciples to

the cathedral to serve as special guards. That arrangement has been in place for generations.”

The entity looked a bit derisive when speaking of the Gloomites. However, he didn't elaborate. He just led Xu Qing in the direction of the sect.

No one detected their arrival. Their perceptions were affected, and they had no idea Xu Qing or the entity in red were even there.

As Xu Qing walked among the Gloomites, he had a hard time understanding why the entity in red referred to them as if they were a unique species. From what he could see, the disciples seemed to be people from all species.

The entity didn't seem inclined to go into more detail, though, so he didn't ask any questions. After walking deep into the sect, they reached a huge crevice in one of the glaciers. The entity stopped at the edge and closed his eyes for a long moment.

“This is the place,” he said. Expression one of sorrow, he stepped into the crevice.

Xu Qing looked down into the crevice briefly, then followed.

A cold wind blew out from inside. It was so cold it seemed capable of freezing both the body and the soul. The further down he went into the crevice, the colder it got. After going down for such a long time, Xu Qing had lost track of how long they had been inside. His eyebrows were white from frost. Not long after that, they reached the bottom. They were in a huge, icy cave temple. It was almost like a minor world, with a sky filled with ice and lands that stretched on with seemingly no end.

Off in the distance, Xu Qing saw a lake. The water in the lake was obviously very strange, as it hadn't frozen. Mist swirled above its surface.

Within that mist, Xu Qing could see numerous Gloomite disciples. The disciples were lugging crystal caskets over to the shore, where they placed them neatly in rows. At a glance, there seemed to be hundreds of coffins around the lake. After delivering a coffin, the disciple carrying it would hurry away.

Looking over the coffins, Xu Qing saw that there were bodies inside of them. Based on their clothing, they were all disciples of this sect.

It was a very strange sight, and Xu Qing was about to look more closely at everything when the lake suddenly churned, and beams of seven-colored light rose up from it like tentacles reaching toward the coffins. Each tentacle ultimately wrapped around a single coffin, which it then dragged back toward the lake.

Before much time had passed, all the coffins sank into the lake and disappeared. After that, the surface of the lake became calm again.

“When you look at the Gloomites superficially,” the entity said placidly, “they look like a sect filled with all sorts of species. But the reality is that turning into other species is the only way for them to serve as special guards in the cathedral. Those who don't become another species will end up as food.”

“In order to become another species, they have to go through a special ceremony. You just witnessed it. The disciples in the coffins will be taken to a special location, and if they live through it and come out again, it’s considered a success. That’s because the individuals that come out are not the same as those who go in.”

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. “Parasitization?”

“The Gloomite patriarch used to be a subordinate of my father. Back when Crimson Mother showed up, he chose to betray my father, who subsequently killed him. The major worlds he was building collapsed and were mostly destroyed. The life force within them ceased to exist. One damaged chunk fell here. To thank them for their service, Crimson Mother preserved the discarnate souls of those who died here, and that’s how the Gloomite species came to be.”

Xu Qing looked at the lake again. If it took an Imperial Sovereign to kill that Gloomite patriarch and shatter his major worlds, then it went to indicate that the patriarch was a Smoldering God.

After another long look at the lake, the entity turned and headed deeper into the cave temple. “Let’s go. The place we’re going to isn’t here.”

Xu Qing could sense that there was more to the story, but now wasn’t the time to ask questions. He simply followed as they got deeper and deeper into the cave.

Because the seven-colored tentacles moved so quickly, and also because of the large number of coffins, Xu Qing hadn’t noticed that there was a familiar face in one of the coffins.

Chapter 568: Secrets of Revered Ancient (part 2)

At the bottom of the lake, one of the ‘corpses’ in the coffins opened his eyes and looked around. Seeing the surrounding lake water, he suddenly looked extremely pleased with himself. Then he glanced at the seven-colored tentacles that were dragging down the coffins, and he looked even more pleased.

Foolish Gloomites. Getting into this place was as easy as putting a hand in my pocket and pulling something out. Next, I need to get into this species’ minor world. Then I can enact my real plan. I wonder how little Ah Qing is doing nowadays. I doubt he’s having as much fun as I am. He’s probably already at Mount Heavenly Ox, shivering and trembling as he waits for me to show up....

That ‘corpse’ was none other than the Captain.

Oh, little Ah Qing. Eldest Brother didn’t intend to be late. But that’s just how things worked out. For the sake of this big job, you need to stay put for a little bit. Besides, you’re the one who decided not to stick close to me.

Feeling very lofty, the Captain closed his eyes and continued to pretend to be dead.

The entity in red sped up as he led Xu Qing away from the lake and across the glaciers. Eventually, he waved his hand to sweep up Xu Qing and move even faster.

Because of the shocking speed, it only took about fifteen or sixteen hours to reach the very depths of the glaciers. It was extremely cold here, and the power of the red moon warding spells was intense.

The warding spell fluctuations caused Xu Qing's eyes to narrow as he realized where they were heading. Just as he expected, the entity in red soon stopped at the edge of a glacier, and looked down, his eyes full of grief. His grief was so intense that it affected the surroundings, so that it was just barely possible to detect the faint sound of weeping.

Xu Qing's expression remained the same as ever. Recalling what he had said back in the east, he followed his line of sight into the ice below. It was dark in this area, and that was even true of the interior of the glacier. But as Xu Qing looked down into that darkness, he realized he was looking at some colossally monstrous entity.

"Want to see more closely?" Without waiting for an answer from Xu Qing, he waved his right hand gently through the air. All of a sudden, countless pinpricks of light appeared inside the glacier, almost like fireflies. Individually, their light was weak. But collectively, they illuminated the entire area.

With that light, Xu Qing could see clearly what was under the surface of the glacier. His heart leaped into his throat. A corpse lay inside the glacier.

It was fully 30,000 meters from end to end, and wore a brown suit of armor. Despite being dead, the corpse emanated a baleful aura that filled Xu Qing's mind with a sound like an angry roar.

Xu Qing shivered and took a few steps back. After calming his heart, he again looked more closely. The corpse was that of a handsome young man with a determined facial expression. He had eyebrows like swords and a heroic disposition. However, pierced into his forehead was a black nail. Blood dripped from the wound down his face, making him look very fierce.

But his body was even more shocking. It was largely desiccated, and those few places that weren't withered emanated a blood energy that contained an aura of death as it spread throughout the glacier. That alone caused countless speculations to arise in Xu Qing. He looked over at the grieving entity in red.

"This was my third little brother. When we were small, he loved following me around. As the Heir Apparent, I helped my father deal with the politics of the court, and was always busy. Wherever I went, my little brother followed along. Sometimes when I got frustrated I would send him off to the side, and he would cry out to me. 'Big brother, big brother...'"

"Being an impulsive person, he never got along with my ninth little brother. They were always fighting. And I always tended to side with Ninth Sib." [1]

Xu Qing said nothing. He could sense the deep sorrow in the entity.

"That nail in his forehead is the weapon of my father, the king. My fourth younger brother took it and stabbed him with it. You know, my fourth younger brother was actually trying to kill me. Instead, my third younger brother died in my place."

The Heir Apparent smiled.

“Boy, I still haven’t explained who my fourth younger brother is. He did all of this as a blood tribute for when Crimson Mother arrived. And as a result, he’s very famous nowadays. He’s the godchild of the Moonrite Region.”

When Xu Qing heard that, he was stunned. He had heard about a godchild related to the Red Moon Cathedral in the Moonrite Region, and had assumed that such a person would be extraordinary. But he could never have guessed that individual's origin. The current red moon godchild used to be the fourth son of the region’s Imperial Sovereign!

“Over the years that have passed, he’s the one that’s kept us fed.” The Heir Apparent laughed. “He was worried that his brothers and sisters would die too quickly. Therefore, he harvests common citizens to keep us fed. In the past, he would occasionally slice skin off us and feed it to the others. Later on, he stopped appearing in person. See? Didn’t he treat us other brothers and sisters sooo well?” The Heir Apparent was grinding his teeth, and his eyes shone with killing intent. “Do you know where my third younger brother’s energy and blood is now? You’ll find out soon.”

Xu Qing wasn’t sure what to say, so he just sighed softly.

As they walked along and Xu Qing heard all of this information, he began to gain a much better understanding of the Moonrite Region. However, the more he understood it, the more he felt the pressure that weighed down on all living beings here.

“Boy, can you help me open a hole in the red moon warding spells? Just a tiny one will do.” The Heir Apparent looked calmly at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing nodded. Sitting down cross-legged, he activated his violet moon nascent soul. Instantly, the surrounding red moon fluctuations grew stronger. The power of the warding spells surged, and tiny red threads appeared everywhere. The red threads spread out, creating a huge net that covered everything. Then one of those many threads changed colors, turning violet. As soon as that happened, the red moon warding spells slowly shivered to life.

Xu Qing struggled to control his breathing. As far as he was concerned, it wasn’t too hard to manipulate the warding spells in a simplistic way. But to open a hole in them was something far more difficult. Right now, all he could do was absorb the red moon power in the area, causing the warding spells to weaken. Then, by tapping into the authority of his violet moon, he could slowly create an opening. That was the limit of what he could do now.

Three days passed.

During that time, Xu Qing continuously absorbed from his surroundings. On the evening of the third day, he had reached his limit. Eyes opening, he extended his right hand and pushed down toward the ground.

The red moon warding spells seethed as a vortex formed.

The moment the vortex appeared, the Heir Apparent blurred. In the blink of an eye, he disappeared, turning into a stream of blue energy, within which was a discarnate soul. The soul actually looked

like a young man, and his facial features resembled the man in the glacier below. However, he seemed more dignified as he flew into the vortex.

The red moon warding spells surged as they formed a barrier. Xu Qing went all out to resist them. He felt like he was a little pony pulling a massive war chair, and it made his soul feel like it was about to be ripped to shreds. His violet moon nascent soul shivered, and its facial expression was one of pain.

And this was the reaction for a discarnate soul. Given that, if this wasn't a discarnate soul, and it was something trying to break from inside to outside, then Xu Qing couldn't have succeeded no matter how hard he tried.

What was more, Xu Qing could only do so much, even right now.

The fact that the Heir Apparent picked this place meant that he had a lot of confidence here. The soul shadow flickered with blue light as it ignited itself, pushing its power to the maximum as it pushed into the vortex Xu Qing had created.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and Xu Qing coughed up seven or eight mouthfuls of blood. His violet moon nascent soul looked dangerously listless. However, the discarnate soul of the young man finally managed to break open the barrier, make a hole, and enter it.

Once past the warding spells, the discarnate soul started fading. It clearly couldn't last for very long. Without any hesitation, it shot toward the nail in the forehead of the third younger brother.

Just before it faded from existence, it reached the nail and merged into it.

Xu Qing wiped blood from his mouth. Walking back a few paces, he sat down cross-legged. He had already done everything he could. As for whether the overall plan would succeed, all he could do now was wait and see. There was no way he was strong enough to drag the discarnate soul back out.

Back at the bottom of that lake, the seven-colored tentacles had dragged the hundreds of coffins all the way to the bottom of the lake. There was a vortex there, pulsing with greed and longing. And the coffins were being pulled right toward that vortex. Once through the vortex, they were in a strange world.

Laying inside one of those coffins was the Captain. His eyes snapped open, and they gleamed with anticipation.

"I've finally arrived! Hahaha! Okay, little birdies, grandpa is here!"

Chapter 569: Imperial Sovereign's God-Weapon Suppresses the Northern Plains (part 1)

Beneath the surface of the glacier, the Heir Apparent of an Imperial Sovereign merged with the nail stabbed into his third younger brother's forehead. After that, no energy fluctuations emerged whatsoever. There was absolutely no change to the nail. It was as if nothing had happened.

Xu Qing sat cross-legged in the distance, looking down at the glacier. After some thought, he slowly got to his feet, then carefully took a step backward to see if it was possible for him to leave. Although he hadn't run into any danger up to this point, that didn't mean things would stay that way. Right now seemed like the perfect time to make an exit. Given the level of his cultivation base, it made sense to not participate in whatever was to come next.

However, he'd barely made it ten paces when the face beneath the nail flickered. And then a growling voice echoed in Xu Qing's mind.

"The time hasn't come yet, boy. Wait for me."

Xu Qing stopped in place and tried to decide what to do.

As he did, the voice continued, "If you want to leave, I won't stop you. Right now, I'm not strong enough to. But you're the one who pointed out that you and I have a mutual enemy in Crimson Mother. And right now... I'm planning to do something huge. If you help me, then my chances of success will rise significantly. But even if you don't help me, I'm still going to try. You're standing at a crossroads. You just have to decide which direction you want to go."

Without any change in facial expression, Xu Qing looked at the huge figure in the glacier below. A moment passed, and he clasped hands and bowed. Then he turned and sped away as fast as he could.

In the silence that followed, a faint sigh echoed out over the glacier.

About eight hours later in the distant darkness, Xu Qing stopped moving. Having confirmed that he really was being allowed to leave, he turned and went back. After arriving, he sat down cross-legged in the same spot as before.

"I'll wait for you for a day!" he said.

"Thank you!"

the voice replied from beneath the glacier.

Xu Qing closed his eyes and waited.

Meanwhile, deep below the surface of the glacier, something momentous was playing out. The Heir Apparent had told the truth to Xu Qing. The Gloomite patriarch really had been a subordinate of an Imperial Sovereign, and really had turned traitor when Crimson Mother arrived. Later, he was killed by the Imperial Sovereign, and his major world was shattered and reduced almost completely to ash. Only a small fragment survived, landing in this location and ending up buried beneath the glacier.

That fragment contained countless deceased souls from that rebel major world. There, they milled aimlessly, without any consciousness. In fact, most were asleep. However, because of the services they had performed, the deceased souls in that world fragment were allowed to come out by means of parasitization. And that was how the Gloomite species came to be. That said, the veil between life and death was not easy to cross. There were also other restrictions in place. As a result, during the countless years that had passed, though a lot of Gloomites had returned, the vast majority remained in the Moonrite Region.

Some people claimed it was the Imperial Sovereign's rage, suffused into a heavenly dao.

The vortex at the bottom of that lake was a passage that led to the major world fragment. Though it was only a fragment, being buried beneath the glaciers, it was essentially a minor world. Ghostfire was the only illumination under the surface of the glaciers.

Black snowflakes filled the sky, covering all the lands. And a sinister wind blew, weeping like ghosts or wolves. Any mortal who heard that sound would be shaken down to their soul. It sounded like something from the underworld. Even in the darkness, it was possible to see into the black glacier and glimpse vast lands and even mountain ranges, filled with deceased souls, wandering aimlessly everywhere. To them, time had no meaning. Everything was a blur, except for their hunger.

They would instinctively try to attack any living beings they encountered. Right now, on the edge of the world fragment, a different sort of light was glittering. It started out as red. But then blue was added, and yellow, then more, until it was seven-colored light.

As the seven-colored light flickered, the countless souls in the world fragment locked onto that area. There were even some souls sleeping beneath the glacier who seemed like they might wake up as a result. Next, strips of light appeared out of the seven-colored vortex, like tentacles that wrapped around the coffins and placed them down on the black glacier. After the hundreds of coffins were in place, the seven-colored tentacles retracted into the vortex and disappeared.

However, the vortex still remained, waiting. Before long, the wind screamed as the deceased souls floated toward the coffins at high speed, like ravenous wolves. It was as if, to them, the coffins were plump sheep. The life force emanating from the coffins drove the deceased souls toward madness.

From a distance, it was possible to see a swarm of souls closing in on the coffins. They were like a black tempest.

The coffins were obviously made from special materials, as they kept the disciples sealed within, but didn't stop the deceased souls from entering. In the blink of an eye, well over 10,000 deceased souls had entered the coffins.

The bodies had already been prepared fully. They had no souls in them, and were only empty husks. That made them much easier to parasitize.

That said, because the souls were chaotic and unthinking, they wouldn't immediately parasitize a body. Their first instinct was to eat. That was one of the reasons that not every Gloomite parasitization attempt worked out.

Because of that, a few dozen of the body shells in the coffins began withering up as hundreds of souls fed on them. In a few breaths of time, they became little more than skeletons. After that, the souls would burst out of those coffins and move to new coffins.

At the same time, the fragrant aroma coming from the hundreds of coffins was attracting even more sleeping souls.

Before long, souls whose auras vastly surpassed those of the ordinary deceased souls were moving through the black glacier, pulsing with greed and madness. They fought fiercely to be the first into the various coffins, snipping and biting at each other. Compared to the ordinary souls, the ones that were sleeping in the glacier were much stronger, and therefore, it was easier for them to acquire bodies to parasitize.

It didn't take long for the first parasitized body to appear. The coffin exploded with a boom, revealing a person seated there cross-legged. It was a young man whose slack facial expression was only now changing. A vile energy began to pulse off him, and longing appeared in his eyes as he looked toward the seven-colored vortex. Slowly, he rose to his feet, then started walking forward

unsteadily. At first he looked like a marionette, struggling to walk smoothly. But he soon got used to the body, and the rigidity faded away. After about ten breaths of time had passed, he seemed fully acclimated. Running toward the vortex, he leaped in, thus returning to the world of mortals.

Before long, another coffin exploded, and a figure stepped out.

However, there was yet another coffin that seemed very strange. Lots of deceased souls were pouring into that coffin... yet nothing was coming out. It was almost as if that coffin contained a black hole that swallowed everything up. Within the other coffins, many of the bodies withered up, and the souls within them turned their ravenous attention toward that strange coffin.

All of a sudden, about a hundred deceased souls entered the coffin, where they saw the Captain laying there. They pulsed with greed as they prepared to drop onto him.

However, as they neared, a host of mouths suddenly popped into being all over the Captain, and simultaneously, they inhaled. Instantly, those souls were sucked into the mouths, after which chewing sounds rang out. Then the mouths disappeared, and everything went back to normal.

Not long after, another group of souls burst into that same coffin....

And thus, time passed. Most of the body husks in the coffin turned into ashes, with only about ten of them succeeding in waking up and leaving through the vortex.

The seven-colored vortex was gradually turning dark, until eventually, it vanished. As for that strange coffin, it was the only one present that had life force in it. As a result, the surrounding deceased souls continued to pour into it ravenously.

All of a sudden, a terrifying shockwave surged out of the coffin. The souls who had been about to charge inside instantly turned and fled in terror.

The Captain, still inside the coffin, didn't just produce a host of mouths. Numerous arms also stretched out to grab the deceased souls. However, too many of the souls had entered the coffin, and a lot of them were now trying to flee. Seeing that, the Captain took out a mask and put it on his face.

A howl echoed out as the illusory image of a massive heavenly dog appeared, which lunged toward the fleeing souls and gobbled them down. A moment later, all of the souls in the surrounding 300-meter area had been devoured. And those beyond that area were like rabbits in the presence of a hungry wolf. They fled in the opposite direction.

Ignoring them, the heavenly dog vanished, after which a loud burp echoed out from within the coffin. The Captain then sat up, stretched, and glanced around, looking very pleased with himself.

"Hahaha! Using myself as bait is the best way to get nice and full!" He waved his hand and proudly continued, "Get out here, both of you. Am I that warm and comfortable? Hurry up! We have a big job to worry about!"

Two people flew out from the Captain. They started out extremely small, but quickly grew to the size of normal people. They were none other than Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu. They had been accompanying the Captain recently on all sorts of fantastic jobs. Wu Jianwu was no longer high-spirited and full of mettle like before. Instead, he looked completely on guard. Ning Yan seemed numb to everything. That said, both of their auras were much stronger than before.

Seeing their facial expressions, the Captain sighed, clasped his hands behind his back, and started walking.

“Keep up and don’t be too loud. You don’t want to wake up these old souls that are sleeping under this glacier. Though I do have ways of dealing with them, our priority is to reach our destination as quickly as possible.”

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu hurried to follow. Wu Jianwu didn’t spout any poetry as he glanced around, looking so nervous that the sound of the wind stirring a leaf would make him run in the opposite direction.

Ning Yan glanced at him out of the corner of his eyes. Keeping his disdain in his heart, he smacked his own belly, revealing some vines, which he fiddled with as he walked along nonchalantly.

After they were some distance away, the Captain sighed. “Oh, you two. You’re really not on the same level as little Ah Qing. Ai. I miss little Ah Qing so much! I wonder how he’s doing nowadays. Probably eating poorly and sleeping even more poorly than that.”

Chapter 569: Imperial Sovereign’s God-Weapon Suppresses the Northern Plains (part 2)

Not too far away, the very Xu Qing the Captain was so worried about was seated cross-legged atop the glacier, looking down into the ice. He had been waiting for quite a while now. Already, about half of the day he’d set as the deadline had passed. As of yet, there was no change to the figure in the glacier below.

Xu Qing’s facial expression was the same as ever as he retracted his vision and continued to wait. He would do his absolute best to wait for the entire day.

Thus, time passed. Soon, as the twenty-fourth hour neared completion, Xu Qing opened his eyes. Standing, he clasped hands in the direction of the ice.

“Time’s up, Senior.”

“*Back up by about 3,000 meters,*” came the faint voice of the Heir Apparent from beneath the ice.

Hearing that, Xu Qing sped away. When he was about 2,400 meters away, a thunderous boom erupted from the glacier behind him. The icy ground quaked, and blue light shot up from the ice below, making everything increasingly bright. Eventually, it became so bright that the area beneath the glacier almost seemed lit by a blue sun. The source of that blue light was the nail in the huge figure’s forehead.

Quivering, the nail slowly rose, as if there was a massive power inside of it trying to pull it out of the body’s forehead. As every successive inch came out into the open, it shone with more scintillating blue light. Gradually, terrifying fluctuations spread out from the glacier. The mere sensation of the fluctuations caused Xu Qing’s heart to thump with fear. The sensation he was getting surpassed the taboo treasure of Sea-Sealing County. In fact, the difference between the two was like that between a firefly and the sun.

There was also something profoundly ancient spreading out. As a result, Xu Qing had no other choice than to back up. After he’d gone another 300 meters, the feeling of fear remained, but wasn’t as intense. Meanwhile, the fluctuations had provoked a reaction from the red moon warding spells.

From a distance, it looked like the red light of the warding spells was being suppressed by the blue light. As a result, the glacier vibrated, and cracks started spreading out over its surface.

All of a sudden, a howling voice echoed in Xu Qing's mind.

“Help me suppress them!”

Xu Qing gritted his teeth. It was obvious that if he stuck around, he would be asked to provide help. Without the slightest hesitation, he reached out with his right hand and pushed it down onto the glacier.

Violet moon godly authority erupted out to interfere with the warding spells.

He didn't need to take control of the warding spells to open a passage. He just needed to interfere with the warding spells. As for whether the Heir Apparent would ultimately make it out, there was no way for Xu Qing to assess.

That said, to the Heir Apparent, Xu Qing's actions were crucial. His interference and influence could very well make the difference between success and failure. Before, all probabilities pointed to failure. But now, things were different.

Next, an even more deafening sound erupted from the glacier. Blue light shone brilliantly as the nail continued to rise. Ultimately, it completely emerged from the corpse.

When that happened, the northern ice plains turned blue.

Various species and sects that called the northern ice plains their home took notice, and many were curious about why things had suddenly turned blue. Though they had no idea what was happening, they all felt fear and pressure as the blue light spread everywhere.

Cracking sounds erupted that surpassed the volume of heavenly thunder. In the depths of the glacier, the nail, which was emanating that boundless blue light, pulsed with terrifying energy as it slowly rotated around to point at the red moon warding spells. Light flared as the blue nail then shot upward.

It accelerated with boundless courage and unstoppable force as it slammed into the warding spells. Blue and red light flickered together, creating a violet glow. It was a deadlock.

“God Weapon Qi Nuo, you were born in the darkheaven and tempered in an earthworld; are you really willing to be trapped here? I can help you! Now is the time to unleash your power!”

The blue nail vibrated, until eventually, the defiant fluctuations of a spirit automaton rolled out of it. They were imbued with a spirit that could conquer mountains and rivers, and as they gathered at the tip of the nail, it pulsed with the power to crush everything in its path! Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth as the nail shot high into the sky! The dome of heaven was now lit by blue light, so that it was no longer dusky. From a distance, the northern ice fields seemed to have been turned into a world of blue. Cracks spread out on the ground, and many places caved in. Glaciers shattered. The entire northern region was starting to sink down.

Nothing like this had ever happened before. Whether it was to the living beings of the north, or to the Moonrite Region in general, it was completely unprecedented! There was no way the Red Moon

Cathedral wouldn't investigate something like that, and thus, it was only possible to imagine what explosive developments were just around the corner.

All living beings were shocked. Cries of astonishment rang out everywhere. However, the blue nail in the sky didn't leave. It slowly turned until its tip was pointed at the ice below. Light flickered dazzlingly, making it look like the nail was building up power.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing appeared on a distant shattered glacier, looking around at everything. He had prepared himself mentally, but even still, was nearly bowled over with shock.

The Heir Apparent said that he had a younger brother who died here, and a big sister who was sealed here.... Does that mean he's about to....

Pupils constricting, Xu Qing turned to run. He could tell that things were going to get very dangerous and destructive soon. However, even as he turned, a majestic stream of divine will slammed into his mind like ten thousand sledgehammers.

"It will be really unlucky for me if you leave now, young friend. Don't you remember how I promised to give you a very mysterious gift? As the Heir Apparent, my word is my bond. And I promised you something!"

Xu Qing stopped moving. Gritting his teeth, he turned to look at the blue nail, which seemed very close to the point of being fully powered up.

"What gift?" Xu Qing asked.

"How about the fragment of a Smoldering God's major world? There are three items sealing my third older sister, and that's one of them."

Xu Qing's eyes went wide, and his heart raced. How could he ever have guessed that the mysterious gift which had been offered to him was the fragment of a major world?

The identifying mark of a Smoldering God was the ability to bring forth a major world. A major world like that would have boundless mysterious abilities. And even a broken fragment of one would still be considered a precious treasure. It was something that would be valuable even to a god. The red moon hadn't taken it away, but rather, used it as part of a sealing cage. To ordinary cultivators, something like that would be even more incredibly precious.

Once again, divine will echoed into his mind. *"Do you dare come with me to get it?"*

"Yes!"

Xu Qing said, his eyes already bloodshot.

A prize like that was enough to cause craziness to bubble up from deep within him. It was like the time he got his first life lamp, his first imperial-class ability, or that experience with the seazombie divine likenesses. During those escapades, the craziness in his heart rivaled the Captain.

In response to his words, laughter swept out from the nail.

"Come here!"

Blue light shone down, surrounding Xu Qing like a cage, then taking him up into the sky. Eventually, he approached the nail and stood atop it.

The blue light connected with the nail. Because the light was from the nail, Xu Qing didn't suffer any of the pressure of being so close to a precious treasure. As he stood there, the Heir Apparent spoke to him again with divine will.

“Okay, young friend. Now I'm going to show you exactly how mighty this precious treasure of my father's was!”

Rumbling sounds erupted from the blue nail as it turned into a streak that shot down toward the ice! Its shocking speed and might caused ripples to spread through the canopy of heaven, and resulted in the ground caving in.

There wasn't anything that could stand up to it!

Meanwhile, inside the major world fragment, atop the highest of the black glaciers, the Captain stood, looking around. Of course, he had no idea what was going on outside.

“This is the place! Little Ningning, Big Jianjian, you two better behave well! In a moment, you both need to unleash your treasures. We need to do the sealing as quickly as possible. Once the sealing is over, we'll get out of here. If we go too slowly, though... well, then I wish all of you good luck. After all, every place that I've raided up to this point ends up becoming a barren wasteland.”

Wu Jianwu nodded vigorously, though inside, he felt very nervous. Ning Yan was also getting anxious.

Seeing their facial expressions, the Captain inwardly shook his head.

Just not on the same level as little Ah Qing. They clearly lack courage. If little Ah Qing were here, he would just be looking at me calmly.

Sighing inwardly, the Captain waved his hand, causing a ball of light to shoot up into the dome of heaven.

“Show yourself, my Little Roundy!”

The ball of light suddenly erupted with blinding beams of light that contained seemingly infinite heat. As the light rose high into the canopy of heaven, it turned into a sun! Boundless light and heat spread out, covering all of the black glaciers!

Chapter 570: Look, Everyone! Who's That on the Nail? (part 1)

There was no true sun in the Moonrite Region, which existed in year-round dusk. It was only during the three months of Heavenfire Skycrossing that the region received significant light. What was more, *that* light represented death.

However, not all species were adapted to living in endless darkness. Therefore, after the living beings in the region were culled, and regrowth had begun, there were always certain big species who produced talented and courageous individuals. The artificial sun that was being discussed was the result of a very powerful species who, after generations of replenishment, managed to raise a sun for their own species.

That said, the light and heat of suns like that wouldn't travel very far, and generally only illuminated the species in question. They were nowhere near as mighty as the Dawning Suns. Even still, just being able to do that was enough to guarantee a certain level of protection for their species.

Usually, more godheralds came from such species than others. As a result, when Crimson Mother came, though such species would suffer from the fate of extermination like all the others, their sun would remain. And because of that, they could recover more quickly. The cycle would continue for years and years.

There were originally nine species in the Moonrite Region who had their own suns. Due to unexpected circumstances, three of them ended up being wiped out, leaving six. The Lonesuns were one of those six, and they were also the most recent addition. Reportedly, they had mysterious assistance back when they originally created their sun.

Months earlier, their sun suddenly vanished, seemingly of its own accord, despite the Lonesuns having extremely strict security. It almost seemed like the sun had intentionally gone into hiding.

Right now, that very sun appeared in the sky of the major world fragment.

“Those old Lonesun bastards borrowed my things years ago and never gave them back. Hmmmphh! Little do they know I let them do that on purpose!” The Captain looked up at the sun, feeling superlatively comfortable. “They took good care of it for me.”

The sun the Captain had released into the sky unleashed dazzling, blinding beams of light, as well as intense heat. Instantly, heaven and earth shifted into the warm season.

The temperature increased, and was continuing to increase. After only ten breaths of time had passed, it reached shocking levels. Mist roiled off of the ice, and the seemingly eternal glacier was already showing signs that it might melt. That said, this one sun wasn't enough to melt all the glaciers in the entire major world fragment. That was why the Captain had come to this specific ice mountain.

“I just need this place melted! That'll be enough!” The Captain's eyes glittered as he lifted both hands into the air. “Little Roundy, this is the place to let it shine!”

The sun in the sky vibrated, causing the light and heat to contract. Wherever it passed, the ice slowly melted, revealing the ruins beneath.

Eventually, all of the light and heat was focused on the ice mountain the Captain was standing on.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were fully aware of how mighty this sun was, so they had long since picked a safe spot off in the distance to watch from. Meanwhile, the Captain's hair was melting away, leaving him looking very strange. He didn't seem to care. His clothes weren't affected by the heat, and he looked very calm and relaxed.

“It was so nippy. Finally it's warming up a bit.”

The ice mountain beneath his feet was starting to melt. Rivulets of black water rolled down its side until it eventually evaporated into steam. The mountain was rapidly shrinking, until all that was left was a 300-meter cavern in the ice shelf, out of which emerged steam and an ancient aura.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu watched fearfully as an intense rumbling sound also emerged from the huge cavern.

The melting continued until the bottom of that huge cavern was visible! Now it was possible to see something that had been concealed for countless years: the true surface of the ground. That said, compared to the endless black glaciers in this area, that 300-meter cavern was like the eye of a needle. Though it had been opened, the frigid energy in the area was so strong that the cavern was already showing signs of icing over.

The Captain didn't care. He just looked down excitedly into the cavern.

Thanks to the sunlight, the depths of the cavern were clearly visible. There was black soil there, as well as numerous blood-colored furrows arranged in a very precise fashion. If you took them all in together, you would realize they resembled a huge fingerprint. It was as if some paragonic entity had slammed a palm down onto this area to wipe out all living things, and had left behind a blood-colored palm print. The markings, here, though, were just those from a single finger.

After confirming this was the right spot, the Captain bellowed, "Little Ningning! Big Jianjian! Hurry up. Help me handle this treasure!"

Using his outstretched hands to control the sun, he sent more heat into the area, preventing the cavern from being sealed over again.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu didn't dare to dally. They burst into action, with Ning Yan waving a hand to produce a patch of golden flesh. The patch of flesh was large enough to be able to cover dozens of people at once. And once unfurled, it was obvious that it had actually been stitched together with many smaller pieces. Because of that, it would be very difficult to determine where it came from. Wu Jianwu quickly gripped the side of the flesh opposite of Ning Yan. Then the two of them stretched it out and sent it toward the bottom of the cavern.

"Hahaha! I like this skin patch treasure more and more!" Up in midair, the Captain's eyebrows danced up and down as his eyes burned with excitement.

Ning Yan looked like he wanted to say something, but ultimately held back. He glanced at Wu Jianwu. Wu Jianwu kept his mouth shut.

Next, the excited Captain performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then pointed up into the sky.

"Let it shine a bit more, Little Roundy! Help me get a good image of this fingerprint!"

The sun above seemed to shift in place, and then it erupted with light that was vastly more intense than before. It abruptly stopped, only to reappear a moment later. That happened about a dozen times, so quickly in succession that the entire area was bathed with dazzling light.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu kept a firm grip on the patch of skin, and as the light flared, an image of the fingerprint appeared on the skin. It was a perfect copy of the fingerprint in the cavern, although much smaller. As it became increasingly clear, it emanated an astounding level of pressure.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were ready for that, but it still caused them to tremble. And as the patch of skin transformed it seemed to become so heavy that it started to slowly sink down.

That was when Ning Yan unleashed the power of his bloodline. At the same time, a host of little animals appeared around Wu Jianwu and released bloodline fluctuations. As a result, they managed to keep the patch of skin from falling. About ten breaths of time later, the sun darkened, and the fingerprint was clearly visible on the patch of skin.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu struggled to control their trembling as they quickly rolled up the patch of skin. When it was put away, both exhaled sharply in relief, then looked up at the Captain.

The afterglow of the sun landed on the Captain, making him look very imposing, and perfectly highlighting the emotion on his face as he sighed.

“It’s too bad the only people here to witness this majestic event were us three. Little Ah Qing had no way to see it.” The Captain clasped his hands behind his back and sighed loudly. “Later on when I explain what happened, he’ll definitely have mixed emotions. What a pity. What a pity!”

The Captain shook his head and was about to continue speaking when, all of a sudden, something very dramatic happened.

The sky in the major world fragment glittered, and wild colors flashed left and right. Then, blue light appeared in the canopy of heaven. It wasn’t just a small section of the sky. It filled everything! It was as if the entire dusky sky had turned light blue. What was more, that light grew more intense, all while terrifying ripples spread out.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were visibly stunned, but the Captain was taking it in stride.

“Presumably we’ve been discovered. They’ll be here soon. But that’s fine. This is all within the realm of what I predicted. The two of you can make your escape according to the method I explained earlier. We’ll meet back up at Mount Heavenly Ox. Once we’re there, I can promise you that even more good fortune will appear!” The Captain waved his hand to produce a jade slip. “Starting now, we just let things play out naturally and—”

Before he could finish speaking, a heaven-sundering, earth-crushing rumbling sound spread out through the blue-lit sky. The deafening sound stirred the clouds as a massive rift opened up in the icy canopy of heaven.

As the fully 5,000-kilometer rift opened, the sound continued to echo out, shaking the lands. There wasn’t just one rift. In the blink of an eye, a second opened. Then a third and a fourth....

Dozens of rifts opened in the icy canopy of heaven. Looking up, the sky almost seemed like a shattering mirror. As rifts continued to open, the rumbling sounds were like thunder.

Meanwhile, the blue light continued to shine dazzlingly, and the faint blue in the sky became deeper and deeper. Then light emerged from all of the rifts, in narrow beams that shone onto the glaciers below. The black glaciers couldn’t do anything to stop the blue light, and thus, the lands also turned blue. In the blink of an eye, everything in heaven and earth was blue. The terrifying pressure that came from beyond the icy sky grew even more intense.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the canopy of heaven started crumbling. Countless chunks of ice fell like blue meteors. As they slammed into the ground, everything started crumbling. Deafening rumbling rolled out everywhere. As the sky collapsed, the tip of a 30,000-meter nail appeared!

It was only the tip, but it shattered the canopy of heaven around it, with those effects spreading rapidly in all directions. As the sky fell, the huge blue nail descended! The entire major world fragment was shaking violently. Not even the Captain had caused something as dramatic as this to happen.

The countless deceased souls in the major world fragment, regardless of whether they drifted aimlessly or were sleeping in the ice, all let loose terrified screams. As far as they were concerned, doomsday had come!

Ning Yan was completely and utterly stunned, while Wu Jianwu looked like he might start crying.

“We’re finished! I said before we came in here that I had a bad feeling about this! Why’d you have to drag me along??”

“Chen Erniu!! What are you doing? What’s going on?”

The two of them had already crushed their teleportation talismans. Unfortunately, thanks to the dramatic situation, the talismans that the Captain had said would ‘never, ever malfunction’ were somehow not working.

Chapter 570: Look, Everyone! Who’s That on the Nail? (part 2)

The Captain inhaled deeply, his eyes wide and somewhat blank.

“I have no idea what’s going on! Something weird is happening. This is too bizarre! I just came in here to take a picture! I didn’t touch anything! I definitely didn’t do anything to instigate something like this. How could these Gloomites be so unreasonable? We do one tiny thing and they go and destroy everything? What are they doing! This is outrageous!!”

Trembling, the Captain looked up at the enormous blue nail, and his blank expression changed into one of shock.

That’s freaking... the weapon of an Imperial Sovereign!!! These Gloomites are all psychos! In order to destroy us, they’re deploying the weapon of an Imperial Sovereign? They were never this vicious back in the day! Also, where did they get a weapon like that? Wait, hold on. That’s the same nail that’s in the forehead of the Imperial Sovereign’s third son! What the hell? That was supposed to be my sixth major heist! Who’s taking that thing? Who?? Who is the early bird getting that worm??

The Captain was both shocked and also a bit defiant. There was no questioning that the aura he felt was from the weapon of an Imperial Sovereign. The Captain quickly snapped a jade slip, but it didn’t do anything. After that, all he could do was turn around and run. As he did, he pulled out more teleportation jade slips and snapped them.

“Stop standing around shivering, you two! Hurry up and follow me. We have to get out of here. This really isn’t my doing!”

“It’s definitely your doing!” Wu Jianwu shouted angrily. However, he also knew that now wasn’t the time to lose his temper. Gritting his teeth, he promised himself that if he survived, he would make sure to stay as far away from this crazy person as possible.

The terror in Ning Yan’s heart swept away any fear he had of the Captain, so he shouted, “This is just like the Ten Entrails Tree! Chen Erniu, don’t you know that you can’t die if you don’t have a death wish??”

Despite those words of fury... he still followed the Captain.

The three of them were like three tiny rabbits fleeing in the face of a landslide. But then, the rumbling sounds in the sky grew louder, and the area of devastation widened. Countless chunks of ice rained down from above as the massive nail pierced down and stabbed directly into the surface of the major world fragment. The descent of the nail sent out terrifying shock waves that obliterated countless deceased souls. Violent winds swept out.

All the Captain, Ning Yan, and Wu Jianwu could do was huddle together in the patch of skin and flee as fast as they could.

The Captain was really not inclined to give up so easily, and looked back in the direction of the descending nail. When he did, his pupils constricted and he gasped.

“What the eff? That nail... there’s someone standing on it!!”

Hearing that, Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu instinctively looked over their shoulders. Sure enough, they saw that atop that absolutely terrifying nail... was a person.

The blue light made it hard to see, but that person’s robe and hair whipped in the wind, making him look like an immortal. His beautiful facial features and slender frame were completely attractive in every sense of the word. The way he stood atop the nail made it seem like it was his personal weapon that he was controlling. The imposing manner, the grandeur, were enough to deeply shake anyone who could see.

The Captain suddenly stopped in place. Gaze somewhat blank, he said, “Say, guys, does that fellow look familiar...?”

Ning Yan stared, his eyes filled with disbelief and his mind a complete blank. Wu Jianwu stood as motionless as a wooden chicken, his eyes numb. Reaching out, the Captain pinched Ning Yan very hard. When Ning Yan yelped in rage, the Captain knew that he wasn’t hallucinating. His eyes began to shine.

“It really is little Ah Qing!” The Captain started jumping up and down and waving his hands. “Little Junior Brother! I’m right here!”

Meanwhile, in the shattered sky, the massive nail continued to descend. The ground was shattered and collapsing in many places. Ice fell out of the icy sky like rain.

Atop the nail, Xu Qing was not as calm as his facial expression might indicate. He was actually trembling inwardly, and was absolutely shaken to the core. The pressure from the nail really was fearsome. From the moment the nail had stabbed into the glaciers in the world above, it had

smashed through all obstacles without a pause. All of the layers of ice had shattered, until the nail pierced all the way to the major world fragment.

It had taken him here. Upon looking around, Xu Qing saw the shattered black glaciers, as well as the light source in midair, which resembled a sun, except that it was going dark.

Xu Qing couldn't help but be curious about why there was a sun here. Then he saw the figures fleeing like rabbits down on the ground below. His expression became one of absent-minded curiosity.

It seemed impossible that the Captain and the others would be here. After all, they were supposed to be meeting at Mount Heavenly Ox soon. Xu Qing had been hurrying on his way, worried about being late, only to find the Captain right here. The feeling of disbelief only lasted a moment before vanishing. It took only that long for him to realize that it actually made sense to find the Captain here.

After all, given how crazy the Captain was, the more unimaginable a place was, the more likely he was to go there. The Captain had already traveled far, far down the path of having a death wish. He didn't ever seem to get tired of it. And the only way he would stop would be if he reached the end of the path....

Such thoughts only existed in Xu Qing's mind for a moment. Then, it was without hesitation that he jumped off the gigantic blue nail.

Given the speed of the nail, the moment Xu Qing left its surface, he was already a great distance away from it. However, blue light still surrounded him protectively as he shot toward the Captain and the others. Behind him, the blue nail picked up speed. Surrounded by blue light and whipping winds, as well as by the collapsing heaven and earth, it got closer and closer to the icy surface of the ground.

In the blink of an eye, there were only about 6,000 meters between the tip of the nail and the ground.

Being that close, the destructive power of the nail could eradicate everything in its path. The layers of ice below shattered, revealing a huge crater.

As the 30,000-meter crater opened up, the deceased souls sleeping there didn't have a chance to awaken before being wiped out of existence. Those who did awaken had it worse off, as they were unable to flee, and could only scream as they were ripped to shreds.

The distance shrank by 300 meters. 2,400 meters. 1,500 meters....

The ground was completely cracked and shattered, and the massive hole was so huge it couldn't be covered back over like the crevice created by the Captain's sun. Finally, a massive boom echoed out, and the entire major world fragment shook violently, as the Imperial Sovereign's nail stabbed deeply into the depths of the crater.

A tempest sprang up, and a violent shock wave spread out. From a distance, it was possible to see the ice layers exploding out from that central area.

50 kilometers. 500 kilometers. 5,000 kilometers.

The ice layers erupted in a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering manner. The nail pierced into the crater like a hot knife through butter, crushing everything and piercing into the depths of the soil. As everything collapsed, the nail pierced through the outer layer of the earth! Keeping up its terrifying momentum, it continued stabbing down!

Despite Xu Qing being in midair some distance away, the shockwaves still slammed into him and sent him tumbling away like a kite with its string cut. Thankfully, he was protected by the blue light, so all that resulted was he coughed up a few mouthfuls of blood.

The Captain, Wu Jianwu, and Ning Yan had already flown up into the air. With the patch of skin as a shield, they weathered the storm. The Captain had already retracted his sun. That said, all three of them were still trembling with fear.

As Xu Qing got close to them, he raised his voice and said, "Fly up! Something big is about to happen below!"

Xu Qing knew exactly what the nail was aiming at, and thus he knew that this world fragment was heading toward destruction. After shouting his warning, he turned and fled toward the shattered canopy of heaven.

The Captain and the others followed at top speed. Everybody knew that now wasn't the time for reunions. Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan were rather slow, so the Captain grabbed them and then held nothing back to fly high into the sky.

As they got farther from the ground and closer to the canopy of heaven, the entire world started shaking. It was far more intense than before. The effects went beyond 5,000 kilometers, filling the entire major world fragment. Because the cause came from above and went down, the effect came from below and went up!

Beneath the layers of ice in the major world fragment, there was some colossal entity... and it was emerging from a sealed state of slumber into consciousness! It shivered, and then started rising from beneath the ground. Layers of ice exploded, and ice chunks flew everywhere. A huge bronze coffin broke through the ground, the ice, and the snow to appear right in front of Xu Qing and the others.

It looked exactly like the coffin at the bottom of the Heavenfire Sea! It was horrendous and stupefying! After having been buried under the ground for countless years, it... was finally out in the open! An ancient aura spread out from it, filling the area. In the lid of the coffin was a nail, spreading out from which were numerous tiny cracks.

In that shocking moment, the face of the Heir Apparent appeared in the blue mist surrounding the nail. Looking down at the coffin, he quietly said, "Time to wake up, Third Sister."