

Timescape 591

Chapter 591: Name Your Price, Young Sir!

The coquettish voice seemed like silk threads that drifted through the air, into the ears, and down to the soul.

Xu Qing frowned and looked at Li Youfei.

Li Youfei, who was visibly stunned, shook his head and said, “Not me... I don’t have any. I lost it all in Qi Condensation.”

The clay fox glanced disdainfully at Li Youfei. “Where did you come from, you piece of trash?” She looked back at Xu Qing, her eyes glittering flirtatiously. It was as if she could see right through Xu Qing’s disguise. “Also, you’re so handsome! I’m getting worked up just looking at you.”

The clay fox stood and stepped out of the shrine. Then, the fox’s entire body rippled as she transformed into a bewitchingly charming young woman. [1]

Her ample chest swayed as she walked, and her hourglass figure was so incomparable that Li Youfei gasped upon seeing it. As his heart raced, he thought, *Seductress!*

She wore gauzy red clothing that only half covered her, and looked like it might fall off at any moment. Her skin was so fair it was almost translucent, and her curvaceous body was so attractive that anyone who looked at her would be overwhelmed with the desire to be with her.

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered coldly as he assessed the seductress’ cultivation base. She was clearly in Nascent Soul. His shadow spread out, but as soon as the woman took a step forward from the shrine, it shivered and tumbled back to Xu Qing.

The woman licked her lips and smiled. “Young sir, although we’re both in Nascent Soul, you’re not aware of my background and origin. I don’t want to use force on someone as cute and lovable as you. That would take all the fun out of it. Therefore, let’s negotiate. Name your price.”

Xu Qing didn’t respond. This was his first time experiencing something like this. Ling’er had already stuck her head out of his sleeve. She was clearly bristling with rage, to the point where her scales were standing on end as she glared at the woman.

The woman ignored Ling’er. She slowly looked at Xu Qing from head to toe. Then she looked back into his eyes and licked her lips again.

“I won’t hurt you,” she said. Then she took out a bottle gourd and slowly shook it back and forth. “I have nine painquelling lozenges here. There used to be ten, but someone bought one of them for twenty red heavenfire crystals. I can give the rest to you, if you’d like. Sound good?”

Xu Qing was very taken aback.

When she saw his facial expression, she felt herself burning with even more passion than before. Next, she took out a silver-colored bone. Smiling, she continued, “This is a bone pill from an almighty member of the Ancient Spirit species. It would be very useful to that little snake of yours. Want it?”

Ling'er was visibly stunned for a moment, but then she clenched her teeth and continued glaring at the woman, all while refraining from even looking at the bone pill.

The woman smiled and took something else out. Astonishingly, it was an internal organ from a human. It was golden and crescent-shaped, indicating that it was probably a kidney.

“This little treasure came from a crazy person who took a bite out of Crimson Mother, and was subsequently chopped to pieces. Someone gave me the kidney later on. If you spend a few days with me, young sir, you can have it to replenish your emptiness.” [2]

Shocked, Xu Qing looked at the kidney. Ling'er, meanwhile, was starting to get nervous. Li Youfei was astonished, and looked enviously at Xu Qing.

When Xu Qing didn't respond to the woman, she sighed.

“The young man made a big mistake; he somehow took to favoring a snake. Ah, whatever. Take care of your primal yang, young sir. If you ever change your mind, you can come back and look for me right here. I'd be happy to do business any time.”

The woman turned and swayed back to the shrine, where she turned back into a clay fox. During the entire exchange, the clay people just stood there expressionlessly. And once she was back in the shrine, the procession continued on its way. As the sinister wind blew, they went through the valley and then disappeared into the distance.

Everything went quiet.

Xu Qing looked thoughtfully in the direction the clay fox had disappeared to. Ling'er looked nervously at Xu Qing. Li Youfei stood off to the side with very mixed emotions, not really sure of what to say. Ever since leaving the desert, things had been very strange.

Speaking in hardly more than a whisper, Ling'er said, “Big Bro Xu Qing...”

“There was no curse on her,” Xu Qing replied calmly.

Ling'er sighed.

Li Youfei shivered. “Grandmaster, do you mean... she's from out of the region?”

Xu Qing shook his head. The clay fox had shown up too unexpectedly, giving him no chance to assess whether she had passed by randomly, or if she had come this way on purpose. What was more, the items she had pulled out were all extraordinary to say the least. He couldn't help but wonder if the painquelling lozenge she'd mentioned selling was the same one he had bought in the Moonrebel Congregation. And then there was that kidney...

Xu Qing hesitated for a moment. However, in the end, he knew he couldn't stay in this location for very long. Turning, he left in the opposite direction. Li Youfei hesitated briefly, then followed him.

Half a month flew by.

Xu Qing followed the directions of the parrot the entire time. Every day, he would spend more time studying Li Youfei. As a result, he gained a lot of inspiration regarding pill concocting, and also continued to make changes to his version of the painquelling lozenge.

At first, Li Youfei was very nervous about the whole thing. But as the days passed, he gradually stopped caring. Just about every day, he ate more painquelling lozenges than he could afford even if he sold himself.

Eventually, Xu Qing came to learn why Li Youfei had chosen to leave the Bitter Life Mountains, specifically, because of his conflict with a patriarch there.

“Patriarch Inkrule is in the Void Returning level. He’s the number-one expert among rogue cultivators in the Bitter Life Mountains. He deals with both the Red Moon Cathedral and the Moonrebel Congregation, and has always lived well doing so. Having no other options, I killed his apprentice to pass the Moonrebel Congregation test...”

Thinking back to how things played out, Li Youfei surreptitiously looked at Xu Qing out of the corner of his eye. Sighing, he mused that things really hadn’t gone well. After all, though he successfully killed his target, he didn’t manage to keep his hands on the corpse. The reason he was surreptitiously looking at Xu Qing was that, over the course of the past half a month, he had come to realize that Xu Qing had two godslave corpses. They were none other than the ones he had killed in the white wind.

Xu Qing had been experimenting on them, especially when reaching a deadlock in his work on Li Youfei. When that happened, he would often take them out and dissect them for research purposes. As time passed, his dissection methods grew increasingly brutal. Sometimes he would remove their organs to study, sometimes he would crush their bones to check the marrow. It always involved a lot of blood.

Xu Qing had discovered something very interesting about the two godslave cultivators. Their internal organs were in different states of invasion. Although the curse within them had turned into a blessing, that transformation wasn’t complete.

“I wonder what Spirit Trove godservants would look like,” he murmured.

During times like that, Li Youfei would shiver. Although there was no screaming involved when Xu Qing dissected the corpses, Li Youfei would still watch with his heart full of trepidation. He had always thought of himself as a ruthless person. But compared to this grandmaster, he almost didn’t even count as being ruthless. And he couldn’t help but fear the prospect of this grandmaster coming up with the idea of experimenting with Li Youfei’s corpse.

As he stewed in anxiety, they got closer and closer to the Yin Sacrifice River in the west. Eventually, Xu Qing solved the final problems with his new painquelling lozenge.

At the moment, they were about a month away from the Yin Sacrifice River, atop a mountain. Li Youfei lay in front of Xu Qing on the ground, unconscious.

Xu Qing had just finished with some experimentation. He looked at Li Youfei, whose life force was flourishing, then at the pill he had just concocted. His eyes gleamed with satisfaction. This pill was the result of the fantastic circumstances relating to Li Youfei’s body, as well as all the research he’d done on the two godslave corpses.

It didn’t look very different from a normal painquelling lozenge. It had the same five-colored exterior. But if you examined it closely, you would find that it also contained a white color, making

it generally lighter in appearance. That said, in terms of its medicinal efficacy, it was poles apart from the original. It didn't just quell the pain from the curse. It could actually reduce the curse levels!

If you assigned a numeric value to the curse level in a person, say 10,000, then consuming this pill would reduce the level to 9,999. Although that wasn't very much, perhaps even too little to notice, it was still a big leap forward.

And that was because the reduction was permanent! The fundamental principle was similar to antibodies. Once the reduction occurred, it never changed. And the pain relief was only a side effect. There were other side effects. For instance, it drained life force. However, the drainage was less than with the ordinary painquelling lozenges, while the pain relief was even more effective.

Unfortunately, the curse reduction only works the first time you consume it. After that, you get pain relief but nothing else. That's because the curse is alive, and it will adjust to deal with the pill effects.

Xu Qing was slightly disappointed, but at the same time, realized that problems like this couldn't be solved instantly. In order to improve this pill, he needed more information about the curse.

Also, if I could experiment on a Spirit Trove godservant....

The more he thought about it, the more he was convinced that Spirit Trove godservants must have some fantastic mysteries hidden within them.

Another problem is that plants are just too rare in the Moonrite Region. I remember that some forbidden regions have plants with a lot of mutagen in them. If I could add some of those medicinal properties into this pill, then I could probably make my version of the painquelling lozenge even better.

Xu Qing had the shadow cover the sleeping Li Youfei, which sent him into even deeper sleep. After making sure that the surroundings were safe, Xu Qing took out the mirror fragment and went to the Moonrebel Congregation.

It had been quite a while since he went there, so when he arrived on the altar in the temple, he felt a bit uncomfortable. After taking a moment to acclimate, he went outside. The sky was bright and blue, causing him to squint a bit as he looked around.

In the distance... he saw the temple where he had paid heavenfire crystals to get the first painquelling lozenge. It made him think about the clay fox, which caused his guard to go up. Whether it was a coincidence or not, he still got the feeling that his original opinion of the Moonrebel Congregation was correct. People here were complicated.

This time, he didn't leave his temple. He waved his hand, and a beam of light shot from the depths of the temple to form a ball in front of him. It looked just like the balls of light in the other temples. After inspecting it, he put one of his altered painquelling lozenges inside. Next, he made a notation of what he wanted for it.

One hundred drops of blood from a Spirit Trove godservant.

It wasn't an outrageous price. For him, concocting these painquelling lozenges wasn't difficult. After all, he had given over two hundred of them to Li Youfei. And ultimately, he wanted to

improve the pill even more. Based on his previous experience, he knew that after he put the item in and listed the price, he could leave and come back later to collect the profit.

Hopefully it doesn't take very long.

With that, he went back to the altar and left.

Back on the mountain top, he woke up Li Youfei and continued traveling.

The next day in the Moonrebel Congregation, the burly man from the temple next to Xu Qing's opened his door and walked out. With his bare chest and ribbons of stone, as well as his intimidating expression, he seemed very dazzling in the sunlight.

It's been quiet recently.

He came to the Moonrebel Congregation on a daily basis to enjoy the sunlight. Only in this place did he feel truly alive, to the point where he was reluctant to go back to the real world. The real world was full of darkness and suffering, and he was constantly forced to think about the tragic fate that awaited him in the end.

There were many people like him who would rather stay in the Moonrebel Congregation permanently. However, there were rules in place, so no matter how much he liked it here, he had to go back to the real world every few days. That was the main reason he got so infuriated by the racket Xu Qing had made earlier. After enough time, anyone would start to get annoyed at having their precious peace disturbed.

Upon walking out into the peace and quiet, the burly man stretched, then prepared to go for a walk. That was when he noticed the ball of light in Xu Qing's temple. The burly man's eyebrows shot up.

So, the annoying scoundrel put some stuff up for sale?

The burly man wasn't very surprised. It actually made him chuckle disdainfully. He remembered how the person from that temple would always act so mysteriously, and hardly did business with anyone. Whenever he glared over, that person would flee like a scared rabbit.

Ah, whatever. Might as well see what the scared little rabbit is like.

The burly man was clearly not very happy to have a neighbor like Xu Qing. Swaggering over, he went into Xu Qing's temple. Noting that there wasn't any incense in the corroded cauldron, he snorted sarcastically. Once inside, he glared scornfully at the unmoving statue on the altar, then shifted his attention to the ball of light.

I wonder what he finally put up for sale. Probably some junk.

He touched the ball of light, whereupon his previously calm expression flickered. Then his eyes went wide and he stopped moving, as if he had been struck by numerous bolts of lightning.

Chapter 592: Becoming Famous in the Moonrebel Congregation

Painquelling lozenge? The first thing he puts up for sale is a painquelling lozenge? And that price...

The burly man started breathing heavily, as if he didn't dare to believe what he was seeing. He checked again, just to make sure he wasn't hallucinating.

Only one hundred drops of godservant blood?

The burly man was almost struck senseless. Although painquelling lozenges were rare, having been in the Moonrebel Congregation for years, he had seen them for sale many times. Thus, he knew how outrageously expensive they could be. In his memory, he had never seen any painquelling lozenge offered for such a low price. At first, he suspected that it might be some sort of scam.

However, in the Moonrebel Congregation, the way transactions worked was that the seller had to put the sales item on display so that potential buyers could inspect it. For one thing, that forestalled inadvertent mistakes. Beyond that, it made it possible to inflict severe penalties in the case of fraud. In minor cases of fraud, the result might be trade sanctions on that temple. But in severe cases, the owner could be expelled from the Moonrebel Congregation, and never allowed to return. Because of that, most people never tried to run scams. It just wasn't worth it.

The burly man looked closer at the pill. After examining it, he started breathing even more heavily, and his heart started pounding. Turning, he rushed out of the temple.

A mistake! From the time I joined the Moonrebel Congregation until now... this is the biggest mistake I've ever seen! I need to buy that thing immediately. If I miss this chance, it'll be the biggest regret of my life! The little rabbit must surely know how much that pill is worth. So why offer it at such a low price...? Maybe he wrote down the price wrong. He probably meant one thousand drops of godservant blood!

The burly man was determined to get that painquelling lozenge before the foolish seller returned.

I've got to snatch it before someone else does. Thankfully this location is relatively remote. I doubt anyone will notice that pill for a while. I can't let anyone find out about it!

The burly man struggled to suppress his excitement and instead look cool and collected. Noticing someone walking down the road in his direction, he plastered a look of disdain onto his face, as if he had just looked at a pile of trash.

After quickly finding a place with no one nearby, he further suppressed his excitement and got in touch with his friends in the Moonrebel Congregation. He also used all of his other connections and contacts to find godservant blood.

The little rabbit didn't specify blood from a specific person, which makes this easy. Over the years, lots of people have made deals with godservants, so their blood isn't exactly rare.

The burly man was in very high spirits. It only took a day for him to make arrangements to get the hundred drops of godservant blood. Worried that someone might beat him to the punch, he stood guard outside his own temple while he waited for the blood to arrive. He pretended like he was just out enjoying the scenery, but was constantly keeping an eye out on all the other passing statues, worried that one of them might enter Xu Qing's temple.

When he finally got the godservant blood, he raced like the wind into Xu Qing's temple, rushed over to the ball of light, and completed the transaction. Once the painquelling lozenge was in his hand, he smelled it, whereupon his heart erupted with excitement.

The color. The smell. It's the same as the ones other people sell. Seems this thing is real! Hahaha! What a big mistake!!

All of a sudden, he realized that the statue on the altar seemed to be moving.

The little rabbit is coming back. He must have realized he made a mistake. I can't stick around!

Spinning, he hurried out, looking very much like someone who felt guilty at having taken advantage of someone.

The moment the burly man left, the statue's eyes opened.

Xu Qing was back.

I had no idea I would sense it when someone buys something from me. Pleasantly surprised, he glanced outside the temple. A moment ago, he had seen someone hurrying out. Though he'd only seen their back, it seemed like his angry neighbor. Given how the man had been hurrying out, Xu Qing could guess what had happened. He probably thinks I made a mistake in the price. So he hurried away feeling guilty.

Xu Qing didn't care. Stepping off the altar, he walked over to the ball of light. The light glittered, and a bottle flew out into his hand. After checking it, his eyes gleamed with satisfaction.

It's not blood from a single person. There's blood from a few dozen. Not bad. Not bad at all.

He was very pleased. He now had plenty of specimens to work with. With that, he took out another painquelling lozenge and put it into the ball of light. Just as before, he listed the price as a hundred drops of godservant blood. After that, his statue went still again as he left the Moonrebel Congregation.

Shortly after, his bare-chested neighbor cautiously stepped out into the open. After making sure Xu Qing was gone, he breathed a sigh of relief.

Hahaha! That idiot must have been so pissed off just now.

Thinking back to all those months of noise, the burly man felt wonderful. Then he noticed that the ball of light in Xu Qing's temple again had something for sale in it. Looking very pleased with himself, he walked over.

Let's see what other stuff the little rabbit is selling.

Feeling very smug, he reached out and touched the ball of light. Instantly, his eyes went wide, and he felt like his mind was being struck by even more lightning bolts than before. Yet again, he wondered if he was hallucinating, and had to double check what he was looking at. A moment later, a blank look appeared on his face.

How... is there another one? And the price is still a hundred drops of godservant blood? Impossible! Is this guy really just a complete idiot...? No. There must be something wrong with the pills!!

Expression turning grim, the burly man hurried back to his temple. He was going to go see if the pill he had purchased was real.

If it's fake, I'm going to make sure he gets what's coming to him!

Gritting his teeth, he left the Moonrebel Congregation. The next day, he came back, bits of lingering shock still on his face. Looking like a madman, he raced back toward Xu Qing's temple.

Real. It was real!

However, his excitement only lasted until he walked back into Xu Qing's temple, where he discovered that someone else had already purchased the second pill. Regret filled him.

Dammit! Why didn't I buy the thing right then and there?

The burly man slumped, feeling pain in his heart, as well as the regret of missing out on something. He waited around for a few days after that, hoping that Xu Qing would come back and put up more medicinal pills for sale. During that time, his regret intensified.

However, Xu Qing never came back. The two hundred drops of godservant blood had given him a lot of inspiration, and had also helped him improve his concocting techniques.

He was still about half a month away from the Yin Sacrifice River, but this time, he was in the middle of a sprawling plain, concocting more pills using Li Youfei. Yet again, he was thinking about the medicinal plants in the forbidden regions.

Just because I don't have any right here doesn't mean they don't exist....

After some more thought, he went back to the Moonrebel Congregation, where he put another painquelling lozenge up for sale. This time, instead of asking for godservant blood, he asked for a specific medicinal plant. Having done that, he left.

About an hour later, his burly neighbor emerged from his temple looking full of regret. Acting on instinct alone, he looked over at Xu Qing's temple. When he saw the ball of light glowing, he shivered from head to toe, then rushed over. Getting the godservant blood he'd prepared ready, he reached out to the ball of light.

There really is another one for sale! This guy... wait, hold on!

Although the asking price had changed, making it impossible for him to buy the pill immediately, he knew the medicinal plant in question. He had seen it for sale before. Though it was expensive, it couldn't possibly compare to a painquelling lozenge.

This guy must be some sort of grandmaster! He must be able to concoct painquelling lozenges with ease. Either that, or they aren't important to him. Or maybe he has some amazing background that makes him so generous! Regardless, he's clearly a very important person!

The burly man was convinced that this was the most amazing destined opportunity of his entire life. Turning, he left to find the medicinal plant the grandmaster wanted, deeply worried that someone might beat him to the punch.

Unfortunately, his fear came true. The moment he walked out of the temple, another statue rushed over, burst into Xu Qing's temple, and headed right toward the ball of light.

Shocked, the burly man turned to look at the newcomer. The newcomer touched the ball of light, looked shocked, and then noticed the burly man looking at him. He looked back. The two of them obviously recognized each other and didn't like each other very much.

"It's you, 99715!" the burly man said through gritted teeth. In the Moonrebel Congregation, people didn't use their real names. When they got to know each other,

they used their temple address number. The burly man was familiar with this newcomer, as he was another of the local neighbors.

“Only those connected by destiny can get the pills of a grandmaster!” the other statue said. Chuckling coldly, he raced away.

The burly man replied with a cold harrumph. Then he raced away in the opposite direction. About ten hours later, he finally found the medicinal plant Xu Qing wanted. After rushing back, he saw 99715 walking out of the temple.

“Too late,” said 99715, who then sat down cross-legged outside of Xu Qing’s temple.

The burly man wasn’t ready to give up that easily. After going inside to check the ball of light, he went outside and also sat down to wait. He had the right idea. In the following days, Xu Qing came back over and over again with more painquelling lozenges. To Xu Qing, it was a very convenient situation. By doing business in the Moonrebel Congregation, he was able to easily make progress with his painquelling lozenges. Whatever he needed for his experiments, he could get by offering pills for sale. At the most, it would take about a day to get what he wanted. Sometimes it only took three or four hours.

As a result, the quality of his painquelling lozenges increased quickly and dramatically. Although he had already sold a few dozen painquelling lozenges, he could make more at any time using Li Youfei.

Li Youfei, meanwhile, grew so astonished that he was numb. Every single day, Xu Qing used him to concoct more medicinal pills. It was almost unimaginable. Occasionally, he found himself wrapped up in a childish daydream in which... he ended up being the hero who saved all of the Moonrite Region. But after looking at Xu Qing, he would abandon such thoughts and make sure to be even more cooperative.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing’s activities were causing a bit of a commotion in the Moonrebel Congregation. It had started with two statues waiting outside of his temple. That soon changed to four or five. Eventually, as word spread, the number of statues waiting outside his temple reached into the dozens. The statues all stayed on guard. Whenever light started shining in Xu Qing’s temple, they would rush inside, check the ball of light, and then scatter in the hopes of being the first person to track down what was being asked for. Of course, the sight of so many statues sitting around waiting made passersby curious. And the clamor prompted inquiries. As a result, astonishment spread in the Moonrebel Congregation.

Before long, the number of statues waiting outside of Xu Qing’s temple went from dozens to hundreds. The effects of so many people milling about were terrifying. The situation became even more pronounced as the cauldron outside Xu Qing’s temple accumulated more than thirty sticks of incense burning in it. That was especially eye-catching. When the crowd reached into the hundreds, word really started spreading.

“Did you hear about the mysterious and compassionate grandmaster?”

“His temple address is 99719. Because of that number, I say we should call him Grandmaster Pill Nine!”

“Grandmaster Pill Nine’s painquelling lozenges cost only a tenth as much as everyone else’s. And they’re more effective! He really cares about the common people, and wants to save all living beings!”

“That’s right. That’s why Grandmaster Pill Nine only asks for medicinal plants and godservant blood!”

“I knew about Grandmaster Pill Nine’s amazing power when he first joined the Moonrebel Congregation! All of you people who just showed up recently have no idea how extraordinary he really is. Back then, the grandmaster spent two months transmitting an amazing dao reverberation that filled the area and resonated with the heart and mind! It was an immeasurable blessing for me to be here from beginning to end. It was an exciting experience, but at the same time, it left me feeling very clear-headed. What’s more, the curse in me was suppressed, all thanks to the mysterious and unpredictable mercy of Grandmaster Pill Nine! Sadly, it only lasted for two months. That’s what leaves me sighing with regret. As I think back, those two months were so wonderful....”

From the burly man’s facial expression, it seemed that he was having trouble even expressing himself in words. And thus, word started to spread through the Moonrebel Congregation about Grandmaster Pill Nine.

However, it eventually reached the point where Xu Qing didn’t put up any new medicinal pills for sale for a few days in a row. That was because he had finally reached the banks of the Yin Sacrifice River.

Off in the distance he could see the roiling waters. Even being far away, he smelled the stench of gore and saw countless corpses floating by. It filled him with revulsion. Even the sand was red, and the entire place thrummed with the feeling of the curse.

This was the spot the parrot had led him to, where he was supposed to meet the Captain.

He continued walking. After passing some warding spells, and reaching the red sand, his expression flickered as he heard the sound of the Captain, Ning Yan, and Wu Jianwu breathing heavily.

He also could hear some of their conversation.

“I can’t do it. It’s stuck! It won’t come out!”

“It’s fine. Don’t be scared, Big Jianjian. Just pull harder! It’ll come out at any moment! Put your back into it, Big Jianjian! Use those legs!”

A strange look appeared on Xu Qing’s face as he heard Ning Yan screaming.

“Nooo! It’s gonna break. Everybody get your hands off....”

Chapter 593: Extracting Suns from the Ancient Yin Sacrifice River

The entire Moonrite Region was surrounded by the Yin Sacrifice River, with the exception of a mountain range in the northwest that connected to another region. The river was almost like a sealing mark that encircled the region and trapped all the living beings inside.

The area where Xu Qing had just arrived was in the southwest. There were unbroken chains of mountains here and not much vegetation. Because of being so close to the river, the wind brought with it an aroma of death and decay that filled the area.

However, the bizarre dialogue that the wind brought with it changed the dark and gloomy atmosphere into something a bit different than before. An odd expression appeared on Xu Qing's face, all while Ling'er poked her head out of his sleeve.

"What are they doing, Big Bro Xu Qing?" Ling'er then covered her face with the hem of Xu Qing's sleeve.

Li Youfei had been wondering this whole time where they were going. Being so close to the Yin Sacrifice River, and hearing the voices carried to them, he also had a strange, uneasy expression on his face, and he even backed up a few steps. Although it seemed unlikely, he couldn't help but wonder if this all had something to do with why Xu Qing had given him all of those painquelling lozenges, and maybe even his reason for refusing that clay fox.

No, it can't be... Li Youfei thought, trembling in the depths of his being.

Xu Qing had no way of understanding why Li Youfei was so apprehensive.

There were warding spells here. Not only did they provide the concealment of invisibility, but also, they isolated this area and cut off both sound and sight.

Now that Xu Qing was close enough, he could tell that the Captain had used his blood to set all of this up to allow for Xu Qing to be able to enter without any trouble. Looking thoughtful, Xu Qing took a few steps forward, squatted down, and put his hand on the ground. He could sense that he was right on top of one of the warding spell eyes. Brushing the sand aside, he revealed an eye, which looked at him and blinked a few times. There were other similar eyes in the area. There were also blue worms wriggling in the sand. The area in question was a good 500 kilometers wide.

When Li Youfei saw all of that, he shivered as if facing a powerful enemy. To him, this area seemed far more gruish than the white wind in the desert.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was already speculating about what was going on.

When we parted last, Eldest Brother said he had a 'small job' to handle.... What exactly is he doing that requires warding spells covering a 500-kilometer area? [1]

As he pondered that, the eyes and worms stirred, emanating emotional fluctuations. At the same time, the Captain's voice rang out.

"Hahaha! You're here, little Ah Qing! Hurry over here and help pull!"

Xu Qing still had a strange expression on his face, but without the slightest hesitation, he hurried forward. As he did, the eyes and worms parted to make a path for him.

As he proceeded, the vicious dialogue and the panting grew clearer. After less time passed than it takes half an incense stick to burn, he experienced a sensation similar to passing through a curtain of water. Then everything became clear.

The first thing that attracted his attention was a colossal object on the river bank. It was a huge structure shaped like a door frame, crafted from bronze-colored stone. It was fully 9,000 meters tall and 3,000 meters wide. It loomed over the riverbank like an ancient giant, emanating pressure that was both shocking and majestic. Xu Qing saw innumerable ancient magical symbols covering it, and just looking at it left him feeling shaken.

Inside of the door frame, there wasn't an actual door. Instead, it was a massive object formed of concentric rings of black metal. The rings on the top and bottom were the smallest, with those in the middle being the largest. It almost looked like a huge spring. It was mottled with rust, and some parts of it dripped with red river water. Apparently, it had been submerged in the river for a very long time.

Xu Qing couldn't even begin to guess what he was looking at. Looking off to the side, he saw the Captain, Wu Jianwu, and Ning Yan, lined up in a row.

The Captain was in the front, holding a vine, bent over and gasping for breath as he pulled as hard as possible. Behind him was Wu Jianwu and a host of his children, all of them similarly pulling on the vine. Ning Yan was last in line, sitting on the ground with his legs splayed and his feet in the sand, moaning and howling as he tugged on the vine coming from his belly.

“Don't! It's really gonna break....”

The vine extended from his belly all the way into the Yin Sacrifice River up ahead.

As all of them pulled, the river water seethed. It was just barely possible to see some massive, circular object underneath the water, slowly being pulled up.

“Hurry up and help, little Ah Qing!” the Captain yelled, sweat pouring down his face as he pulled hard on the vine.

Wu Jianwu also gasped for breath as he looked over at Xu Qing.

Sounding helpless and hopeless, Ning Yan howled, “Help me, Biggest Bro....”

Meanwhile, a streak of light shot away from Xu Qing. It was the parrot. The host of tiny, new feathers that were starting to grow out on him made him look extremely ugly. It took only a moment for him to land on Wu Jianwu's shoulder. Looking like a child who had just escaped the clutches of a fiendish devil, he started crying.

“Daddy, I thought I would never see you again!”

However, before he could go into detail about everything he'd gone through, his daddy knocked him to the side with his head and shouted, “Grab the rope and pull!”

The parrot was both stunned and indignant at how horrible the world was. However, since his daddy had told him to do something, he had no choice. Just like the hapless Ning Yan, he had to start pulling as hard as he could.

Although Xu Qing had some misgivings, he walked over to the Captain, grabbed the vine, and pulled.

Li Youfei hurried to help as well, flashing a smile at Wu Jianwu, looking curiously at Ning Yan, and glancing at the Captain, all while trying to figure out which of the three ranked highest in seniority.

With their help, there was a lot more pulling power. The water seethed, and rumbling sounds rang out as a huge circular ring appeared at the edge of the river.

“What is that thing, Eldest Brother?” Xu Qing asked as he pulled.

The Captain took a few gasping breaths, but couldn't hold back from proudly saying, “You certainly took your time getting here, little Ah Qing. But that's fine. There's still time. See that big door frame behind us? Hahaha! Wanna guess what it is?”

Xu Qing shook his head and looked puzzled.

Upon noticing Xu Qing's facial expression, the Captain laughed heartily.

“It's a sun! The Moonrite Region used to have nine artificial suns, but three of them fell from the sky. You know about that, right? Well, that door frame is one of those suns that perished! And what we're pulling on is another of the three fallen suns. This is the small job I came here to handle. In spring, I planted the seed. Now it's autumn, and the time has come to harvest three suns!”

As a matter of fact, the Captain had tracked down all three of those ancient fallen suns in a past life, and had even gone so far as to repair them. Then he hid them in the Yin Sacrifice River.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, was shaken, and couldn't help but look back at the huge door. Never could he have imagined that the thing was actually an artificial sun.

“It's all thanks to Ning Yan. Hahaha! I knew it from the very beginning. The little punk does have an amazing bloodline. After I put that vine into him, then blessed it, it's able to resist the corroding effects of the Yin Sacrifice River.”

The Captain tugged hard on the vine. Further back, Ning Yan heard the Captain's words, and an angry look appeared on his face. By now, he regretted nothing more in life than his decision to go to Sea-Sealing County. If he hadn't gone to Sea-Sealing County, he would never have gotten to know Chen Erniu. And if he didn't get to know Chen Erniu, then he would have avoided a lot of misery. That couldn't be truer of the current moment. Inside, he was trembling with fear at the thought of Xu Qing's grip faltering, which could easily result in himself getting dragged into the river. That said, on his adventures with Chen Erniu, he had eaten a lot of very interesting things, and was now on the verge of breaking into the Nascent Soul level....

“Everybody, crank it up!” the Captain shouted.

They pulled harder. Water sprayed everywhere as the huge item finally broke the surface and neared the shore.

It was massive, being over 9,000 meters tall. And it radiated immense pressure. As it got closer, Xu Qing was finally able to see clearly what it looked like. It was a massive ring, and though it was covered with red water, he could tell that it was actually the color white. Most gruish of all was that

the middle part of the huge ring was filled with countless person-shaped statues. They were standing on the ring itself, hands clasped with each other to form an inner ring. However, the ring they formed wasn't complete. Xu Qing could see that there was one statue missing, creating a gap.

"Little Roundy, get out here and pull your dad!" the Captain shouted. Taking out the artificial sun he'd taken from the Lonesuns, he added it to the effort. As water blasted everywhere with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force, the huge ring slowly got closer and closer. About an hour later, they finally managed to pull it out.

When it landed with a massive thump on the shore, Ning Yan sagged to the ground. Wu Jianwu did the same. In contrast, the Captain, despite looking exhausted, ran over and ran his hands over the surface of the ring, his eyes shining fanatically.

"Little Ah Qing, do you know this thing's name? It's Big Roundy!"

Xu Qing approached and looked at the massive ring. He couldn't help but feel admiration for whatever species it was that created this thing.

"Help me push it over to Big Boxy, little Ah Qing."

The Captain excitedly started pushing, and Xu Qing joined. Together, they managed to roll the gigantic ring across the sand to a spot right next to the huge door frame. There, they dropped down and sat on the riverbank, huffing and puffing.

Xu Qing looked at the two colossal items. He sighed. "Eldest Brother, are you sure this is the 'small job' you mentioned?"

The Captain laughed heartily and threw his arm around Xu Qing's shoulders.

"Of course it's a small job. Once we're finished here, it's off to the Bitter Life Mountains. And that's where... we'll do something *really* big! By the way, little Ah Qing, how did things work out for you over there?"

"Alright," Xu Qing replied. "I opened a little medicine shop."

"Medicine shop?" the Captain said, his eyes glittering. "Not bad! I bet you need a shopkeeper, don't you?"

Ling'er poked her head out. "No, we don't!"

The Captain chuckled, looked at Xu Qing and Ling'er, and then nodded knowingly. Clearing his throat, he continued, "Forget about that for now. There's still a big fellow at the bottom of the river. Let's rest up, then we'll start pulling again. Let me tell you, little Ah Qing, this last one is not going to be simple! It's the very first artificial sun created in the Moonrite Region. There's even a story that says it comes from the time of the Imperial Sovereign."

Off to the side by Wu Jianwu was Li Youfei, who was feeling shaken to the core. Being a native of the Moonrite Region, he obviously knew about the artificial suns. To have personally seen one dragged out into the open was something outright shocking.

Are all of the grandmaster's friends this terrifying?

They rested for a bit, but not long enough for Li Youfei to overcome his shock.

At that point, the Captain stood. Heading toward Ning Yan, he excitedly called, "Time to get to work, everybody! This is the last fellow to pull out. Let's go!"

As Ning Yan looked pleadingly at the Captain, the Captain patted his shoulder.

"This is the last one, Big Ningning. I promise you, we'll get that thing I said I would get for you. It'll definitely push your bloodline so high it'll surpass your own father's!"

Ning Yan looked back at the Captain suspiciously.

Grinning enigmatically, the Captain grabbed Ning Yan's vine and tossed it into the river.

Xu Qing still felt a bit apprehensive, but he walked over to join the Captain nonetheless.

The Captain laughed heartily. Feeling warmth in his heart, he said, "You're the best, little Junior Brother. You really do care about your Eldest Brother. Earlier, Ningning and Jianjian just watched while I jumped in the river. Neither of them came with me! Alright, let's do it!"

With that, the Captain ran forward and jumped into the river. Xu Qing followed. Both of them unleashed the power of their cultivation base to fight back against the power of the water as they dropped down toward the bottom of the river. The Captain's method of protecting himself involved blue light shining all around him. Xu Qing did things a bit more simply. He just sent out the power of the violet moon. And thus, the two of them sped downward.

The river was dark, and the blood-red color grew deeper as they went down. There were corpses everywhere.

Xu Qing saw the rotting corpse of a girl floating by, eyes open. Ignoring it, he continued down.

There were terrifying entities in the river, but the Captain's blue light and Xu Qing's violet moon authority cowed them. None of them dared launch an attack.

Time slipped by slowly but surely. With the Captain guiding it, Ning Yan's vine extended down with them as they neared the bottom of the river. It was hard to say how much time passed. Eventually, a huge sphere appeared below, many thousands of meters in size. It was in bad shape, with lots of damage, as if it had gone through a battle. Its rusty surface added to the extremely ancient feeling it imparted.

Anyone who looked at it would feel a sense of decay thanks to the countless years it had witnessed. This was indeed the very first artificial sun that the Imperial Sovereign had created for the Moonrite Region.

"We're here!" the Captain said to Xu Qing via hand signs. With Xu Qing to keep an eye on the area, the Captain neared the huge sphere with the vine in hand.

Xu Qing kept watch vigilantly.

Unbeknownst to Xu Qing and the Captain, there was someone seated cross-legged in the ancient, rusty sphere! He was gaunt and wizened, and wore a brown robe. His skin was covered with

countless veins that vaguely resembled mountain ranges. Long gray hair floated around him, which slowly became deceased souls that drifted in the sphere.

As the Captain and Xu Qing neared the sphere, he opened his eyes, and they shone with blue light that could shock the soul.

He was none other than the Heir Apparent! As he looked out of the sphere, a strange expression appeared on his face.

Chapter 594: What The Heck Did We Pull Out??

Xu Qing and the Captain had no idea what was inside the sphere.

As Xu Qing stood guard, the Captain closed in on the sphere with Ning Yan's vine. Eventually, he found a spot where he could attach the vine to the damaged exterior. However, he was worried that the connection might not be stable enough, so he continued wrapping the vine through several other spots as well. Eventually, he tied it into a huge knot. Then he bit his finger and used blood to draw a magical symbol, fusing the vine onto the sphere itself.

Having done that, the Captain patted the sphere, then settled down cross-legged and flashed a hand signal to Xu Qing.

A casual observer would have no idea what that signal meant. But Xu Qing knew. Feeling a bit awkward, he took out an image-recording jade slip, protected it with violet moon power, and then recorded an image of the Captain in the jade slip.

With that accomplished, the Captain raced over to check the image. Looking pleased, he winked and flashed another hand signal.

Xu Qing shook his head to refuse the Captain's invitation to return the favor and record a wonderful image of Xu Qing.

The two of them then followed the vine back up out of the river. Everything went smoothly. A few hours later, they were back on the shore. The moment they came out of the water, the Captain grabbed the vine.

"Get to work, people! Big Jianjian, just now I actually saw some inscriptions on that thing which were penned by Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity himself. Sadly, it was too dark to make them out clearly...."

Wu Jianwu had been lying on the sand resting, but when he heard the Captain's words, he jumped up, his eyes wide. Grabbing Ning Yan's vine, he shouted excitedly at his children, who all followed his example. The parrot was no exception. Ning Yan was starting to get nervous again, but he sat up just like before and grabbed the vine. Li Youfei was an astute person, so he grabbed the vine and started pulling, his face flushed from the effort.

As everyone pulled, the water started churning. At the other end of the vine, the huge metal sphere started rocking back and forth, and then it rose up a bit.

Inside of it sat the Heir Apparent. When he sensed the sphere moving, an odd expression appeared on his face, and he looked outside. It seemed like he wanted to say something, but in the end, chose not to....

As time passed, the metal sphere slowly rose out of the mud and started moving across the bottom of the river toward the shore. With every slight movement, the water seethed, and waves rolled out on the surface. It was creating quite a disturbance, but the Captain had prepared well, so it didn't attract any attention, at least temporarily. If the effects went on for too long, though, that could change. That was one reason why he was in such a hurry.

Unfortunately, there were a lot of rocks on the riverbed, and as the metal sphere hit them, it bumped up and down. And those effects reached the Heir Apparent.

The Heir Apparent no longer had an odd expression on his face. He was calm as he sat there, doing nothing to stop the Captain and the others from pulling on the sphere within which he was recovering from his injuries.

Three days passed in a flash.

Everyone was working so hard that, before long, the huge sphere became visible. After countless years of remaining unseen, it was now visible in the outside world. It was covered with rust, and seemed profoundly ancient. It even caused ripples to spread out in the sky.

“It's out! Everybody pull harder!”

The Captain excitedly tapped into all of the power in his cultivation base and pulled as hard as he could.

The huge sphere was fully 30,000 meters in size, making it even larger than the rings in the door frame. It moved very slowly, and even that required a huge amount of effort. On two occasions, the vine seemed like it might snap. Thankfully, the vine was being bolstered by both the Captain and Xu Qing's violet moon power, so it held strong.

With the goal right in front of them, everyone went all out. Xu Qing even grew his body larger, to a size of 15 meters, making him seem like a small giant.

Finally, as all of them gasped for breath, the sphere broke the surface. Then, a few hours after that, they managed to drag it onto the shore.

It was now out of the Yin Sacrifice River. As it lay there, red water dripped down its pocked surface, almost like a waterfall. The ancient feeling of the thing was even more intense now, and it radiated the effects of time, causing everything around it to pulsate.

Li Youfei was rocked to the core. Ning Yan inhaled sharply. Wu Jianwu's eyes shone brightly as he approached, looking for the inscriptions the Captain had mentioned.

The Captain, meanwhile, was sprawled out, hardly able to catch his breath. Looking at the gigantic sphere, he laughed proudly.

“What do you think, little Junior Brother? Is your Eldest Brother awesome, or is he awesome? Hahaha! Three suns! All sitting right here. Add in Little Roundy, and that means I have four. Let me tell you, although the other five Moonrite Region suns are in the hands of other species, I left back doors in all of them. When the critical moment arrives, all it will take is a thought on my part, and all nine suns will come to

me. Of course, I'll need a bit of help from you to deal with these three! Little Junior Brother, the big day we came here for is about to arrive!"

Xu Qing looked at the three massive items, his heart pounding. All of a sudden, he thought back to what the parrot had told him earlier, and a question occurred to him.

"Eldest Brother, when you mentioned lighting a fire, were you talking about these three suns?"

The Captain crawled to his feet, his eyebrows dancing up and down. "Exactly! Come on. The big sphere needs more time to dry off. Let's start by lighting the other two."

The Captain dragged Xu Qing over to the huge stone door frame. Reaching out, he put his hand on the door frame, his eyes shining with anticipation.

Xu Qing looked up at the thing, still trying to wrap his mind around how something like this could turn into a sun.

"Little Junior Brother, have you ever heard of *eternal power*?" The Captain pointed at the door frame. "*This* is eternal power. And it's also how it can be turned into an artificial sun."

The Captain waved his hand, and Little Roundy appeared. As Little Roundy's light focused on the door frame, the magical symbols on the bronze-colored stone began to glow.

They almost seemed to be powering up. Little Roundy continued to shine, until the magical symbols were all shining brightly. At the same time, loud rumbling sounds echoed out. Eventually, the door frame was shining radiantly, attracting the attention of everyone else present.

When the light was so bright it felt blinding, the Captain said, "Little Junior Brother, your amazing golden crow is the best fire to light all things. Use your golden crow power to breathe a bit of fire and light this thing up!"

The golden crow within Xu Qing erupted, manifesting as a majestic figure outside of him. To Li Youfei's astonishment, the huge golden crow swirled around a few times, then faced the doorframe and breathed a blast of heavenfire. A boundless sea of flames swept over the door frame, and was then sucked in by the magical symbols. Then powerful fluctuations pulsed out and gathered in the huge spring. The spring vibrated.

"Again!" The Captain spat out some blood and added it to the effort, transforming Xu Qing's golden crow power.

The flames transformed, and the door frame started rumbling. As it shone brightly, countless fluctuations entered the spring, which started vibrating with even more intensity, until finally... it sank down with great force!

The largest ring, which was in the middle of the spring, slammed down. A huge boom rang out, and the land quaked. Countless boulders shattered, and everyone present staggered. Then the spring shot back up and slammed into the top of the door frame.

Next, it slammed down again.

The cycle continued, resulting in constant rumbling booms. It seemed like it would keep moving like this for all eternity. Eventually, a sea of flames developed, sweeping out to cover the door frame and turning into a huge ball of fire.

Xu Qing looked on, his heart pounding. Everyone else reacted even more dramatically. Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were both staring, dumbfounded. Li Youfei was utterly and thoroughly stupefied.

As for the Captain, he laughed heartily and waved his hand. As a result, the sun in the doorframe shrank down until it became a beam of light that entered his hand.

After putting it away, the Captain pointed at the large ring that he and Xu Qing had pushed over earlier.

“On to number two, little Ah Qing!” the Captain said, and he pulled out a headless corpse. A mere glance revealed that the corpse was obviously from the Captain’s present life. He must have decapitated himself recently....

He threw the corpse toward the ring, and as it tumbled through the air, it grew larger and larger. Eventually, it was the same size as the person-shaped gap. When it landed in place, its hands connected with the hands of the statues on either side. The inner ring was now complete!

“Give me some fire, little Ah Qing!” the Captain shouted.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing had the golden crow breathe out some more heavenfire, which swept over the ring, and then shot toward the Captain’s corpse. The corpse ignited, and then the fire spread to the statues on either side of it. One by one, the statues lit up. As they did, their eyes opened, and they began chanting a spell. At the same time, they began moving in unison like a gear. Intense rumbling sounds spread out as the fire grew more intense. A moment later, the ‘gear’ was spinning rapidly, and the huge flaming ring turned into a sun.

The Captain flew over, reached out, and grabbed it. Just like the door frame, the new sun shrank down, and the Captain put it away.

“Hahaha! That couldn’t have gone more smoothly. In fact, it went so well it felt weird!”

Xu Qing suddenly went on guard. As far as he could remember, whenever the Captain did something big, unexpected things always happened. If the Captain hadn’t said what he just said, Xu Qing might not have been worried about anything. But now he felt uneasy.

When the Captain saw Xu Qing’s expression, he looked displeased.

“Now now, little Ah Qing, don’t you trust me? Like I said, this wasn’t a big job. It was a small job! I’ve been planning it for a very, very long time, so there’s absolutely no chance anything unexpected could happen. You were watching just now. Everything went incredibly smoothly, right? Come, come. Let’s light the last one. After, we’ll depart for the Bitter Life Mountains!”

Licking his lips, the Captain looked at the metal sphere. There wasn’t as much water draining off it now. What was more, there were some things that resembled evil spirits that were coming out of the inside and looking around malevolently.

“We can light it now,” he said. “Just send the fire over. When those evil spirits get burned up, they’ll be an offering for the sun.”

Xu Qing hesitated briefly. It was true that he didn’t see any signs that something unexpected would happen, and therefore, he decided to trust the Captain. With the wave of his hand, he sent the golden crow flying up into the air, where it breathed out a sea of flames toward the metal sphere.

Boundless fire enveloped it. The fire had been lit.

The Captain then prepared to take out some items he had prepared for this moment to make sure the sphere was completely ignited. However, before he could, the huge sphere vibrated and rose up into the air of its own accord.

The fire went wild, making it seem like the heat was about to go completely out of control. It was the same inside the sphere. In the blink of an eye, the thing looked like a giant soldering iron. If that was all there was to it, it might not have been a big deal. But then it started emanating terrifying fluctuations that made it seem like... it was about to self-detonate!

Chapter 595: An Old Grandpa in a Sun

A massive burning metal sphere currently hovered in the air above the Yin Sacrifice River, emanating terrifying pressure along with loud crunching sounds that resembled the grinding of teeth. It had turned bright red, and its surface was so hot it was starting to melt. Fluctuations of instability rolled wildly off it, such that anyone who looked at it would feel indescribable terror. The pulsations of the ancient sun caused countless grains of red sand to rise into the air. It was the same with the river, as innumerable droplets of blood-red water floated upward.

Everyone on the river bank was so astonished they felt like they were being struck with 1,000,000 bolts of lightning.

“What’s going on?” Li Youfei said.

“Dammit, I *knew* this would happen!” Wu Jianwu blurted.

“Every time Chen Erniu does anything, bad things go down!” Ning Yan snapped.

“Does he really have a death wish? I can’t believe I trusted all of his goddamn nonsense again!!”

Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan were both deathly pale in the face as feelings of deadly crisis exploded within them. Both of them were trembling visibly. Ning Yan was the first to turn his shock into action. Screaming, he turned and ran. As he fled, he tried to pull the vine all the way back underneath his garment.

Wu Jianwu’s cultivation base wasn’t high enough, and he was also slower, so as the vine swept past him, he grabbed onto it and used it to flee.

Li Youfei also reacted quickly. This was his first time accompanying Xu Qing, so he wasn’t prepared. But as his spine tingled, and he saw the terrifying fluctuations of self-detonation coming off the sun, he instinctively fled.

All three of them wished they could teleport away, but the Captain’s warding spells had the place locked down. Besides, the fluctuations coming off of the sun had thrown the surrounding space into

chaos, making teleportations impossible. The parrot might have been able to, except... his feathers still hadn't grown out yet.

"We're finished! Finished! I can't believe I'm going to die! This is so messed up!" Furious, the parrot bit down onto Ning Yan's vine. "The biggest mistake in my entire life was going to the Bitter Life Mountains...."

It didn't matter how quickly everyone fled, they couldn't flee far enough.

Seeing what was happening, Xu Qing sighed. This was exactly what he had thought would probably happen. Whenever the Captain did something big, things like this went down. However, he didn't flee in the same direction as Ning Yan and the others. Instead, he turned toward the Yin Sacrifice River. It seemed like a much better choice to rely on the power of the river to stay safe, rather than flee out into the wide open.

As he burst into motion, he shouted some advice to Ning Yan and the others.

"Get in the river!"

Hearing that, Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu changed directions. Li Youfei was surprised, but after thinking about his own special abilities, he gritted his teeth and did the same.

Meanwhile, the Captain was just staring at the sun up above, completely dumbfounded. Sensing the fluctuations coming off of it, he turned to the fleeing Xu Qing.

"There's no way! I planned everything. Things can't go wrong. This really was just a small job...."

As Xu Qing reached the water, he looked at the Captain. "You call this a small job?"

"Yeah, it's really a small job! Dragging some things up and lighting them on fire!" The Captain's heart was in chaos. This really went beyond anything he could have predicted. As he had said, he really did prepare for a long time for this job. "How could dragging up a sun lead to this? It's not a god or something! Logically speaking, this shouldn't be happening."

The Captain felt both humiliated and hurt that something was going on with the sun. This didn't conform to his plan at all, and it seemed he wouldn't be able to take the sun away.

"I'm going to go take a closer look, little Ah Qing. Maybe I can repair—"

All of a sudden, the ancient sun's aura erupted again, sending out terrifying fluctuations. The sand was no longer rising up into the air. Instead, the high levels of heat were causing everything to melt. The nearby water was steaming as the aura of self-detonation grew more intense. The massive detonation of a sun like this would release indescribable force. But one thing was for sure; everything in the area would definitely be incinerated.

As a result, the Captain gave up on his idea of repairing the sun. Xu Qing took a deep breath, and as the sense of deadly crisis built within him, he backed up into the water.

But then, the sun floating above suddenly dropped down. Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth as intense heat rippled out, and pressure weighed down everywhere. Most terrifying of all was that the

sun wasn't just moving straight down. It was actually going in the direction of Xu Qing and the Captain.

Xu Qing could only watch as the massive sun drew near. As it did, the Yin Sacrifice River near Xu Qing and the Captain solidified.

It wouldn't permit them to enter!

Xu Qing's face fell, and he prepared to change directions. But then a massive amount of pressure wrapped him up. In the blink of an eye he was shaken to find that he couldn't move at all. It wasn't just him. It was the same with the water and the land. Ning Yan and the others had stopped moving, and were locked in place.

"What is this?" the Captain moaned. "Is this thing intelligent or something?"

Xu Qing's scalp tingled. Everyone else felt like their astonishment had turned into tempests of death in their mind.

Meanwhile, as the sun neared, it shrank. As everyone trembled, it unexpectedly shrank down to roughly the size of a fist. And then someone seemed to step out of thin air and grab it.

He was an extremely handsome man in a brown robe, with long, flowing hair that turned into deceased souls. He had blue eyes, almost like gemstones, which gave him an extremely noble air. When he appeared, everything above and below went still. The wind stopped blowing. The fire stopped burning. Even the waters of the Yin Sacrifice River became as tranquil as a painting. All creation calmed down because of the presence of this person. The only thing left behind was the boundless terror in the hearts of everyone present.

Ning Yan was terrified. Wu Jianwu was shaking. Both of them recognized this person....

Li Youfei seemed to be the closest to a complete breakdown. Ever since he had started following Xu Qing around, the things he experienced surpassed anything he could have imagined. What he had gone through in the past several months went far beyond anything he had experienced before in his entire life. Although he had no idea who this newcomer was, it couldn't have been more shocking to see him take a sun that was about to explode and fiddle with it in his hand.

The Captain, meanwhile, looked on with pupils constricted, his heart battered by waves of shock and astonishment.

How could there be a person inside my sun.... Just what the heck did I drag up? And why does this person... seem so familiar?

The Captain was trembling.

Also trembling was Xu Qing. As he looked at the person holding the sun, he felt blank inside. Never could he possibly have imagined that the Captain's 'small job' of dragging up some suns would also involve dragging up the Heir Apparent of an Imperial Sovereign!

Then Xu Qing thought back to the scene at the bottom of the river when they found the metal sphere. The Heir Apparent must have been inside at the time. Thinking back to the stories he'd heard about the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom fighting the godchild of the Red Moon Cathedral, he could only guess that the Heir Apparent must have gone into hiding in this sun while he recovered.

It was true that a sun would make a great hiding place. After all, this ancient sun originated in the time of the Imperial Sovereign, so the Heir Apparent would naturally know a lot about it. And though the Yin Sacrifice River was a dangerous place, with Crimson Mother sleeping, it was actually very safe.

Normally speaking, it would have been virtually impossible for anyone to find him. That is... except for the Captain, whose entire plan had been to drag that sun to the surface.

Looking very calm, the Heir Apparent approached Xu Qing and the Captain. Looking down at them, he asked, "How did you find me? And why did you try to light my hiding spot on fire?"

With that, he waved his hand, dispelling the restraining power that held them in place. Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu flopped onto the ground, as did Li Youfei. All of them were shaking uncontrollably. The terrified parrot scrambled to hide in his father's sleeve. The Heir Apparent's gaze and aura contained unimaginable pressure that filled the area.

Trembling, the Captain tried to be dismissive and fawning at the same time. "Senior, it was just a misunderstanding! A misunderstanding.... Our bad. So, we'll take off now. No need to pay any further attention to us, venerable sir. Er... maybe you should go back and rest some more?"

As he spoke, the Captain slowly backed up.

The Heir Apparent looked at him calmly.

The Captain plopped to the ground, a geyser of blood spraying out of his mouth.

The Heir Apparent looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing eyed the Captain coughing up blood. Looking very respectful, he clasped hands and bowed to the Heir Apparent. Being just as courteous as he had been in the past, he said, "We had no idea you were in there, Senior. We're here to work on the mission our Master gave us to locate three suns."

The Heir Apparent looked at Xu Qing and smiled mysteriously. Forgoing any further questions on the subject, he looked off into the distance.

"He'll be here soon. We should leave. Young friends, where did you plan to take these suns after you dragged them up?"

Xu Qing hesitated, but in the end, didn't dare to hide the truth. "The Bitter Life Mountains."

"The Bitter Life Mountains?" The Heir Apparent thought for a moment, then smiled. All of a sudden, his appearance changed as he transformed into a kindly old grandpa. Retracting all of the pressure and every last fluctuation, he clasped his hands behind his back, making him look very much like a random mortal shopkeeper.

"I was planning to go in that direction myself," he said, starting to walk. "Let's go together. On the way, I'll explain some secret information about the Red Moon Cathedral that relates to you."

Ning Yan and the others looked on, flabbergasted. For some reason, their attention was focused on Xu Qing. As for the Captain, he stopped coughing up blood, crawled to his feet, and also looked in shock at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing wasn't completely sure of what to do, but after a moment, he gritted his teeth and hurried after the Heir Apparent.

The others quickly followed. Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu exchanged a glance. Both of them felt weak in the knees, and could see the astonishment in each other's eyes.

A living Smoldering God....

That was what both of them were thinking. As for the Captain, he quickly composed himself and then rushed to the Heir Apparent's side. Acting very much like a servant, he took out a fan and started gently waving it in the Heir Apparent's direction.

"Grandpa, you look hot. Allow me to cool you down, sir. Grandpa, are you tired? Big Jianjian, call your precious bear out immediately for the grandpa to ride!"

Everyone trembled as they proceeded along. Only Xu Qing looked the same as usual. However, in his heart, he was trying to figure out what was going on.

I guess we're going back to the Green Spirit Pharmacy?

About two hours after they left, everything blurred and rippled as an enormous figure appeared.

It was impossible to make out any details about this newcomer. He wore a voluminous red cloak that spread out in all directions and caused everything to turn the color of blood.

Godly might that surpassed Void Returning filled heaven and earth, causing countless natural and magical laws to manifest. It was even possible to see projections of suns, moons, stars, and other heavenly bodies. Everything blurred as the power of the red moon spread out. The figure waved a hand, and time flowed in the opposite direction in the area.

Countless illusory shards formed together, as if to reveal what had played out in the area earlier. However, just as the shards were connecting, but before they could form a stable image, they started vibrating. A moment later, they shattered and dispersed.

The figure looked at the Yin Sacrifice River, and the waters seethed.

"Come to me, river spirits," he said, his deep voice echoing over the water.

In the blink of an eye, a host of river spirits appeared. All of them bowed deeply to the cloaked figure.

"Well met, Pontiff."

"What happened here?" the enormous figure asked coolly.

The river spirits looked around, confused and shaking their heads. They had no idea what happened.

"Altered perceptions...." The huge figure looked off into the distance, then turned and faded into nothing. However, his voice continued to echo even after he'd left. "So, you

were hiding here, Heir Apparent.... Now that you're on the move, where are you going?"

Chapter 596: Crimson Mother's Mortal Flesh

The sky above the Moonrite Region was like a permanent evening. Even at nighttime, there were no stars, no sun, and no moon. It was as if a black sheet had been spread over the dome of heaven, covering all living things and obstructing the eyesight of all beings.

Right now, undetectable ripples flowed through that night sky. Within those ripples was a huge artificial sun. It was none other than Little Roundy.

The Heir Apparent had declined to use Wu Jianwu's bear as a mount, so the Captain ended up taking out Little Roundy instead.

The Heir Apparent was actually quite pleased with the artificial sun. With the wave of his hand, he concealed it with invisibility, and as a group, they sped in the direction of the Bitter Life Mountains.

The atmosphere was tense inside the sun.

Ning Yan sat still, his back straight, but unable to refrain from trembling. Despite being in pain from head to toe, he had been shaking for the better part of a day now. Like a mortal facing a tiger, he simply couldn't calm his heart and mind as he sat there.

Wu Jianwu was in a similar state. He hardly dared to breathe too loudly.

Li Youfei was even more on edge. After coming to his own conclusion about the cultivation base of this 'grandpa,' his apprehension and terror turned into beads of sweat that rolled down him constantly. He could hardly breathe. The suffocating feeling filled him with even more reverence for Xu Qing than before. In fact, that reverence had reached a peak level that seemed difficult to surpass.

In his mind, this grandmaster truly was a grandmaster. Not only did he have a mysterious background and accomplish unimaginable things, but also, he was acquainted with Smoldering Gods.... Li Youfei had heard of that cultivation level before, but during his entire life, had never seen a dead one, let alone a living one. Truth be told, he hadn't even seen a scrap of hair from such a being. As he thought about that, he couldn't help but glance at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing was currently sitting next to the Heir Apparent. Few people would dare to sit in a position like that, and in reality, Xu Qing hadn't intended to. But the Heir Apparent had beckoned him over.

As a result, Xu Qing had no choice but to steel himself and sit down there.

As for the Captain... he was one of those 'few people,' so he did dare to sit there. He fanned the Heir Apparent nonstop and hadn't let up with his fawning behavior. "How's the airflow, grandpa? Okay? Would you like more?"

The Heir Apparent grunted an affirmative response.

The Captain immediately started waving the fan a bit harder.

Xu Qing's hair stirred as he sat next to the Heir Apparent. He understood exactly why the Captain was working so hard, and even cast him an encouraging look. The Captain saw that and waved the fan even harder.

The Heir Apparent was looking at the floor. The Captain, Ning Yan, and Wu Jianwu had lived in this sun for quite a while now. As was expected, the spot where three grown men had been camping out for such a long time was quite a mess. That was even more the case considering that Wu Jianwu had all his animals with him.

Noting what the Heir Apparent was looking at, the Captain opened his mouth to speak. Before he could, the trembling Ning Yan rushed forward with a rag to clean the floor.

The speed with which he acted prompted a profound gleam to appear in the Captain's eyes.

Ning Yan wasn't paying attention to the Captain, though. For all he knew, this 'grandpa' might be his future patron and supporter, the person to save him from the sea of suffering he wallowed in currently. As long as he served this new master well, it was entirely possible that the Captain might be too scared to cause problems for him. Thanks to his frantic efforts, the place was soon much cleaner.

The Heir Apparent looked pleased.

Thinking back to certain people he remembered, and how they looked in situations like this, Ning Yan quickly tucked his hands into the opposite sleeves and plastered a smile onto his face. [1]

"Grandpa, sir," Ning Yan said, "if there's anything you find displeasing, please just let your humble servant know. Your humble servant will immediately take care of it."

The Heir Apparent looked at Ning Yan with a glimmer of reminiscence in his eyes, as if Ning Yan reminded him of an old friend. His expression softened.

"Your bloodline is fairly strong. If you keep working hard, there's no limit to what you can do with it."

Hearing that caused Ning Yan's heart to swell with excitement, and he bowed deeply to the Heir Apparent.

Wu Jianwu noticed all of that and suddenly felt nervous. Before he could do anything, though, the parrot flew over and cautiously landed on the 'grandpa's' knee. Wu Jianwu's heart swelled with apprehension, and he wondered if the parrot was intentionally trying to get killed.

However, the Heir Apparent didn't seem to mind. Looking at the parrot, he smiled. "Your bloodline is even more interesting."

When the parrot realized that the Heir Apparent wasn't shooing him away, he got a bit excited.

"When grandpa shows up, ya'll are stinky schmears; call grandpa's name and grandpa is here!"

The ridiculous poetry caused Wu Jianwu to inhale sharply, and start trembling inwardly at the fear that he might be implicated. However, the Heir Apparent just smiled again.

"Back in the day, your ancestor didn't talk like an Ancient Emperor."

Hearing that, the parrot gushed, "My ancestor is a stinky schmear! Grandpa's the best! Grandpa's the most awesome! Long live grandpa!"

The Heir Apparent grinned and petted the parrot's bald head. He clearly liked the parrot.

The parrot looked profoundly deferential as he let the Heir Apparent pet him. Then he looked around until his gaze settled on Ning Yan.

“Hey! Little Ningy! Why isn’t this place spotless yet, huh? Are you blind or something? From now on, whenever grandpa is around, you’d better make sure this place is spick and span!”

Ning Yan looked at the parrot. The parrot looked back disdainfully.

Saying nothing, Ning Yan went back to scrubbing the floor.

When the parrot realized that Ning Yan wasn’t talking back, he got a bit more daring. Glaring at the Captain, he said, “And you. Niu what’s-your-name. What kind of fanning is that supposed to be? Haven’t eaten today or something? How weak! Also, why are we going so slow? You’re only using one hand to fan grandpa, so feel free to use your other hand to fan the flames and get this sun moving faster!”

The Captain stopped fanning and looked at the parrot.

The parrot glared at him derisively.

The Captain’s eyes narrowed and he opened his mouth to speak. Before he could, the Heir Apparent suddenly said, “You’re the one who came to the Heavenfire Sea back then.” [2]

The Captain’s heart suddenly started pounding. Shaking his head, he said, “That wasn’t me. Definitely not.”

The Heir Apparent looked deeply at the Captain but didn’t say anything further.

The Captain breathed an inner sigh of relief. Then he waved his left hand to produce a second fan. “You’re very perceptive, little parrot. Thanks for the reminder. I’ll speed things up, Grandpa.”

With that, he started fanning with both hands, and the sun sped up a bit. [3]

When the parrot saw Chen Erniu obeying and the Heir Apparent being so encouraging, he felt extremely proud, and got even braver. He felt like this was the pinnacle of bird life, and that it was his moment to shine. Therefore, he ordered his dad to come over and massage grandpa. Then he glared at Xu Qing and prepared to exact revenge.

“Now there’s you, Little Qingy. We’ve got a long trip ahead of us, so get up and do a little dance for us. Grandpa here needs some entertainment!”

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu surreptitiously looked over to see what would happen. The Captain smiled mysteriously.

Meanwhile, no expression at all could be seen on Xu Qing’s face as he looked back at the parrot.

Sounding profoundly arrogant, the parrot said, “Hey, did you— ack!?”

Before the parrot could say anything else, it flopped onto the ground and coughed up a huge mouthful of blood.

“How’d you poison me?”

Xu Qing calmly ignored the parrot and turned to the Heir Apparent. Sounding very respectful, he said, “Senior, you mentioned earlier some information about the Red Moon Cathedral that relates to me. Sir, do you mind sharing some of the details?”

The Heir Apparent glanced at the parrot. Smiling, he reached out and stroked it gently. Then, a strange look appeared in his eyes as he turned his attention back to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing understood what the look in his eyes meant, so he said, “It’s a trump card my Master gave me. It’s a curse poison from a god.”

The Heir Apparent smiled enigmatically. Considering that he now looked like a kindly old man, his smile made him seem like an elderly person in the presence of younger family members.

Xu Qing made sure to keep a very respectful expression on his face.

A moment passed, and the Heir Apparent began to speak in a hoarse voice that filled the interior of the sun.

“You previously mentioned that we have a common enemy in Crimson Mother. I’m not sure what your Master’s plan is, but regardless, if you want to deal with Crimson Mother, the first step is to handle the Red Moon Cathedral. My most recent trip there was not just to deal with a personal grudge. I also wanted to see what sort of reserve powers Crimson Mother has given to the cathedral.”

The ears of Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu both perked up, and the Captain looked on, blinking.

“When we spoke before, the heavenly dao prevented you from hearing everything I said. But presumably you remember some of the things I told you. Crimson Mother, before reaching godly ascension, was killed by my father.”

Everyone present was visibly shaken by the words spoken by the Heir Apparent. That was especially true of Li Youfei. As a local, hearing this shocking information was enough to leave him reeling.

“The reserve power left to the Red Moon Cathedral by Crimson Mother is none other than the husk shē shed upon transforming from a mortal into a god! It contains raw power from the red moon, and it forms the nucleus of the cathedral. With it around, the cathedral cannot be destroyed.

“Anyone who gets too close to it will be absorbed. They’ll lose their identity and become a believer in Crimson Mother. Not even cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral dare to touch it. All they can do is enshrine and worship it. The godchild can use it to seek instructions from Crimson Mother. However, because Crimson Mother is currently sleeping, it won’t work.

“The only person who can make it work... is you.”

As Xu Qing considered the words, the Captain’s eyebrows raised slightly. However, the Heir Apparent didn’t say anything further.

Days passed. Wu Jianwu, Ning Yan, and Li Youfei slowly got used to the presence of the Heir Apparent, but all of them were still very nervous and couldn't relax.

The Heir Apparent cleansed the parrot of poison, who eventually got back into high spirits. The parrot was clearly afraid of Xu Qing, but had no qualms about being arrogant and bossy with everyone else. On many occasions, Ning Yan gritted his teeth in response to the parrot's words. The Captain frequently smiled grimly. With the Heir Apparent present, no one dared to act out of turn. That said, the parrot wasn't an idiot. When the Heir Apparent rested, he would stay very close by. There were never any chances to do anything to the parrot. However, the Captain wasn't going to forget any of this.

When the Heir Apparent was resting, the Captain started doing something new. In Xu Qing's presence, he would take out a mirror, go inside of it, and then come back out shortly after.

Every time he did that, he would look proudly at Xu Qing, hoping to see some surprise on his face.

Xu Qing never looked surprised. But the Captain didn't give up, so Xu Qing eventually sighed inwardly and asked the question he knew the Captain wanted to hear.

"Eldest Brother, what have you been doing with that mirror?"

Hearing that, the Captain laughed heartily. At long last he'd gotten the reaction he'd hoped for. "Given how much time you spent in the Bitter Life Mountains, I bet you know exactly what I've been doing. You're probably just so depressed that it took you a while to ask me. Am I right? Hahaha! You guessed correctly. I've joined the Moonrebel Congregation!"

Clasping Xu Qing's shoulder and giving him a knowing smile, the Captain continued, "I get it, little Ah Qing. You probably tried the same thing in the Bitter Life Mountains, except you got stuck in the second subtest. With the red moon authority you have, there's no way you'll pass it. What a shame you can't see the scenery there. Listen to this. Something really big happened in the Moonrebel Congregation recently. An alchemy grandmaster showed up!" Smiling mysteriously, he lowered his voice. "Nobody knows where this grandmaster came from. But guess what? Thanks to my hard work, I actually became friends with him."

Xu Qing hesitated briefly, wondering if the Captain was actually talking about himself. He was about to ask for clarification when the Captain proudly kept talking.

"But let's not get into that. In a bit, I'll tell you some stories about me and the grandmaster. The reason I bring this up is that I accepted a mission from the Moonrebel Congregation. For the past few days, I've been working on completing that mission. The reward is going to be amazing when I do. And with grandpa here, we have nothing to be afraid of, so I've been working even harder than normal!"

Xu Qing was familiar with the way the Captain always tried to take advantage of every asset available, so he wasn't surprised by any of this.

"What mission?" he asked.

Speaking in a near-whisper, the Captain answered, "There's an unlucky cultivator from the Moonrebel Congregation who cultivates some technique called the Ultimate Poison Resistance

Body. However, he actually ended up being severely poisoned and had to go into seclusion. He hasn't even moved since then.

"That cultivator is desperate for a way to dispel the poison. He's basically on his deathbed. It's so bad that he went so far as to reveal his actual location, and issued a mission to ask for help."

Chapter 597: Don't Eat Random Medicines (part 1)

Xu Qing didn't say anything in response to what the Captain said. However, the story sounded very familiar. He remembered encountering a cultivator who claimed to cultivate the Ultimate Poison Resistance Body. After concluding a transaction with him, Xu Qing had warned him not to directly consume the pill he'd given as payment. That cultivator had disappeared afterward. However, after Xu Qing got busy concocting pills using Li Youfei's body, he didn't pay much attention to the situation.

Is it the same person? Xu Qing thought.

"I bet the fellow is crazily anxious by now. That's why the reward for the mission is so amazing." A peach appeared in the Captain's hand. Taking a bite, he continued, "I figure that with grandpa here, if this poisoned guy is on a fishing expedition, we'll still be safe. But if he really needs help, then your skill in the dao of poison might be of some help. In other words, this could be a chance for us to earn a quick profit."

The Captain handed an apple to Xu Qing. "What do you think, little Ah Qing? Want to give it a shot? You might not have joined the Moonrebel Congregation, but that doesn't matter. I'm here!"

Xu Qing looked at the apple and considered the matter for a moment. "Sure."

He was curious to find out if it was the same person. And if it was... then it really would be a simple thing for him to get rid of the poison. After all, the information that person provided about the curse was accurate.

The Captain was pleased that Xu Qing had agreed. Glancing at the Heir Apparent, who was seated in meditation, he said, "With a Smoldering God here, it would be a big waste to *not* do this."

Truth be told, he had another reason for wanting to do this, and that was to make a name for himself in the Moonrebel Congregation. After joining, he had learned a bit about how the Moonrebel Congregation worked. Considering that the place was essentially a big marketplace, word of mouth was extremely important. Since he didn't have anything worth selling, he figured he needed to take a different approach. His golden ticket was going to be helping people.

And then there's that Grandmaster Pill Nine. There are so many people crowded around his temple that I haven't even been able to get inside. I need to think of a new strategy for that.

As the gears in his mind spun, he looked up at Xu Qing. "Say, little Ah Qing, how has your curse research been going?"

"I have some ideas," Xu Qing replied. Considering how proud the Captain was about joining the Moonrebel Congregation, he figured it wouldn't be appropriate to explain

that he himself had also joined. That would definitely be very disappointing to the Captain.

“Well, I wouldn’t worry. How could you expect that curse to be something easy to research? Later on if you have time, you might think about looking at painquelling lozenges.” The Captain’s eyes suddenly shone with longing. “Little Ah Qing, you have no idea how significant painquelling lozenges are to the people in the Moonrebel Congregation. Remember I said that something big happened there recently? And remember that grandmaster I became best friends with?”

Xu Qing nodded.

“Well he’s no simpleton. He’s a genius in the dao of alchemy, and can even mass-produce painquelling lozenges. I’m really lucky to have gotten to know him and have some very, very interesting conversations. I’m a fan of his genius, but he’s also a fan of my profound insights. That’s why we’ve become bosom buddies. Thanks to our conversations, I’ve seen his genius firsthand.”

The look of reminiscence in the Captain’s eyes caused Xu Qing to blink a few times. However, he didn’t say anything.

“Don’t feel discouraged, little Ah Qing. It’s fine. During one of our conversations, the grandmaster promised to give me a painquelling lozenge. Once I get it, I’ll hand it over to you so you can study it. Maybe you can unlock some of its secrets and concoct a few.”

The conversation had attracted the attention of Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu, as well as Li Youfei. None of them were members of the Moonrebel Congregation, so they had no idea what had been going on there recently.

When Li Youfei heard the Captain mention that this grandmaster could “mass-produce” painquelling lozenges, he couldn’t help but glance at Xu Qing briefly.

Meanwhile, Ning Yan asked, “Elder Brother Erniu, how could this grandmaster from the Moonrebel Congregation be so amazing? Can he really mass-produce painquelling lozenges?”

After coming to the Moonrite Region and having a bounty put on their head by the Yin-Yang Betwixt Flowers Sect, both Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu had come to understand how valuable painquelling lozenges were. Because of that, this information from the Captain was actually shocking to both of them.

The Captain stuck his chin up and smiled proudly. “Why do you think he’s *not* amazing? After Grandmaster Pill Nine made his debut, he shook the entire Moonrebel Congregation for two whole months with his dao reverberations. His neighbors were incredibly lucky. Apparently, the curse within them was suppressed significantly afterward. That’s why some people suspect that the Moonrebel Congregation personally extended an invitation for him to join.”

Ning Yan gasped and Wu Jianwu’s eyes went wide. Li Youfei was also visibly moved. Everyone was now paying keen attention to the Captain’s story.

“The most shocking thing of all is that his painquelling lozenges sell for a tenth of the standard market value, but they’re actually more effective! Since none of you are members of the Moonrebel Congregation, you have no way of knowing that every single day, Grandmaster Pill Nine’s residence is surrounded by a crowd of hundreds! When he puts a pill up for sale, hordes of cultivators go crazy trying to find whatever he lists as the asking price. It’s a really spectacular sight!”

The Captain sighed emotionally. Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan were reeling mentally. It was only Li Youfei who was truly starting to feel shocked, as he was now convinced that the grandmaster in question could only be Xu Qing. Xu Qing, meanwhile, plastered a shocked look onto his face.

“That being said, as the saying goes, *celebrities deal with both fame and controversy*. My good friend the grandmaster has his fair share of difficulties.” The Captain cleared his throat and then sighed. “Because his painquelling lozenges are so cheap, it’s affected the market as a whole. As his fame has grown in the Moonrebel Congregation, he’s picked up a lot of detractors. In fact, it’s hard to say how many there are.

“In any case, he hasn’t put any new pills up for sale in quite a while, and his detractors have taken advantage of that to spread a lot of bad rumors.

“Other grandmasters of the dao of alchemy have made public statements about him. Some praise him, but others disparage him. There are even people who claim that his products are dangerous, and that they’re not really painquelling lozenges. There are also people who claim that the pills he put up for sale weren’t made by him, and that he acquired them with shady methods.

“Some rumors claim that he’s actually working for the Red Moon Cathedral, and that the pills are secretly poisonous. Opinions differ.”

The Captain sighed. Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan sat there feeling blown away. Li Youfei didn’t say anything.

As for Xu Qing, he sighed softly. He hadn’t been to the Moonrebel Congregation in a while, so he had no idea about the things the Captain was describing, especially the slanderous things some people were saying.

“*The tree may crave calm, but the wind will not drop,*” Xu Qing whispered. “The best thing is to not worry about what other people say.”

“That’s right!” the Captain said, his voice tinged with emotion. “And that’s exactly what I said to my dear friend the grandmaster. Because of that, he’s in a good mood despite all the bad rumors.”

Xu Qing looked at the Captain and nodded.

The Captain appeared to be very pleased with himself, and was about to continue talking when the parrot opened his eyes from his position on the Heir Apparent's knee. Looking arrogantly at Xu Qing and everyone else, he squawked, "What are you people sitting around talking for? Get to work! And by the way, Niu what's-your-name, it's too hot in here! Get over here and fan grandpa immediately!"

The Captain's eyes widened into a glare. However, when he noticed that the Heir Apparent was finishing a session of cultivation, he sighed inwardly. With a fawning look on his face, he hurried over with his fan.

The parrot then contemptuously started scolding everyone else, even his father. Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and Li Youfei all got to work immediately.

Things were like that every day in the sun.

Xu Qing took it all in and sighed. It seemed to him that the parrot was setting himself up for a very bad end. And he was right. A few days later when the Heir Apparent was resting, the Captain brought Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu over to Xu Qing.

Grinding his teeth, the Captain said, "Big Jianjian, that parrot of yours needs to be taught a lesson. It's so annoying!"

Ning Yan nodded, and his eyes glittered with killing intent. The parrot's dramatic behavior had only continued to become more detestable. Li Youfei kept his head bowed and didn't say anything, as he knew it wasn't his place to add anything. But he felt exactly the same way.

Wu Jianwu thought for a bit, then took a deep breath. Eyes glimmering with pain, he lowered his voice and said, "*The unworthy son's actions bring great pain; does any love within him remain?*"

He was also annoyed by the behavior of his rebellious son. The parrot had been yelling at him left and right as well, and definitely was not acting in a filial manner. If things kept going as they were, Wu Jianwu could see a day in which the *parrot* demanded to be called dad.

Therefore, they started to come up with a plan. The downside was that the Heir Apparent was always around, and the parrot never left his side. At the Captain's suggestion, they decided that they would take action after they reached the Bitter Life Mountains.

And thus, time passed. When they were still about half a month away from the Bitter Life Mountains, the Captain ingratiatingly asked the Heir Apparent if they could make a quick side trip. The Heir Apparent agreed.

As a result, the artificial sun shifted directions and went to the Whitecloud Mountains, the location of the hiding spot of the cultivator who practiced the Ultimate Poison Resistance Body. It was located in Skywater County, which was two counties away from Greensand County. It was a place with a lot of vegetation, which made the place seem very alive.

Given the environment, there were a lot of sects and species there. What was more, because the Red Moon Cathedral's godchild was injured and in seclusion, the resistance movement in the region was flourishing. Much of that activity was among the organizations in the Whitecloud Mountains, and as a result, the Red Moon Cathedral was working hard to keep the area under control. When they arrived, it was immediately possible to see the effects of the cathedral's actions. Everyone in the artificial sun could see it.

As they proceeded along in their concealment of invisibility, one of the Red Moon Cathedral's church temples appeared off in the distance.

Chapter 597: Don't Eat Random Medicines (part 2)

Unlike the other church temple Xu Qing had seen, which was built on a heart, this church temple was atop a gigantic eyeball. Dark veins covered the eyeball, and it pulsed with the power of inspection, which it used to scan the area it passed through. There were a lot of cultivators on the asteroids that orbited around it, and they pulsed with killing intent.

When the Captain noticed it, he slowed down the artificial sun.

“What are they doing here? Did they track down my unfortunate friend?”

He quickly took out a mirror and went to the Moonrebel Congregation, only to return a moment later. Looking at Xu Qing, he said, “I got in touch with my friend. It seems that after he posted his mission, someone passed the information to the Red Moon Cathedral. Because of that, he isn't willing to tell me exactly where he's hiding.”

Xu Qing looked at the distant church temple and noticed that it had just shifted directions, and was now accelerating.

“I think they already found him,” he said.

The Captain immediately sent the sun flying in pursuit. Before long, they saw the church temple stop above a valley.

The huge blood-red eyeball pulsed with a demonic glow that locked onto the valley. Then, a streak of red shot out of the eyeball. Countless streams of blood created a magical symbol that entered the valley. The grounds shook. Boulders shattered. The sides of the valley crumbled, sending dust floating up everywhere. Everything in that spot collapsed, leaving behind a huge crater.

Shockingly, there had once been a cave under the valley.

In the middle of the crater that was all that remained of the cave, surrounded by masses of rubble, was an altar. And laying on that altar was a person. It looked like he wanted to fight to defend himself, but could hardly move. What was more, he was surrounded by a poisonous miasma. Blood was splattered all around the altar, some of it dried up and some of it fresh. Clearly, this person had been there for quite a while coughing up blood.

Seeing that, Xu Qing sighed. He recognized that poison....

The Captain blinked a few times as he also realized the poison seemed familiar. He looked suspiciously at Xu Qing, but didn't ask any questions. Instead, he looked at the Heir Apparent with a fawning expression.

“Grandpa...?”

The Heir Apparent was currently playing with the parrot and pretended not to hear.

The Captain gave Xu Qing a helpless look.

Xu Qing turned and bowed respectfully to the Heir Apparent. “Senior...?”

The Heir Apparent looked up and smiled. “What did you call me?”

Xu Qing blinked a few times. "Grandpa?"

The Heir Apparent smiled and looked out of the sun. A moment later... the Red Moon Cathedral's church temple suddenly shivered. Without any warning whatsoever, the asteroids orbiting it suddenly exploded, sending deafening booms out everywhere. The cultivators atop them instantly went unconscious and dropped to the ground like dumplings dropping into a wok of boiling water.

The church temple atop the eye seemed inclined to fight back, but in the end it just went silent, and the blood-red glow it emanated faded and went away.

A moment later the main entrance opened, and a middle-aged godherald stepped out clad in a red robe with golden trim. The godherald looked threatening without being angry, and pulsed with extraordinary fluctuations. He obviously had a very high standing in the cathedral. However, his eyes were blank and his face was expressionless and even numb. He almost looked like a marionette. Following him were three godservants in red robes, two men and a woman. They had similar facial expressions, and behaved in the same way. Next came a few dozen godslaves who walked in a similar fashion. It was almost as if they all had strings attached to them guiding their movement. All of them hovered up into the air, where they remained in place unmoving.

The grisly scene caused Wu Jianwu and Li Youfei to tremble. Although both of them knew that Smoldering Gods were terrifying, the reality was that they had no idea how strong they actually were. Now that they were seeing for themselves, it was like a new world was opened up to them.

It's like an actual god....

As they trembled, Ning Yan sighed and continued scrubbing the floor.

The Captain was thrilled. Giving Xu Qing an encouraging look, he jumped down into the crater below.

"37951, is that you?" he called out. The figure in the miasma stirred weakly. Eyes fluttering open, he struggled to rise, but failed. All he could do was call back to the Captain in a weak voice.

"The red moon is by no means eternal..."

"Now's not the time for code phrases!" the Captain snapped as he got closer. "Are you 37951 or not?"

"Yeah..." the figure replied from within the poison.

As they spoke, Xu Qing also emerged from the sun. Glancing around at the chaos, he descended into the crater and walked over to the blood-splattered altar.

I told him from the beginning not to take the whole pill....

With the man's identity confirmed, the Captain squatted at the edge of the miasma.

"How did you end up like this?" he asked curiously. "I thought you cultivate the Ultimate Poison Resistance Body!"

The figure in the miasma looked angry, and was about to say something, except his injuries suddenly caused him to cough up a huge mouthful of blood. He passed out.

“Don’t tell me he’s dead,” the Captain exclaimed, shocked.

Xu Qing waved his hand, and the poisonous miasma dissipated, revealing the unlucky cultivator within.

He was an old man dressed in a wrinkled navy blue robe. His hair was gray, and he had pronounced cheek bones and a large nose. He had a proud look to him, and he seemed like the kind of person who normally spoke his mind and acted decisively. His face was wrinkled, but he didn’t come across as a frail elderly person. Instead, he seemed dignified. He was clearly an important person. But right now, he was obviously in immense pain. His brow seemed to overflow with helplessness, as if the world had come to lack meaning to him. The black blood splattered on his face looked horrendous and ghastly. His hands were clenched into fists, as if he wished to crush away the unwillingness in his heart, and yet... could not.

Seeing that, Xu Qing sighed and waved his hand, sending a medicinal pill flying out. It landed in front of the old man, where it exploded, turning into a stream of white energy that entered his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

Within moments, the poison in the old man was already half dispelled. Seeing that, the suspicion in the Captain’s eyes grew. He looked at the old man. Then he looked at Xu Qing.

It seemed to him that Xu Qing had dispelled the poison a bit too easily. It was almost as if... Xu Qing was the original source of the poison.

No, that’s not possible. Little Ah Qing isn’t a member of the Moonrebel Congregation! How could these two know each other! He couldn’t be the poisoner.

As suspicion swirled in the Captain’s heart, the old man regained consciousness. After looking around blankly for a moment, he sat up, his gaze sharpening. Checking to confirm that the poison in him was gone, he looked at the Captain and Xu Qing, clearly moved.

“How did you get rid of the poison?”

Xu Qing didn’t say anything. He just backed up a few steps.

The Captain, meanwhile, chuckled sarcastically and looked the old man up and down. “First you have to tell us how you ended up like that, 37951.”

The old man didn’t respond immediately. He really was an important person, and he wasn’t used to Nascent Soul cultivators talking to him like equals. It was true that they had saved his life by dispelling the poison. But he had to wonder how they got past the Red Moon Cathedral forces. And that left him feeling a bit suspicious. That was especially true considering he had no idea what was going on beyond the crater...

Clearing his mind, the old man decided he needed to leave as quickly as possible. Standing, he smoothed out his garments, recapturing a bit of his usual dignity.

“I offer you my thanks, young friends,” he said. “However, I’d prefer not to get into personal details about myself. Suffice it to say that this was a tribulation for me. Please, don’t spread word about it.” With that, he took out a bag of holding and tossed it to the Captain. “That’s the reward I promised. It wouldn’t be wise to stick

around here for very long. We'll see each other again in the future, and I'll provide some further rewards."

The old man then flew up into the air. Ignoring Xu Qing and the Captain, he released the power of his cultivation base and prepared to start fighting if necessary. However, as soon as he was out of the crater and saw the situation outside, he lurched to a halt. As he looked around, his heart was battered by waves of shock, and his expression flickered dramatically. What he saw was a group of cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral all lined up in ranks. They weren't hurt, but they weren't moving, as if they lost consciousness. What was most shocking of all was that one of them was a godherald. And even the godherald was just hovering there quietly.

"What's going on here??" The old man felt rocked by astonishment. Deeply shaken, he looked back down into the crater. He had spent two months battling for his life with that poison, so he had no idea what had been going on outside. Also, where had those two Nascent Soul cultivators come from...?

Suddenly questioning his previous behavior, he dropped back down into the crater. This time, instead of acting proud and dignified, he adopted a very polite tone.

"I was caught up in the moment before and was a bit impolite," he said. "I offer profound thanks to you two Fellow Daoists for your kindness. About the scene outside...."

He could tell that something very strange was going on with the people from the Red Moon Cathedral. And yet he couldn't fathom what force could be at play that would cause an entire group of cathedral cultivators, including a godherald, to seemingly lose consciousness like that.

Xu Qing's face remained expressionless, but the Captain smiled.

"Don't worry about all that, 37951. Let me guess, that poison that almost killed you must be the work of some archenemy of yours. Am I right?"

The Captain was clearly very curious about the poison.

The old man looked the two of them over, then thought back to the shocking scene he had just witnessed. After a moment of consideration, he sighed. "No, it wasn't an archenemy."

"Then what happened?" the Captain asked curiously.

"Two months ago I bought a medicinal pill from someone in the Moonrebel Congregation."

"Then what?" the Captain prompted.

"It wasn't a very expensive pill, so I didn't look at it very closely." The old man shook his head helplessly.

"Was the pill some sort of trap?" the Captain asked.

The old man kept explaining. At first, he kept things very simple. But as the Captain interacted with him, he began to vent all the frustration and humiliation that had been building up within him.

“I thought it was just some ordinary poison pill. How was I supposed to know that some freaking whoreson was plotting against me? When I consumed the pill, everything seemed normal at first. It wasn’t that bad. But who could have guessed that the after-effects would keep getting stronger and stronger? Eventually, they went completely out of control, and before I could react, I was fully poisoned!”

“That’s outrageous!” the Captain said, glancing at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing’s face remained expressionless. In contrast, the old man was getting more worked up.

“Exactly! Completely and utterly outrageous! I could hardly move this whole time. I did everything I could to fight back and dispel the poison. I was basically on death’s door when you arrived. This whole dang thing is something a good person would never do! Now that I think about it, whatever whoreson gave me that pill probably *was* an archenemy! I just got careless. How villainous!!

“Most outrageous of all is that the pill he sold me was actually a mix of many kinds of poison. A pill like that should be really expensive! But he gave it to me for so cheap! All I gave him was a bit of information. How sinister!”

The Captain continued to provide loud exclamations in response to various parts of the story, getting the old man even more worked up. As for Xu Qing, his frown deepened as the old man kept using the word ‘whoreson’ over and over again.

“And then, in order to pull the wool over my eyes, the whoreson hypocritically told me not to consume the pill, but to shave off a bit to try first. See what I mean? He was obviously trying to egg me on!” The old man finally sighed. “I suppose I have my stubborn personality to blame for why I just consumed the whole thing.... If an archenemy wasn’t behind this situation, then who was? It was a clever trap designed around my personality! I’m definitely going to track down that archenemy to get *payback!*”

Chapter 598: A Story about the Glories of the Ancient Past

The old man’s face was a mask of anger, and his wording abounded with sullen fury. He would have been fine if he held his tongue, but once he started talking, he could hardly stop. It reached the point where he didn’t need any egging on from the Captain. He just angrily vented his fury, getting more and more worked up, until finally he ran out of words. At that point, he took a deep, shuddering breath. The pressure within him had finally been largely relieved.

The Captain’s eyes glimmered with empathy. “You’ve had it really rough. Do you think you can determine who’s responsible?”

“After thinking back to enemies I’ve made, I’ve narrowed it down to three people. And I’d say there’s a seventy to eighty percent chance it was orchestrated by Master Fieldcripple!”

The old man gritted his teeth and his eyes shone with resolution. A moment passed and he took out two bags of holding which he gave to the Captain. Then he looked at Xu Qing.

“Our meeting must be predestined affinity. I know the two of you Fellow Daoists are more complicated than you seem, and I know my place in the world. I won’t say anything to anyone. If you can’t show respect in small things, how can you expect it in big things? Let’s be friends.”

The Captain laughed heartily as he took the bags of holding and scanned them with divine sense. It was full of amazing items. Smiling radiantly, he cordially said, “We’re *already* good friends! Just remember to find my temple later on and leave an incense stick there!”

“Definitely!” the old man said solemnly. Clasp hands to Xu Qing, he bid farewell and left.

Watching him leave, the Captain patted the bags of holding contentedly. Of course, considering the old man had seen the Red Moon Cathedral cultivators locked in place unmoving, there was the inherent possibility that it could lead to his own cover being blown. But the Captain wasn’t too worried about that. After all, grandpa was around....

Upon thinking of that, the Captain blinked a few times.

“Little Ah Qing, what do you think? Should we go accept a few more missions to do along the way? This is just too convenient....”

Xu Qing shook his head and calmly said, “Unless you want to spend the entire trip back coughing up blood, I suggest you don’t accept any more missions.”

During his time interacting with the Heir Apparent, he had come to understand a bit about him. As far as he could tell, this Smoldering God ‘grandpa’ didn’t have either ill will or goodwill. Unless a situation was personally important to him, there was really no way to know if or how he would interfere. It all depended on his mood. Just because he had helped out this time didn’t mean he would do the same next time.

The Captain felt that it was a real pity. However, after thinking back to the Yin Sacrifice River, and how the heir apparent had made him cough up blood just by looking at him, he realized it was probably better not to take any risks. He did have a lot of blood, but still....

Oh well, I’m just too weak in this life, the Captain thought, thinking about the image of the ‘old man’ saying sarcastic things about him. Looking over at Xu Qing, he smiled mysteriously, as if he had just come to realize something interesting.

“Little Ah Qing, were you the one who poisoned that guy?” With that, he peered closely at Xu Qing’s facial expression.

Looking the Captain in the eyes, Xu Qing earnestly said, “That’s right. It was me. I sold it to him.”

Stunned, the Captain asked, “You joined the Moonrebel Congregation?”

That, of course, was the salient point.

Continuing to maintain the same earnest facial expression, Xu Qing nodded. "I joined a long time ago. Truth be told, I'm actually that good friend of yours, Grandmaster Pill Nine."

The Captain had already come to suspect that this was the case, but hearing Xu Qing's confession caused him to burst out laughing.

"You almost pulled the wool over my eyes. Well done, little Ah Qing. That said, in the end, you're still a bit too inexperienced. I'm just too familiar with that earnest expression of yours. Every time you use it, you're lying. Sadly, you're just not that good at bragging. Later on, I'll give you a few lessons."

Xu Qing blinked a few times but didn't say anything else as he turned to leave.

The Captain hurried after him. "Wait, little Ah Qing. Were you serious just now?"

"Very," Xu Qing replied calmly.

"Then give me one of those painquelling lozenges to prove that you're actually that best friend of mine." The Captain kept his eyes on Xu Qing.

"I'm out," Xu Qing said, shaking his head. He hadn't done any pill concocting work with Li Youfei recently, so he really didn't have any more painquelling lozenges.

Hearing that, the Captain laughed again. "How convenient! Now I'm sure you're just bragging, little Ah Qing. Well, that's fine. Sure, you're Grandmaster Pill Nine. I believe you!"

With that, he went through the bags of holding and took out half of the items to give to Xu Qing. Then the two of them left the crater and went back to the artificial sun. After they returned, the cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral, as well as the blood-red eye, were teleported to random locations in the area, where they fell to the ground. Seeing that caused Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and Li Youfei to feel even more reverence for the Heir Apparent. At the same time, they instinctively felt a lot safer.

The artificial sun flared with light as it left the Whitecloud Mountains and continued on its way to the Bitter Life Mountains.

The Captain was right. The old man who had struggled with the poison for two months was currently speeding through the mountains coming up with a story to explain what happened to him. His tale wasn't very different from what really happened, except he left out the part about the Red Moon Cathedral.

Meanwhile, back inside the artificial sun, the Captain was feeling very pleased with how he'd made out on the mission. Although, he was still trying to decide whether or not Xu Qing was telling the truth.

Then the Heir Apparent did something that caused his heart to lurch. The 'grandpa' currently held an eyeball in his hand with which he fiddled. Occasionally, he would squeeze it and look at the Captain.

Xu Qing noticed the same thing. He had long been curious about the Red Moon Cathedral's giant heart that he first encountered in the Heavenfire Sea. Add in that the Red Moon Cathedral sent a

gigantic blood-red eyeball to the Whitecloud Mountains, coupled with the Captain's facial expression, and it got him thinking.

"Xu Qing," the Heir Apparent said coolly. "Do you know why the Red Moon Cathedral travels around on various organs?"

Xu Qing shook his head.

The Heir Apparent smiled, then looked at the Captain with a penetrating look. "Do you know, Erniu?"

"Grandpa, I also have no clue—" Before the Captain could finish his sentence, he noticed the Heir Apparent forcefully squeezing the eyeball between his fingers, to the point where it seemed like it might get squished flat. His expression suddenly turned serious. "Wait, grandpa. I remember now!"

"Oh?" the Heir Apparent said, smiling enigmatically.

Xu Qing's gaze fell upon the Captain. Ning Yan and everyone else also looked over at him.

The Captain took a deep breath, and his expression turned even graver. "Based on some things I read in the past, it seems that there was once a very brave, extraordinary, handsome, threatening, ultra-amazing and heroic consummate chosen. This person was supremely compassionate, and cared deeply about all living beings in existence. Upon seeing the profound misery in existence, he could have decided to live a happy life by himself, but instead made a different choice!

"Because of the bright light in his heart, and the stalwart justice in his soul, he chose to rescue the people from the fire and water. And thus, he went to the God Legion Plain to fight with Crimson Mother!

"The battle shook all of Revered Ancient. The starry sky trembled. Heaven and earth moaned in grief. This spectacular, profoundly valorous and righteous amazing chosen ended up fighting the incomparably evil Crimson Mother for three hundred years!

"During those three centuries, wild colors flashed in heaven and earth, and gale-force winds swept hither and thither. Shockwaves spread out into the starry sky, causing countless gods' faces to fall. Innumerable living beings offered prayers on his behalf. Sadly, *heaven is jealous of heroic geniuses*, and in the most critical moment, his closest allies chose to betray him. That most mighty of chosen ultimately suffered defeat. However, in the end, he still managed to bite off a chunk of Crimson Mother's flesh!"

The Captain sighed emotionally. "Crimson Mother's animosity toward him knew no bounds, and thus ordered this chosen's heroic and handsome body to be dismembered. And that is the origin of the organs the Red Moon Cathedral uses when they travel about..."

Ning Yan was shaken to the core. Wu Jianwu stood there with his eyes wide. Li Youfei reacted similarly. All of them felt the same thing: that the Captain had used too many adjectives, all of which basically meant the same thing.

Xu Qing said nothing, but found himself thinking back to that kidney the clay fox had offered him. He believed some of what the Captain said toward the end of the story. But the part in the beginning, such as fighting for three hundred years, he didn't believe at all. And it wasn't even necessary to mention how much he disbelieved all of those adjectives.

"Of course, that most amazing chosen was also immeasurably wise, and thus, before sallying forth to battle Crimson Mother, he cut off one of his ears... and left it behind for all living beings to remember him by." The Captain cleared his throat and blinked a few times.

Xu Qing found himself visualizing the Captain's past-self body from Mount Heavenly Ox.

"Oh really?" the Heir Apparent said coolly. "I heard that story as well, but the version I heard was a bit different. Apparently, there was a very bold and reckless fellow who hatched a scheme to get some of Crimson Mother's flesh and blood. He snuck into this region for that purpose alone. He was a skilled fellow, and somehow managed to infiltrate the Red Moon Cathedral and become the Grand Dancer. Then, he colluded with an outside god to transform himself into a mosquito.

"Taking advantage of a time when Crimson Mother was asleep, he used a true-false transformation magic, along with the help of that outside god, to travel through Crimson Mother's dream all the way into reality. And there, he bit deeply into Crimson Mother. Before he could even swallow that god blood, Crimson Mother smacked him to death with hēr palm.

"Crimson Mother was understandably furious with the cathedral, and ordered the godchild to seal his organs and limbs, and have them used as mounts for the cathedral from generation to generation."

After the Heir Apparent stopped speaking, his words echoed softly in the artificial sun.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu had odd expressions on their faces. Li Youfei inhaled sharply, and yet, found that he was already getting used to associating with these people. Considering he was already in the presence of a Smoldering God, it didn't seem like a very big deal to add in a mosquito who had bitten Crimson Mother.

Xu Qing looked at the Captain. As far as he was concerned, if he had to pick which version of the story seemed more in line with the Captain's personality, it was definitely the Heir Apparent's version.

Scoffing, the Captain quickly changed subjects. "Little Ah Qing, we'll be in the Bitter Life Mountains in no more than half a month. How's your medicine shop doing there? Did you pick a name for it yet? Maybe I should help you come up with one! How about the Green Ox Pharmacy? Or maybe the Super Ox Pharmacy?"

Xu Qing ignored him. He knew full well that the Captain was looking for someone else to jump into the conversation to diffuse the awkwardness.

Even though Xu Qing chose not to respond, Ling'er wasn't willing to let things slide.

"We don't need your help at all! We already have a name. It's called the Green Spirit Pharmacy!" [1]

Up to this point, Ling'er had been too scared of the Heir Apparent to show her face. But when the Captain seemed to be trying to steal her Big Bro Xu Qing's reputation, that was simply pushing things too far, and she had to step out and do something.

"Green Spirit Pharmacy?" asked the Captain. Heart swelling with joy, he quickly said, "That name really isn't good enough. How is business for our little medicine shop, by the way?"

"Business is great," Ling'er replied proudly. "It's a small city, and our shop is the best there is. We have over a hundred customers a day!"

"That's pretty impressive!" the Captain said, looking amazed. "How big is the shop?"

"Very, very big!"

The more Ling'er talked, the more Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were envisioning some amazing, paradisiac medicine shop. Even the Heir Apparent was smiling and listening closely.

And thus, time passed. The invisible sun got closer and closer to the Bitter Life Mountains. And then, when they were only five days away from the Bitter Life Mountains, the wonderful little medicine shop that Ling'er had described suddenly collapsed into rubble....

Chapter 599: Don't Trust Heaven, Don't Trust Fate!

It wasn't just Xu Qing's medicine shop that collapsed. Many of the mudbrick structures in the city collapsed, sending dust and debris flying out everywhere. A group of cultivators in gray robes were flattening the buildings. The commoners had long since scattered, having been forced to leave.

Seven or eight figures hovered in midair, looking down at the city. In the lead position was a young dwarf with very ugly facial features and a baleful aura. His cultivation base was in the great circle of Gold Core, and was actually a bit higher than Chen Fanzhuo, the sect leader of the local Epactic Soil Sect. [1]

These were not cultivators from the Bitter Life Mountains. A few months ago when the green wind changed colors to white and spread out to fill the entire desert, it negatively affected some of the isolated mountain peaks, causing some of them to melt to certain degrees.

After the white wind disappeared, and the green wind returned, there were quite a few organizations that chose to relocate. They wanted to find better mountains that would provide refuge from the white wind, whenever it came around next. This sort of thing happened a lot when the green wind changed colors. Because the Bitter Life Mountains formed the largest mountain range in the Greenhair Badlands, it was naturally a prime destination for such groups.

Of course, the forces in the Bitter Life Mountains were both isolationist and xenophobic. Therefore, any organization that wanted to encroach would need to resort to force. As a result, the Bitter Life Mountains had been full of chaotic warfare recently.

That was exactly what was happening in this mudbrick city. This group of outside cultivators had picked this city on the periphery of the mountains as the location where they wanted to build their new sect headquarters. That resulted in friction with the Epactic Soil Sect. However, in the end, the two sects reached a compromise. After all, losing control of the city didn't mean that the Epactic Soil Sect would also lose their sect headquarters.

And thus, the outsiders occupied the city. At the moment, their leader, that young dwarf, was looking down and feeling very satisfied.

"It should only take about five days to clear this place out," he said coolly.

Meanwhile, one of his subordinates looked at the rubble of the Green Spirit Pharmacy. After a moment of hesitation, he said, "Sect Leader, don't forget what Chen Fanzhuo told us. He said that we could do whatever we wanted to the city as a whole, but that we shouldn't touch the Green Spirit Pharmacy..."

The dwarf laughed coldly. "Chen Fanzhuo didn't want to lose control of this city, so he was being deliberately mystifying. You actually believed him? I don't care what amazing person owns that Green Spirit Pharmacy. How amazing could he possibly be if all he did was open a pharmacy in a mortal city like this? This is the future location of my sect's new headquarters! It would be completely improper to have some random medicine shop here!"

His subordinate nodded. Around that time, a beam of light appeared off in the distance. As it neared, it resolved into Chen Fanzhuo. When he saw the ruins of the Green Spirit Pharmacy, his expression darkened, and he turned to look coldly at the dwarf.

"Sir Tree-Dao, didn't I tell you not to touch the Green Spirit Pharmacy?"

Sir Tree-Dao looked at him askance. "I already did," he said coolly. "What are you going to do about it?"

Green sand blew through the city on the wind, making everything very hazy. Chen Fanzhuo's expression turned even grimmer. Looking coldly at Sir Tree-Dao, he said nothing as he turned and left. Inside, he was thinking, *This guy will be dead soon.*

Sir Tree-Dao laughed coldly. As he watched Chen Fanzhuo leave, his eyes glittered with killing intent.

A measly Gold Core cultivator with no powerful backers, scared of everything, shivering in his boots. Just wait until I become an apprentice to Guru Blackeyes. He's the first one I'll kill!

It had taken a lot of work over the past half-year or so for him to get in the good graces of Guru Blackeyes, and Sir Tree-Dao was very proud of that. He was actually already apprenticed to another Master, but that Master's cultivation base wasn't very impressive. What was more, that Master was so secretive that Sir Tree-Dao didn't even know what he looked like or what his name was. For the past sixty-year-cycle, every time he saw his Master, his appearance was different. As a result, Sir Tree-Dao had long since come to his own conclusions about who his Master really was.

That said, he wasn't completely sure of all the details. All he knew was that his Master was only in the Nascent Soul level. Therefore, becoming an apprentice to Guru Blackeyes, who was in the Spirit Trove level, would be like upgrading from earth to heaven.

I wonder when Guru Blackeyes is going to show up. I asked for his help quite a while ago....

Even as he was thinking such things, a jade slip in his bag of holding vibrated. Heart lurching, he quickly took it out, whereupon a voice message echoed in his mind.

“Come see me, Sir Tree-Dao.”

Sir Tree-Dao immediately got excited as he realized it was Guru Blackeyes’ voice. Without hesitating for a moment, he turned and flew off.

Some distance away from Greensand County, ripples spread through heaven and earth as an invisible sun raced toward the Bitter Life Mountains.

Everyone inside was as busy as usual.

Ning Yan was scrubbing the floor. Wu Jianwu was delivering a massage. The parrot was acting bossy. Li Youfei was doing random chores. The Captain was still fanning away.

The big difference was that the inside of the sun was now filled with Ling’er’s voice and the Heir Apparent’s laughter.

The Heir Apparent really liked Ling’er. Meanwhile, Ling’er wasn’t as afraid as she had been in the past. She was now in human form, seated next to him and chatting with him in her charming and innocent way.

“Grandpa, pretty soon we’ll arrive at me and Big Bro Xu Qing’s Green Spirit Pharmacy. Grandpa, sir, why don’t you stay there? You’ll really like our medicine shop.”

The Heir Apparent nodded, his eyes as warm and loving as if he were talking with his own grandchild. Ling’er reminded him of his granddaughter from years past, memories which he actually found somewhat painful.

Ling’er, seeing that she had laid it on thick enough, finally said, “And so... grandpa, maybe you should let Big Bro Xu Qing rest a bit. Once we get to the Green Spirit Pharmacy, he’s going to have to start concocting a lot of medicine.”

“Silly girl,” the Heir Apparent said, chuckling. Turning, he looked at Xu Qing, who was seated cross-legged some distance away, trembling, with sweat pouring down his face.

Above his head floated three tiny suns. One was a door frame, one was a ring, and the other was a sphere. The three suns emanated intense heat that shone down on Xu Qing and the over one hundred desiccated corpses surrounding him. They were none other than the cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral. They included dozens of godslaves, three godservants, and a godherald.

It was only the godherald that was trembling as if in struggle. His eyes would occasionally open, and he would look around blankly. His face was a mask of pain.

Because of the suns shining down, the red moon power within them was being slowly extracted, turning into thin blood-colored threads that flowed toward Xu Qing and entered his eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and pores. He was currently in a session of cultivation.

After leaving the Whitecloud Mountains, the Heir Apparent had instructed him to do this, and had even set up the cathedral cultivators in a spell formation around Xu Qing. Apparently, the suns were purifying their red moon power and making it easier for Xu Qing to absorb. As a result, his violet moon nascent soul was getting stronger. It wasn't just his violet moon nascent soul. Heavenfiend clones were rising up from the corpses around him as their heavenfate was extracted. The result was that all of Xu Qing's nascent souls were growing. Xu Qing was receiving an unprecedented level of replenishment!

That said, there was a thin line between replenishment and poisoning. For Xu Qing to devour so much nascent soul heavenfate and red moon power in such a short time caused him to feel like his sea of consciousness was expanding dramatically. It also brought with it a sensation of searing pain that left him soaked with sweat and his facial expression fierce.

That was why Ling'er was so concerned.

"Silly girl. Your Big Bro Xu Qing has immense potential, but hasn't experienced enough tempering. It seems likely that his Master hasn't spent much time with him, and can only give him occasional advice and pointers.

"Truth be told, considering your Big Bro Xu Qing's latent power, he needs high-level tempering. Given the unswerving determination that stems from deep in his bones, he's suited for that type of thing. Right now, he's just getting started."

The Heir Apparent waved his hand in Xu Qing's direction, causing the three suns to erupt with more light and heat than before.

Xu Qing's body sank down a bit, and cracking sounds rang out from within him. His skin seemed like it was on fire, to the point where he hardly looked human. Meanwhile, the corpses around him started exploding one by one. Starting with the godslaves, all of the red moon power within them rushed out.

As Xu Qing devoured that power, his cultivation base improved rapidly. Three days later, as they entered the Greenhair Badlands, the godservants were all dead, and only the godherald remained alive. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and he howled in defiance.

At the same time, powerful fluctuations swept out from Xu Qing. His thirteen nascent souls had now been forced into the great circle of the two-tribulation level. The third heavenfate tribulation would come soon.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu looked on, jumpy with fear as they worried the Heir Apparent might do something similar to them. Clearly, they were overthinking things. As far as the Heir Apparent was concerned, the only person who qualified to receive his instruction and tempering was Xu Qing.

"You barely scraped by. Provoking heavenfate tribulation with a cultivation base so low will bring a tribulation that most ordinary cultivators would find formidable. But for you, it wouldn't be enough to bring out your latent potential. I can help make up for the difference. Are you willing to try, Xu Qing?"

Xu Qing looked up at the Heir Apparent. "Yeah!"

The Heir Apparent's eyes gleamed with admiration. Walking up to Xu Qing, he flicked his sleeve, pulling Xu Qing away from the suns. And then, to everyone's astonishment, the Heir Apparent and Xu Qing disappeared and materialized out in the Greenhair Badlands.

As the green wind screamed, the Heir Apparent pushed down with his left hand. The desert rumbled, and sand swirled as a massive pit opened up. Without any hesitation, the Heir Apparent threw Xu Qing into the pit. The moment he landed at the bottom, the Heir Apparent spoke in a voice that boomed like heavenly thunder.

"Let the soil become the body. Temper the soul to be golden. Heaven shall fill with heavenfate tribulation. Bring dao lightning that can destroy the world!"

His voice caused the shifting sands to rumble loudly as they covered Xu Qing. Then, the Heir Apparent pushed down viciously with his right hand, causing the land to press down onto Xu Qing, as if to merge with him.

His divine sense was also connected to the sandy soil. It was almost as if the Heir Apparent was forcing Xu Qing to become part of the desert, and then use that new 'body' to provoke the third heavenfate tribulation. As a result, in the eyes of the heavenly dao, Xu Qing was in the unprecedented great circle of the second tribulation. As a result, he would be summoning the most terrifying lightning imaginable.

"Xu Qing, your Master is extraordinary, but he treats you too softly. He created techniques for you and put the primary focus on avoiding crises, reduced risks, and eliminating threats. That method doesn't directly face challenges, and refrains from using overwhelming power. That method might leave you feeling safe and comfortable.... It's both correct and incorrect!

"We cultivators need to put our lives on the line. We don't trust heaven. We don't trust fate. We don't allow anything to get in our way. No living being can suppress our hearts. Not even gods can make us bend the knee! If you want to do that, you can't avoid or reduce danger. You need to find destined opportunities in the face of a deadly crisis. That's how you develop an indomitable spirit!

"You are obviously an extraordinary piece of metal! And how can you forge metal with something mild and gentle? Sit down and summon the heavenfate tribulation!"

Chapter 600: 3,000 Lightning Bolts; Duskmurmur Extirpation Command

The canopy of heaven trembled as the sound of thunder rolled out. The sky filled with dark clouds that grew thicker and thicker with every moment that passed. Winds screamed in the Greenhair Badlands, growing stronger and stronger until their whimpering turned into the wailing of ghosts and howling of wolves.

Immense pressure weighed down from above, settling not just onto Xu Qing and his location, but the entirety of the Greenhair Badlands. Rumbling sounds seemed to descend from the highest heavens, causing all living beings in the desert to feel jumpy with fear.

All of the organizations in all of the mountains, including those in the Bitter Life Mountains, trembled with anxiety. Even people in the Red Moon Cathedral looked up into the sky.

“What’s going on?”

“Something’s strange about the sky...”

Chen Fanzhuo sat cross-legged in his sect, his heart pounding. As he looked up into the dark sky, a very uneasy sensation filled him. That said, he wasn’t sure exactly what was going on.

There was someone else who suddenly felt uneasy. It was Sir Tree-Dao, who was currently serving tea to an old man in a black robe. It was a ceremony of apprenticeship. Sir Tree-Dao’s hand was trembling so hard that some tea actually spilled. The old man in the black robe looked up into the sky, a suspicious expression on his face.

The number-one rogue cultivator in the Bitter Life Mountains, Patriarch Inkrule, was seated cross-legged in meditation. All of a sudden, he looked up into the dome of heaven, an incredibly serious expression on his face.

Everyone reacted similarly, even the species that guarded the desert and normally lived under the sand.

There was little need to mention the people located in midair in the sun, just overhead the location that was causing all of the dramatic upheavals. Ning Yan shivered. Wu Jianwu gasped. Li Youfei seemed stunned.

And the Captain looked down with an expression of anticipation on his face. *The Heir Apparent said it right. Ever since Xu Qing was named as the future governor of Sea-Sealing County, the old man has been putting safety first. That said, things don’t need to be as dramatic as the Heir Apparent makes them out to be. Little Ah Qing’s dao heart is already forming. Give it a few more years, and he’ll naturally develop his own personal dao. He actually doesn’t need pointers from anyone. Although, for little Ah Qing, this is for the best.*

Down below, the Heir Apparent, in his grandpa form, floated up into the air with his hands clasped behind his back. As the rumbling sounds grew more intense, lightning arced through the air, dancing every which way.

The affected area grew even larger. It started at 3,000 meters but soon reached 30,000 meters. And it kept going, until eventually it covered the greater part of the Greenhair Badlands. That led to no small amount of astonishment among the living beings that inhabited the desert. Before any of them could check closely about what was happening, a roar echoed out like the angry cry of a god. Countless crashes of thunder were accompanied by innumerable lightning bolts which spread out to cover the desert.

Then they slammed down onto the surface of the desert! There were no less than 3,000 bolts of lightning. All of them landed in different spots, then shot through the sand in Xu Qing’s direction. They were like 3,000 lightning dragons, streaking forth with astonishing power.

When the Captain sensed what was happening, his eyes went wide and he gasped. Even he found the development astonishing.

“This is going to kill little Ah Qing!” he blurted, and was about to fly out to help.

The Heir Apparent turned and looked at him. "Calm down!"

The Captain stopped in place, his expression flickering.

The 3,000 lightning dragons rumbling toward Xu Qing, converging around him, shattering the land in his area. When they met each other and became one, a wild, deafening sound wave swept through the Greenhair Badlands. The sand surrounding Xu Qing's subterranean location shattered violently.

Then a miserable shriek rang out inside the artificial sun, drawing the attention of Ning Yan and the others. The godherald that Xu Qing had been absorbing started glittering with electric light, until finally exploding and transforming into a diamond-shaped piece of wood that fell to the ground.

Before anyone could react to his sudden death, a huge shockwave swept across the lands, shattering everything for 250 kilometers in every direction. When it was over, a massive, 500-kilometer chasm was visible below. In the middle of it lay a 15-meter-tall figure, scorched, blackened, and unmoving. It was impossible to tell if the figure was dead or alive.

"Not very impressive. Of the 3,000 lightning bolts, you only sustained a few hundred." The Heir Apparent shook his head. With the wave of his hand, he pulled the scorched figure up to him, then returned to the artificial sun.

Back inside the sun, Ling'er's eyes were puffy and red as she rushed over.

"Big Bro Xu Qing!" Seeing Xu Qing injured and gasping for breath, Ling'er started crying. Wrapping her arms around him, she looked at the Heir Apparent. "Grandpa, you...."

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu hardly dared to breathe, and as they looked at the unmoving Xu Qing, their hearts started to pound.

"He's not going to die," the Heir Apparent said coolly. Then he noticed that Ling'er was crying, and his heart softened a bit. "This was a type of tempering. That Red Moon Cathedral godherald sustained most of the tribulation. When your Big Bro Xu Qing reached his limit, the godherald shared the burden...."

When the Captain heard that, and then looked at the spot where the godherald had vanished from existence, his heart pounded. *Duskmurmur Extirpation Command.*

At that point Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan realized what happened, and both of them inhaled sharply.

That was especially true of Ning Yan, who was privy to many secrets. Thinking back, he recalled a very ancient ceremony that he'd read about in certain ancient records.

"The Duskmurmur Extirpation Command!" he murmured. Thanks to his studies, he knew all about the technique called the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command. Few people nowadays had heard of it or knew how to use it. But back in the days of Ancient Emperors, it was well-known as a very ruthless technique.

The 'duskmurmur' was a type of vicious tree that existed in the ancient past. Every few thousand years, that tree would have to pass a tribulation. Whenever that tribulation came, numerous top experts would suddenly drop dead in random locations. After a lot of research, people came to

realize that all of those events were connected. The experts who died replaced the duskmurmur tree in death, allowing the tree to pass the tribulation. Gradually, people figured out the details of the ceremony.

In the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity, only chosen cultivators from the imperial clan, under the direction of older members of the clan, would use the technique on nonhumans in order to pass tribulations. The most shocking thing about the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command was that after the person facing the tribulation reached their limit, and experienced what should have been their own death, the effects would be passed on to another cultivator, who could be turned into a piece of wood. The curse power that filled the wood, once released, would contain shocking power.

With such thoughts on his mind, Ning Yan looked at where the godherald had died, and to his astonishment, saw the piece of wood there.

Meanwhile, outside in the dome of heaven, everything was going back to normal. The black clouds were dissipating, and all shockwaves had died down. Although the area affected by the lightning was only about 500 kilometers, the event had actually affected the entire Greenhair Badlands. Innumerable mountains there were shaken, including those in the Bitter Life Mountains. Within all those mountains, intense exclamations of shock could be heard everywhere.

Numerous figures flew up into the air, sending out divine will to check the area. Feelings of terror and vigilance abounded.

“What almighty entity is facing tribulation?”

“It doesn’t seem like tribulation. More like somebody refining something!”

Speculations and theories exploded in the Greenhair Badlands. Even the Red Moon Cathedral was shaken, and immediately began trying to figure out what caused the situation. No such efforts amounted to anything. However, the effects were profound and far-reaching to the local cultivators.

The number one rogue cultivator, Patriarch Inkrule, hovered in midair in the Bitter Life Mountains. As he stared up into the dome of heaven, he thought to himself, *Momentous events are in store for the Greenhair Badlands....*

Similar thoughts occurred to many top experts. The black-robed old man with Sir Tree-Dao finally accepted the cup of tea.

“For the time being, don’t leave the Bitter Life Mountains,” he said. “I have a bad feeling about this. Did you stir up any trouble lately?”

Sir Tree-Dao immediately shook his head. “Master, I’ve been in these mountains this entire time, working on establishing my new sect headquarters. I definitely haven’t stirred up any trouble.”

The black-robed old man nodded.

Xu Qing, who had caused all of the commotion, struggled to open his eyes. He could sense how weak he was, but at the same time, felt shocking power flowing through him. His thirteen nascent souls had all reached the three-tribulation level. His battle prowess had increased significantly, such that any Nascent Soul cultivator who encountered him would feel despair and shock.

As of now, Xu Qing could definitely fight against any expert in the early part of the dao begetting phase.

Even the weakest dao begetting experts were vastly superior to Nascent Soul cultivators. And the strong ones would be very close to the true Spirit Trove level. All they would have to do was form a heavenly dao, and break through from the illusory to the corporeal to have a true secret trove.

As Xu Qing focused on recovery, three days passed.

The Bitter Life Mountains were now visible in the distance.

When Ling'er saw that her Big Bro Xu Qing really was okay, she breathed a sigh of relief in her heart. At that point, she returned to her previous vivaciousness, and started explaining more about the Green Spirit Pharmacy to the Heir Apparent.

“Grandpa, our medicine shop is really beautiful. I personally decorated everything. It's very warm and comforting inside, and I take time every day to clean the entire place. You won't find even a speck of dust anywhere.”

Ling'er's enthusiasm had rubbed off on Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu. Even the Captain couldn't wait to see the Green Spirit Pharmacy. Li Youfei was also excited. Last time, he'd had no choice but to flee from the medicine shop. But this time, things were different. As far as he was concerned, even someone like Patriarch Inkrule counted as nothing more than a joke.

The Heir Apparent smiled. He really was feeling very happy. In the past, his lofty position made it difficult for him to experience the happiness of mortal life. Nor had he experienced anything like a true family. Later, he was suppressed in the Heavenfire Sea and endured unending bitterness. Even after his return, he had spent most of his time recovering. Now he felt like he was spending his time with a group of children. All of them went around calling him grandpa, and though he hadn't given voice to how he felt, the truth was that it filled his heart with warmth.

Hearing how happy Ling'er was caused him to smile and nod. However, when he looked outside, a strange expression filled his eyes. “Ling'er, is your medicine shop in the mudbrick city up ahead?”

“That's right, grandpa! That's the city! We're finally home!” Ling'er's eyes shone with anticipation.

As the artificial sun got closer and closer to the Bitter Life Mountains, Xu Qing continued to recover. As of now, he could stand with Ling'er's help. As he looked toward the mudbrick city off in the distance, he sighed inwardly. His travels had taken him away for more than half a year.

All of a sudden, his gaze hardened. Up ahead, he sensed nothing but ruins. Then a rumbling sound echoed out from the mudbrick city. Dust and rubble flew everywhere as the last of the buildings there collapsed.

Xu Qing couldn't have been more taken aback.