

## Timescape 631

### Chapter 631: The Heavenly Body Rises, Bringing Blood

Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth while tempestuous winds screamed back and forth. As everyone watched, the seething sea of light took the shape of a nail. However, the nail didn't fully manifest. After it reached a certain point of dazzling brightness, it collapsed.

In the back room, Xu Qing sat cross-legged with a seven-colored nascent soul hovering in front of him. Boundless daybreak light shone off the seven-colored nascent soul, spreading out in all directions to form the sea of light.

Xu Qing had extended his right hand to touch the outstretched hand of the nascent soul. Within Xu Qing's right palm was the clear outline of a nail, slowly blurring and fading away.

At first glance, the skin on his palm seemed no different than the rest of his skin. However, if you looked closely, you would notice that the middle of his palm was brighter than normal. It was almost as if it had been soaked in water for years, making it incomparably pure. Eventually, the outline of the nail faded away, and the sea of light collapsed and vanished.

Xu Qing opened his eyes. Instantly, all of the daybreak light swept back into his daybreak nascent soul. The nascent soul reentered Xu Qing.

Xu Qing sighed.

I couldn't actually create an imitation of what I saw in my memories. These myriad magics of transformation have their limits.... I can't just create an imitation of any future magical technique I see.

Shaking his head, he stood and walked out of the back room, feeling a bit disappointed.

The moment he was outside, he realized that everyone was looking at him.

Ning Yan was staring at him like he was some sort of freak, and seemed to be on the verge of saying something, except he held back.

Wu Jianwu looked dazed. He was actually thinking back to the time he met Xu Qing out on the Forbidden Sea. Back then, the two of them had fought to a draw. But now.... Wu Jianwu felt incomparably frustrated inside. Eyes bloodshot, he made a decision. He had been slacking off lately, and really needed to continue his bloodline restoration work!

The parrot shivered and didn't say anything. Li Youfei had his head bowed respectfully. Nethersprite was looking deeply at Xu Qing.

As for Patriarch Inkrule, it was apparently the first time he had realized there was someone besides the four Smoldering Gods who was worth paying attention to. He had sensed how extraordinary Xu Qing was. The things he had accomplished were not things Nascent Soul cultivators should be able to accomplish, but rather, Spirit Trove experts. All of a sudden he understood why the kid walking out of the back room was the nucleus of the medicine shop, and was allowed to sit amongst the Smoldering Gods.

Ling'er was also a bit surprised, but in contrast to the others, she looked very proud. The Captain blinked a few times, but looked happy. Eighth Sib was smiling at Xu Qing, while Fifth Sister had a

strange look in her eyes. Although she hadn't participated in giving any advice to Xu Qing like her brother and sister had, she was now starting to see the bigger picture.

The Heir Apparent nodded as a very profound and mysterious expression appeared on his face. He had no way to know it, but that facial expression made him look very much like Xu Qing's Master.

As for Princess Brightblossom, she was looking at Xu Qing without any facial expression.

Xu Qing looked around. It was obvious that they were looking at him this way because he had created an illusory manifestation of the Imperial Sovereign's nail.

Except that Xu Qing was actually very disappointed at his failure. That was especially true considering how Princess Brightblossom and the Heir Apparent were looking at him.

Sighing, he approached them, bowed his head, and said, "Seniors, I still failed."

The Heir Apparent's face twitched slightly. He took the opportunity to make himself look disappointed.

"I saw," he said coolly. "You're still young. It's normal to experience failures sometimes."

Xu Qing nodded and was about to say something further when Princess Brightblossom spoke.

"Open your right hand," she said.

Hearing that, Xu Qing stuck out his right hand and opened it.

Princess Brightblossom, the Heir Apparent, and Fifth Sister all scanned his palm with divine sense, and when they did, strange expressions appeared on their faces. The Heir Apparent reached out. Instantly, a ball of black hair appeared in front of him. It pulsed, growing larger and smaller rhythmically, all while sending out powerful soul fluctuations.

"Imitate that," the Heir Apparent said, looking at him.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing released daybreak light. It spread out, converged, and then settled onto the black hair.

Astonishingly, the white center of his palm blurred as a black ball emerged. A moment later, a black ball was hovering in front of Xu Qing, though it wasn't corporeal. What was more, the power it exuded was nowhere close to the original. It had the same shape, but didn't have the same godly might.

The scene caused Nethersprite and Patriarch Inkrule to be visibly shaken.

The Heir Apparent didn't say anything, but inside, he felt exhausted. Never could he have imagined that Xu Qing would be able to use daybreak light to create a copy of his own divine ability.

Granted, the level of power between the two was like the difference between the full moon and a firefly. It was a physical copy without the godly might, and without any magical laws or authority. But... the Heir Apparent was a Smoldering God! He had never heard of, much less seen, any Nascent Soul cultivator who could do this.

This kid's powers of understanding cannot be described in any way other than freakish!

The Heir Apparent didn't feel like speaking.

Princess Brightblossom waved her hand gently.

The chair off to the side unexpectedly transformed, turning into a group of white doves that flew gracefully into the air. The doves didn't look unusual. However, considering they came from the hands of a Smoldering God, there was no way they could be ordinary doves. Looking closely, it was possible to see stars, moons, and other heavenly bodies twinkling in their eyes, and they seemed capable of piercing through time as they flew.

“Imitate them!”

Xu Qing took a deep breath and then used his same imitation technique on another nearby chair.

The chair quivered, and then in a very grisly display, sprouted feathers. Unfortunately, it never ended up looking like a bird. The feathers just grew out randomly, until the chair finally shattered into pieces.

Seeing that, Ning Yan and the others were shocked. The parrot's eyes went very, very wide, and he even started breathing heavily.

Xu Qing sighed deeply. “I still can't do it.”

Eighth Sib was getting very interested in what was happening. All of a sudden, a swell of rage erupted from him, which affected the surroundings, causing them to ripple and distort as a vicious, draconic beast appeared. It was covered in flames, and each of its scales emanated a terrifying pressure. Its presence made the entire Bitter Life Mountains tremble, and when it opened its mouth, it revealed countless sharp teeth as it roared.

“Give a shot at imitating me!”

Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan looked like they might faint at any moment. Everyone else was in a similar condition. Xu Qing breathed heavily as the terrifying weight settled onto him and caused his soul to tremble. There was no way he could imitate anything at the moment.

Expression calm, Princess Brightblossom let out a cold harrumph. “Screw off!”

The moment the words left her mouth, a thump rang out from Eighth Sib, and everything around him vanished. Heaven and earth went back to normal.

Xu Qing breathed a sigh of relief and bowed his head respectfully.

Princess Brightblossom betrayed no reaction via facial expression. Voice cool, she said, “You can't do it because your cultivation base is too low. You lack magical laws as well as trump cards. Your authority isn't bad, but not quite omnipotent. As your cultivation base improves, and you eventually reach Spirit Trove, that will change everything. Furthermore, you should think about cultivation as....”

Princess Brightblossom had been about to give some pointers regarding powers of understanding. That was what she had always done with her apprentices in the past. But before she could go into her usual advice, she stopped.

Xu Qing looked up attentively.

Princess Brightblossom was quiet for a few breaths of time. Then she continued, “Think of it as gaining experience.”

Xu Qing thought about that for a moment.

The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom noted his expression and exchanged a glance. Then they were about to keep talking when, all of a sudden, their expressions flickered and they vanished. When they reappeared, they were up in the dome of heaven.

Eighth Sib appeared next to them, fully recovered. They were joined by Fifth Sister. All of them were looking off toward the horizon.

The red light was like viscous blood. In the past month, it had been expanding, though not at a steady rate. But now, it was virtually exploding. The red light on the horizon doubled in the briefest of moments, becoming blindingly dazzling. As of that moment, all plants, vegetation, mountains, plains, and rivers in the Moonrite Region... had turned bright red!

A boundless red glow spread out as... a heavenly body appeared on the horizon, almost like a star.

It really did look like a gigantic star. It was pure red, as if it was made of blood, and was gargantuan. The heavenly body was covered with terrain features like mountains and valleys.

It was the red moon! It seemed to be moving at high speed in the direction of the Moonrite Region. Mountains collapsed. Boulders rained down, shattering tree trunks. Corpses flew up into the air.

It was the tideflow power caused by the red moon. That tideflow would create a powerful compulsion, causing all living beings in the Moonrite Region to howl in grief. The curse welled up in the bodies of countless mortals, and cultivators were incapable of escaping. Twisted expressions of agony appeared everywhere. Only the high-level cultivators, or perhaps people who had painquelling lozenges, were able to resist the pressure.

Things were only just beginning. As the heavenly body grew larger and larger, slowly overtaking the canopy of heaven, the lands below shattered, and countless living beings rose up into the air, where death awaited them.

Xu Qing and the Captain also appeared in midair, where they looked off toward the horizon. They weren't the only ones. Top experts from all the species in the Moonrite Region did the same, and they were all trembling.

“The red moon... is visible to the naked eye.”

Xu Qing was deeply shaken. He could sense his own violet moon authority reacting... it was clearly a lot stronger than before. Apparently, the closer the red moon got, the more shockingly it affected his authority.

“Remember what I said before, little Junior Brother? That when the red moon becomes visible on the horizon, it will mean our day has come? And that's because our destination isn't a place you can usually go to. In order to open the path there, you have to meet several requirements. And the most important of all has a name. Green Hair Like Blood.

“Legend has it that the Greenhair Badlands was actually made from a strand of hair. Now, look at the lands below. They look like blood.”

The Captain looked out at the desert.

Xu Qing looked in the same direction and saw that, thanks to the blood-colored light shining down from above, the desert no longer looked green. It looked red.

“We leave tonight,” the Captain said softly, clasping Xu Qing’s shoulder.

#### Chapter 632: The Origin of the Wind Guardians

The evening of the day when the red moon became visible, a black wind sprang up in the Greenhair Badlands. Similar to the various legends about the desert, it started when the green wind mixed with the redness from above. Closer examination would reveal that the color was actually more like violet.

As the wind blew, Xu Qing and the Captain left the Green Spirit Pharmacy with a few allies in tow. The others in the group included Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, Ling’er, Nethersprite, and Li Youfei. It had been very difficult to convince Nethersprite to come along. It was impossible to say how the Captain did it, but eventually she gritted her teeth and agreed. The parrot wasn’t spared, as Xu Qing borrowed him from the Heir Apparent. The parrot had, of course, been dead set on refusing. However, after Xu Qing grabbed him, he inexplicably agreed to go along.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings were adamant about not joining, but they didn’t do anything to stop the group from leaving.

And thus, they traveled out into the windy desert.

As the red moon became more visible, and the tideflow power erupted in the region, the living people experienced indescribable bitterness. Countless mountains had collapsed, and entire lakes of water had begun flowing up into the sky.

The effects of the curse were especially prominent among the mortals. If there were a pair of eyes that could take in the entire Moonrite Region, they would see countless villages and cities that were full of death and sorrow. The souls of those who died couldn’t leave the Moonrite Region, and instead gathered at the Red Moon Cathedral, to be stuck in this hell for life after life.

The insanity only lasted for a short time, to then be replaced by an eternal vortex of despair.

All species. All sects. All cultivators. They all experienced it.

Those alive now were simply unfortunate to be around when Crimson Mother came. After all, Crimson Mother would usually only come once every thousand years or so. There was no fixed schedule. Sometimes a lot of time passed between visits; in other cases, it was a very short time. Not everyone who was born and raised in the Moonrite Region would necessarily live to see the coming of Crimson Mother.

The ordinary people weren’t the only ones in despair. Even organizations closely allied with the Red Moon Cathedral waited in silence. Historically speaking, those who adhered closely to the cathedral might have a better chance of survival, but it all depended on how hungry Crimson Mother was.

Therefore, when the red moon appeared, despair overtook madness as the primary operating force in the Moonrite Region. It filled the world, even the wind in the Greenhair Badlands, which whimpered past Xu Qing and the others.

Everything in heaven and earth was blurry, making it difficult to see them clearly.

As they walked along, they left behind footprints in the sand. However, those footprints were quickly filled in by the wind, leaving nothing behind.

The Captain was in the front, leading the way. Xu Qing was right behind him. As they traveled, Xu Qing instinctively kept his eyes on the surrounding wastelands. He had been in this area before. He had passed it back when he went to rescue the shadow. In fact, just up ahead was the spot where he had first laid eyes on the Wind Guardians.

“We’ve been moving for about four hours already,” the Captain said. “After another incense stick’s worth of time, we’ll be at our destination.”

“The Wind Guardians?” Xu Qing asked.

The Captain looked over his shoulder at Xu Qing. Because of the wind and sand, it was impossible to make out his facial features, but his eyes were glittering.

“Well done, little Junior Brother. You really do understand me. Our destination is indeed the land of the Wind Guardians. You’ve heard of their story, haven’t you, little Junior Brother?”

His gaze flitted from Xu Qing to Ning Yan and the others.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were both wearing thick garments and face coverings. Neither of them were very happy about that. The truth was that they hadn’t been very eager to come along, especially considering they had no idea where they were going.

Xu Qing nodded in response to the Captain’s question. The Wind Guardians’ mission was to guard the wind in this huge desert. And that mission was the source of the species’ unusual characteristics.

“Their species didn’t even exist before the desert came into being,” the Captain said. “Long ago, a certain entity and a certain great individual entered an agreement. That’s how the species came to be. The moment they were created, the Wind Guardians got their mission. From a substructural standpoint, the species’ mission is actually a key.”

The Captain suddenly stopped in place and turned to look at Xu Qing, his eyes shimmering with reminiscence.

“The key to opening the Imperial Sovereign’s Land of God Decapitation!”

Xu Qing’s gaze hardened. Everyone else looked surprised to hear the words coming out of the Captain’s mouth.

“Like I told you before, little Ah Qing, before reaching godly ascension, Crimson Mother was actually killed by the Imperial Sovereign.

“At that time, the Imperial Sovereign used heaven as the blade and earth as the altar. Connecting the sun and moon, he created an altar atop which to behead Crimson Mother.” As the Captain’s garments fluttered in the wind, he pointed at the ground.

“The execution spot is right beneath our feet! It’s the past-life body of the Greenhair Badlands!”

Everyone was shaken, and looked down at the ground beneath their feet, Xu Qing included.

The wind picked up, making it slightly more difficult to hear the Captain as he continued, “Afterward, that entity and that great individual and his partner found the ruins of the Land of God Decapitation. By employing strange magics, signs of awakening were provoked in that land.

“It became a desert wind that covered everything. In order to open the way, a few requirements have to be met. The first one is for the red moon to rise and turn the green sand into red.” With a profound look in his eyes, the Captain proudly continued, “The second requirement is that... the wind in the Greenhair Badlands needs to turn from green to black. And that needs to be stable, with the black wind flowing for eight hours. Right now, the wind is violet.”

The Captain lifted his right hand, and a stream of yellow light emerged from his palm. It was none other than the Captain’s Little Roundy. The light cast by the artificial sun was yellow. As it rose up into the sky, the yellow light it cast merged with the green wind and the red sand.

With those three colors overlapping, it produced black! Instantly, a black wind filled the area. An aura of death proliferated in heaven and earth, growing stronger by the moment.

Ning Yan and the others were astonished. The Captain’s words and actions were giving them the very strong feeling that his latest job was going to be monumental.

Xu Qing looked at the Captain with a very serious expression. “There’s got to be more than two requirements, right?”

The Captain laughed heartily, then waved his hand with a flourish, producing eight daggers that he tossed around.

The eight daggers didn’t stab into the sand. Instead, they floated with their tips pointing down. Then they emitted black lightning bolts that spread out to create a rough circle. They were holy relics of the Wind Guardians, which had been sent to the Green Spirit Pharmacy to the Heir Apparent. Apparently, he had loaned them to the Captain.

Having accomplished these things, the Captain extended his hand in Xu Qing’s direction.

“Okay, little Ah Qing. I need the holy relic you took from the Wind Guardians. Lend it to me for a bit, okay?”

Without hesitation, Xu Qing took the dagger out of his bag of holding and tossed it to the Captain. The Captain performed an incantation gesture and then pointed out.

The dagger shot into the rough circle. The black lightning spread, creating a roughly 3,000-meter circle with the group in the middle. Complex magical symbols appeared in the lightning, almost like writing, although no one could read it.

“Wind Guardians, in compliance with the agreement built into your bloodline, I hereby summon you!”

The Captain lifted his foot and then stomped it hard onto the ground.

As black wind screamed, the nine strange daggers thrummed loudly, bolstering the Captain's voice so that it echoed deep beneath the surface of the desert. Outside of the 3,000-meter circle, vortexes sprang up left and right in the desert. There were both big ones and small ones, and they numbered in the thousands. As they swirled around beyond the circle, Wind Guardians began to pop out into the open.

Each member of the species had a similar circle on their forehead, which seemed to look like the circle that the Captain had created, and seemed to flicker just as the circle did.

Closest to the 3,000-meter circle was Patriarch Wind Guardian, who looked suspiciously at Xu Qing and the others, his expression flickering.

The other Wind Guardians looked at the circle with their hearts pounding.

"This ceremony..."

Patriarch Wind Guardian could hardly have been more astonished. He knew about this ceremony. It was one of the most important ceremonies possible to his species, and it was something related to their mission that no outsider should possibly know about.

Guard the wind. Guard the desert. And wait... One day, in the midst of the black wind, a person would appear. That person would appear along with a circle that would call out to the Wind Guardian's blood, and cause a ceremonial spell formation to appear on their foreheads that resembled an eye. It related to the entire purpose of their species.

Never could Patriarch Wind Guardian have imagined that, after all the years their species had carried out their mission, that this would happen right here and now. What was more, the 'person' who had appeared was one of the cultivators from the Green Spirit Pharmacy. That left him absolutely, positively gobsmacked.

"Little Ah Qing, the third requirement to open the way naturally lies with the Wind Guardians. And that requirement is for all members of this species who have appeared for the black wind to come forth."

As the Captain's voice echoed out, he looked at Patriarch Wind Guardian.

The patriarch shivered. Feeling his blood shivering, he bowed his head and said, "Heed the godly orders!"

Astonishingly, four of the surrounding vortexes suddenly turned white, and out of them emerged four Wind Guardians.

They included men and women of different ages. But the unique thing about all of them was that they had white hair, down to their eyebrows, and pure white eyes. They were obviously unique among Wind Guardians, and were in fact closely cared for from the moment of their birth until their death. According to the requirements of the Wind Guardians' mission, at any given time, they were to have at least three such individuals.

"And now, the skulls!" the Captain said, slowly floating up into the air.



Patriarch Wind Guardian inhaled deeply, then relayed the orders. Before long, nine black skulls were carefully produced and carried out by various Wind Guardians, who placed them underneath each of the floating daggers.

“That great individual made the God Decapitating Altar illusory, then hid it in the wind in the Greenhair Badlands. It’s only the memories of the Wind Guardians that can unlock it. And now, we can begin the ceremony.”

Chapter 633: A Cup of Yellow Springs Water to Bring Back the God Decapitation Altar

Patriarch Wind Guardian bowed his head and said, “Heed the godly orders!”

No outsider knew the details. But all Wind Guardians knew who they exercised faith in. It was a specific god. That god had given them life, and had also given them their mission. And thanks to the soul fluctuations they could sense, they knew for a certainty that the god in question... was right in front of them.

It wasn’t their place to consider why the god was in this specific form, or seemed limited in power. Gods were gods. Hē could create myriad things and take myriad forms.

As the words left the patriarch’s mouth, he settled down cross-legged and closed his eyes. Reaching out with his right hand, he pushed the small circle on his forehead. Soul fluctuations pulsed off him and merged into the black wind.

At the same time, chanting drifted out of the Captain’s mouth.

*“Heaven and earth coexist, the black wind burns the god on cue; assimilate the nine daos, form that which is real and true!”*

*“The dark altar is not covered, memories of the sea given berth; the soul is one, connected to the origin of heaven and earth!”*

His voice seemed ancient, and full of a mysterious will. The moment it echoed out, the entire Greenhair Badlands seemed to react. The lands shook, countless particles of sand leaped into the air, quivering. Lightning crashed in the dome of heaven, sending out countless booms of thunder. The entire desert was stirred up.

However, the chanting didn’t stop because of all that. It continued, repeated the same words over and over again. Patriarch Wind Guardian joined in the chanting, and eventually, all of the Wind Guardians reached up, touched their foreheads, and joined in. Their soul fluctuations spread out, entering the black wind and eventually turning it into a huge vortex.

The vortex spun, moving in the opposite direction as the 3,000-meter circle! One moved clockwise, the other moved counter-clockwise! As they spun, they formed an astonishing power that caused everything to rumble. The friction caused the memories hidden in the wind to gradually be perceived by the Wind Guardians.

As Xu Qing watched all of this play out, he felt like he was finally starting to understand more about his Eldest Brother’s past. But at the same time, he felt just as shaken as when he’d first experienced the sacrificial dance.

Eldest Brother really made a lot of preparations in his past lives.... Being the Grand Dancer was one of them. The Wind Guardian situation was another. And then there's the fact that Grandpa Eighth and Grandma Fifth apparently recognized Eldest Brother. It seems likely that Eldest Brother is the one who went and visited the burial sites of all the Imperial Sovereign's children.

Given what Xu Qing knew about Chen Erniu, it was likely that the 'great individual' he'd mentioned was none other than himself.

Then what about the other entity he mentioned...?

Then Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he thought back to when the Captain explained the story of the sacrificial dance in Mount Heavenly Ox. He'd mentioned a High God. [1]

High God....

Then Xu Qing thought about the legend of the Greenhair Badlands, and a simple explanation popped into his head.

As Xu Qing was lost in thought, the others, including Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and Li Youfei, all looked on with various expressions of shock. Although Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu had been along with the Captain on a lot of jobs, they were still starting to feel nervous. As for Li Youfei... ever since he had run into Xu Qing, he had experienced one thing after another that completely defied imagination. Even Nethersprite was paying close attention to what was happening, and seemed to be profoundly shocked.

As the vortexes spun in different directions, as the wind blew and the Wind Guardians' memories mixed with it, images appeared. There were too many to count, and they seemed to contain anything and everything. They were also profoundly ancient. They were Wind Guardian memories, and thus, they were memories of the desert.

As the soul fluctuations rolled out, they became a sea of memories in the vortexes. The sea spread, filling the air, and swirling into nine specific locations below. Those nine locations were where the nine skulls rested. Those nine skulls were like bowls that seemed capable of containing anything and everything.

In that manner, time passed. The sea of memories continued to flow.

When the eighth hour arrived, the nine skulls were full of something that resembled a liquid. It was memory elixir. It existed in a state between what was true and what was illusory. It was occasionally white, and occasionally black. It was extremely strange.

As Xu Qing looked at it, he realized that the memory elixir contained a bit of the aura of a god.

At that point, the officiator of the ceremony, the Captain, performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then waved his hand. Instantly, the nine daggers inside the 3,000-meter circle flared with lightning-like light.

"Stop!"

His voice echoed like thunder, causing the nine daggers to plunge down into the nine skull bowls, stabbing right into the memory elixir.

Black and white mixed together, turning gray! Within the gray liquid a miniature image appeared.

It was a long, straight mountain range. It stretched in the darkness, illuminated by lightning. On either side of the mountains was a pitch-black abyss seemingly full of hidden wretches and devils. Because of the ripples on the surface of the water, it was hard to make out any details clearly.

As Xu Qing and the others looked on, they all realized what they were seeing. It was... the Imperial Sovereign's Land of God Decapitation, hidden in the wind.

Meanwhile, the four Wind Guardians who had all been born on special days sent a drop of blood out of their foreheads. The drops of blood then floated through the air toward the Captain. They were a part of the key needed to unlock the memories.

The other part came from the Captain. He bit his finger, causing a drop of blood to emerge. However, this drop of blood wasn't ordinary. Its color... was blue. The moment it appeared, the five drops of blood merged, then split apart into nine sections that shot into the nine skull bowls. The moment that happened, the wind reached its ninth hour of blowing.

"Let's... go in!"

Laughing heartily, the Captain grabbed one of the bowls, lifted it up, and drank the liquid. His body blurred as he then stepped into the wind and vanished.

Without the slightest hesitation, Xu Qing did the same. The others gritted their teeth and, each with their own reasons, picked up a bowl and drank. It didn't take long for all of them to blur away just like the Captain.

The Greenhair Badlands looked the same as usual. As the black wind blew, the sea of memories spread out to cover everything.

Xu Qing and the others had already reappeared in the same spots where they had drunk from the bowls. They did not stand anywhere that was real. Nor was it an illusion. It existed on the thin line between those two, where memories were beyond mysterious and beyond wondrous.

However, when things became clear around them, the surroundings looked very different than anyone had expected.

First of all, the world around them wasn't pitch black. Instead, warm light spread out everywhere. The light came from numerous floating lanterns. There were far too many of them to count, and their combined light illuminated the world. Every lantern was made from skin. Perhaps they seemed unusually sinister because of the ghost faces painted on their surface. Some of those faces cried, others laughed. Some were furious, while others were surprised. They were extremely lifelike, almost as if they were crafted from human skin. Thanks to the glow from the lanterns, the long, straight mountain range was now plainly visible to Xu Qing. It was almost like a blade, with the top sloping together from either side. It was so long it seemed like it was connected to the canopy of heaven.

They were currently at the very beginning of the mountain range, standing on a circular altar that was covered with the cracks of time. It seemed ancient and even a bit decayed.

On either side of the mountains was a black abyss. The light of illumination couldn't penetrate that darkness, from which occasionally echoed anguished howls, and a sound like claws scraping against stone. It seemed that the abyss beneath the mountain was filled with terrifying entities that were trying to climb up.

The sky was just as dark. The light couldn't illuminate it. However, it was possible to see an enormous rift that separated the canopy of heaven, like a ghastly scar. Thunderous rumblings emerged from that rift. Every once in a while, a blue bolt of lightning would shoot across the sky.

This place was incredibly strange. Everyone looked around with serious facial expressions. Nethersprite was completely on guard. Whether it was the lanterns of human skin or the terrifying aura from the abyss, she was sensing extreme danger.

The Captain seemed to understand this place well. As he stood at the head of the group, he explained, "The skin lanterns are formed from the villains killed by the Imperial Sovereign. They hate all living beings. If they touch you, you'll instantly turn into a skin lantern yourself. The abyss contains manifestations of Crimson Mother's rancorous energy. Their wicked nature makes it so that they view anyone who travels these mountains as enemies."

The Captain looked over his shoulder at Xu Qing. He smiled. "Welcome, little Junior Brother, to... a large-scale magical film studio. In a moment, you're going to see something that happened many, many years ago. A heaven-shaking, earth-shattering event. And what we need to do is simply pass through here." [2]

The Captain extended his hand to point to the rift in the sky. "Once we get there, we can start filming. In terms of the name, I've already thought of a good one. It's going to be called... *God Decapitation!* I'll explain about the contents a bit later on. But don't worry... everyone here will have a role to play."

The Captain's eyebrows danced up and down as he extended his hand to reveal some blue candles. He gave out one candle to everyone. Xu Qing took one of them. It felt greasy and smelled of blood. Before he could even guess about what it was, he noticed the complex facial expressions on Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu. They looked like they wanted to throw up.[3]

"By lighting these candles, we can safely proceed through the mountains. However, the caveat is... you can't let the candle go out."

The Captain exhaled onto the candle he held, and it lit up. Black smoke billowed out from inside, surrounding him as he started walking into the mountains.

Xu Qing nodded. He exhaled on his candle, and the black smoke surrounded him. He followed the Captain. The others did the same, and before long, they were making their way through the mountains.

"Remember, the candles *cannot* go out..." the Captain warned from up ahead.

From a distance, it was possible to see six clouds of smoke covering six figures, each of them only a few meters apart as they proceeded through the mountains. The lanterns of human skin swayed. Howls erupted from the abyss on either side of the mountain, accompanied by the sound of claws scraping on rock.

Chapter 634: Past Life Face

A group of people raced across the tops of the mountains in this well-lit world.

The Captain was in the lead, followed by Xu Qing. Then came Wu Jianwu, Nethersprite, Li Youfei, and finally Ning Yan. They were separated by a few meters each, and because of the black smoke that surrounded them, they couldn't see the world around them, or even sense much of it.

Xu Qing kept a firm grip on the blue candle as the black smoke spilled out of it and surrounded him. As he proceeded, he remained fully on guard. If the Captain hadn't offered that warning about the candles, Xu Qing wouldn't have had much to worry about. But with that warning in place, he couldn't help but think back to past experiences.

He had his cultivation base fully activated, and had already forgotten about his agreement to not use his violet moon authority. In fact, not only had he tapped into that authority, but also, he had taboo poison spread out all around him. In addition, daybreak light flowed freely in the area. He was completely ready in case anything unexpected happened.

At a certain point, Ling'er cautiously stuck her head out of his sleeve and looked around.

"Big Bro Xu Qing," she said quietly, "this place is sort of like the Ancient Spirit world. There are a lot of deceased souls here. I guess the difference is that in the Ancient Spirit world, the souls are intact. But here, there's some special magical law that causes countless deceased souls to mix together. I can just barely hear them whispering, although I can't make out what they're saying. But I do know they're watching us."

Xu Qing nodded. No matter how fast he moved in these mountains, the smoke from the candle made it impossible to see his surroundings. He couldn't even see the Captain up ahead, or sense anything significant. Even his shadow was restricted, and couldn't stretch out very far.

But thanks to Ling'er's innate abilities as an Ancient Spirit, she could see a bit of the surrounding world.

"Ling'er," Xu Qing said quietly, "I can't sense anything around me. I can barely even see the ground beneath my feet. Are you able to see our surroundings?"

"Yeah, I can, although it's a bit blurry. Big Bro Xu Qing, everything is going fine. Everybody else is surrounded by smoke but moving in the right direction. About thirty meters ahead of you is Elder Brother Erniu. And behind you is Big Jianjian."

Xu Qing nodded and kept moving. And thus, the party of six sped along as quickly as they could manage. Everyone was on high alert. Even the person with the highest cultivation base, Nethersprite, didn't dare to be lax.

It was a very strange world. There were the skin lanterns hanging in the air, and the howling from the abyss. In addition, there were gusts of wind. The shocking wind contained a towering killing intent that made their skin go numb. It caused the smoke surrounding them to ripple and distort, and it filled them with icy cold. The wind was like a host of blades, each filled with a baleful aura that seemed to disregard cultivation base and slash directly at the soul.

"The wind kicked up," the Captain said, his voice reaching all of them in their clouds of smoke. "Keep hold of your candles. Unify your body and mind."

“The wind will make the howling from the abyss even clearer. And at a certain point, it will turn into a voice that we all find familiar. This place is located within memories, so the moment we entered and laid eyes on the surroundings, it became a portion of our own memories. At the same time, our existence is placed into the memories of this world fragment.

“Because our memories are part of the place now, the voices we hear will be different for each one of us. And they’ll be a voice we miss. Remember. It’s not real! Don’t believe what the voices say. Don’t think about them. And definitely do not look back!”

The Captain’s voice grew fainter as he talked, and the wind grew stronger. Eventually, his voice faded away, leaving behind nothing but the cry of the wind.

Xu Qing looked at the smoke around him, and suddenly thought of something.

The Captain said not to trust the voices in the wind. In that case... could he trust what the Captain was saying? If what the Captain just said was true, why didn’t he explain it earlier? But if it was the Captain, could it be possible there was a deeper meaning in his words?

Xu Qing opened his mouth to speak, but then squashed the impulse. Whether the Captain’s voice was real or not, responding to it would be a form of karma. And in the end, it didn’t really matter if the words were real or not. The most important thing was to keep moving forward. With such thoughts on his mind, Xu Qing proceeded calmly through the mountains.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the Captain’s warning became a reality. Everyone began to hear different voices.

Xu Qing heard Sergeant Thunder, Grandmaster Bai, Master Seventh, and Plumdark. He even heard his parents talking to him, as well as the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan. His expression remained the same. He couldn’t imagine anyone in the party getting distracted by this. So he didn’t pay much attention to the voices. He just continued forward, all while keeping a hand protectively on Ling’er, who was now coiled around his neck. He didn’t want her getting worried.

It was impossible to say what Nethersprite was hearing, but her face was expressionless as she continued moving without pause.

Li Youfei was old enough to have experienced a lot in life. Considering how he had cleverly plotted against Xu Qing when they first met, it was a given that he had tenacious willpower. It wasn’t hard at all for him to keep his mind under control and ignore the voices.

As for Wu Jianwu, he heard Mistress Rosyclouds’ voice talking from behind him, calling to him. The suddenness of it caused his eyes to go wide. However, when he thought about how she’d turned and walked away from him, he smiled grimly and continued onward. Next, he heard a voice full of profound majesty, something from ancient times, speaking in exactly the way he knew Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity would speak.

*“Nine clouds in heaven remember the past; ten chasms of fog obscure ancient and modern!”*

Wu Jianwu shivered from head to toe and very nearly looked over his shoulder. But then he realized something didn't make sense. *The wording is wrong. It's a complete load of crap! The tonal patterns are off. It's supposed to be both domineering and heart-rending, but in reality, it's just sentimental nonsense.*

Snorting coldly in his heart, he kept moving.

The last to hear a voice was Ning Yan.

"Your Majesty...."

He stopped in place briefly, but then considered what the Captain had said. After taking a few breaths, he continued.

The clouds of smoke kept moving across the mountains. Nothing unusual happened to any of them.

Thanks to Ling'er, Xu Qing was aware that everything was going well. However, he kept his guard up. He had the feeling there was going to be more gruish phenomena in these mountains. Eyes cold, he proceeded, trying to calculate how far they'd gone based on his rate of movement and the time that had passed.

The candle had been burning faster and faster, to the point where he only had a bit of wax left.

We should arrive soon

, he thought. However, that was when Ling'er's voice rang out in his mind. She sounded alarmed.

*"Big Bro Xu Qing... I just realized there aren't six people traveling in clouds of smoke.... There are seven. The seventh person came out of nowhere. What's more, everyone else seems to be out of order now.... I can't tell who is who."*

Xu Qing looked down at Ling'er. Her state of alarm seemed to confirm that the voice he had heard really was hers. Her observation didn't surprise him at all.

The gruish nature of this world was being fully manifest, whether by means of the voices earlier, or this additional person that Ling'er had spotted.

"Don't look. Just keep going."

At that point, the Captain's voice once again reached everyone's ears. "We're almost to the end. We've successfully passed this challenge, but that doesn't mean we can relax. The fact that the candles are burning faster shows that we've been noticed. Let's speed up. We need to reach the spot where the mountains connect to the dome of heaven, and we need to do it before the candles burn out. Run, everybody!"

In response to his voice, the figures in the seven clouds of smoke all thought different things.

Ning Yan looked surprised, as did Wu Jianwu. Obviously, both of them had noticed that their candles were burning faster. They had also noticed that, back when passing out the candles, the Captain actually had quite a supply. If one candle wasn't enough, why hadn't he given them two? Li Youfei hesitated as he tried to determine if the voice he'd heard was real or not, and if he should trust it. Nethersprite just snorted coldly and continued moving at the same pace as before. Unexpectedly, the Captain also continued moving at the same speed!

It was only Wu Jianwu who suddenly sped up. The end of the mountains lay only about 300 meters ahead. As Wu Jianwu accelerated, he swept past the clouds of smoke occupied by Xu Qing and the Captain. The wind started blowing even harder than before, and the candle in his hands burned faster.

Finally, when Wu Jianwu was only about 30 meters from the end of the mountains, his candle suddenly winked out. The moment it did, the smoke around him vanished, revealing his shocked and terrified face. When Wu Jianwu saw that he was 30 meters away from the end, and then looked back to see six clouds of smoke slowly moving in his direction, he noticed that he was the only one who had sped up. A bewildered look appeared on his face. Apparently realizing that he had been fooled, but knowing there was nothing he could do about it, he gritted his teeth and rushed past the final 30 meters.

But then, bright colors flashed in heaven and earth. Bolts of blue lightning crashed in the sky, and countless skin lanterns turned to face Wu Jianwu, then raced toward him at top speed. The abyss on either side of the mountains erupted with deafening panting sounds, and a massive figure slammed into the side of the mountains and started climbing up. Terrifying fluctuations rolled out, shaking the mountains, distorting the sky, and blurring everything. It was almost as if there was a god in the abyss.

At the same time, one of the clouds of smoke suddenly accelerated rapidly, pulsing with a sense of greed as it closed in on Wu Jianwu.

It moved so fast that the smoke around it cleared, revealing... a lantern of human skin! Unexpectedly, the face on that lantern actually looked very much like the Captain's face. Moving with astonishing speed, and its expression one of madness, it soon reached a point only about three meters from Wu Jianwu.

Opening its mouth wide, it lunged. But then, all of a sudden, Wu Jianwu stopped moving and lifted his right hand. Then, blue light flared as he reached out and grabbed the lantern. The lantern reacted with astonishment, but it was too late for it to evade. Wu Jianwu's hand gripped it tight as he shot backward to the end of the mountains, and the altar that was there.

All of the other countless skin lanterns seemed to suddenly lose their senses. Returning to their peaceful state, they started floating around randomly. The howling from the abyss stopped and the mountains stopped shaking.

Clearly, once someone reached the altar, they would stop paying attention.

Meanwhile, Wu Jianwu stood on the altar gripping the lantern, his eyebrows dancing up and down as he jumped back and forth excitedly.

"I finally hooked this thingy!" he said, laughing. At that point, Wu Jianwu's facial features changed, melting into a liquid that ran down his face and revealing... the Captain!

Chapter 635: Flipped Upside Down; Grandparents Present

Looking down at the lantern, the Captain thought, *Grandpa Heir Apparent and the others really didn't tag along secretly? If they were here, could they really resist the urge to devour the dark souls in the abyss?*



Sighing inwardly, the Captain ignored the struggling of the lantern. Quickly performing a left-handed incantation gesture, he pushed his hand onto the face. The vicious face let loose a howl. In response, the Captain bit the tip of his tongue and spat some blood onto the lantern. Instantly, the face became splattered with blood.

“Shut up, fool! You’re a past life face that I left here on purpose. How dare you yell at me!”

Around that time, Xu Qing sped onto the altar.

Exactly as he did, his candle burned out and the smoke vanished. Xu Qing looked around, eventually noticing the lantern in the Captain’s hand.

Looking very pleased with himself, the Captain held the lantern up high.

“I left this thingy hiding here years ago. It doesn’t have a brain, only a face, so it isn’t very smart. But I know it all too well. You see, from the moment we stepped foot in the mountains, I kept my mouth shut. This thingy, taking advantage of the fact that we couldn’t see anything outside of the smoke, said a lot. You probably heard it all.”

Meanwhile, everyone else was stepping onto the altar, and wondering why the journey had gone so smoothly.

Smiling, the Captain continued, “At first it told you not to look back, right? That was to gain your trust. The truth is that it was worried the things in the abyss would steal its food. After gaining your trust, it told you to speed up. That was its attempt to snatch you.

“It was on a fishing expedition, except, so was I. This thingy has no brain, but it’s still instinctively cautious. If it wasn’t trying to hook one of us, it wouldn’t have gotten close. Truth be told, this challenge is easy as long as we have those candles. The hard part was figuring a way to get my hands on this lantern.”

The Captain smacked the face on the lantern. After being sprayed with blood, the face had been gasping for breath. Now it opened its mouth and tried to bite the Captain, though he still managed to smack the face without being bitten.

“Give me that,” Nethersprite said, her eyes cold.

The Captain blinked a few times then tossed the lantern to Nethersprite. This was one of the promises he’d made to convince Nethersprite to come along.

After catching the lantern, Nethersprite looked at the face, which was about eighty percent the same as Chen Erniu’s. Eyes suddenly turning bloodshot, she viciously slapped the face. However, she didn’t stop at a single slap. She slapped it again and again, causing the face to howl in anguish.

Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and the others were all shocked.

Off to the side, the Captain cheered her on. “Great shot! Harder! Go, go, go!”

That just seemed to make Nethersprite angrier. Strangely, no matter how Nethersprite hit the skin lantern, it didn’t break. And though the face swelled up from the beating, the swelling went down almost immediately. It was a very bizarre scene.

Watching the scene play out, Xu Qing opened his mouth to speak.

However, before he could, a very familiar voice spoke into his mind.

*“What a very interesting lamp.”* It was the Heir Apparent’s voice!

Xu Qing’s mouth snapped shut. He was only slightly surprised to hear that voice speaking. Next, another voice spoke.

*“Yeah, quite the treasure. What’s most interesting is that the construction method conforms to the style of Brilliant Heaven. This Chen Erniu really does have a mysterious background.”* It was Princess Brightblossom.[1]

*“I told you there’s something suspicious about the brat, which is why I suggested we secretly follow along. Earlier, it might have seemed like I was striking up a friendship with the little punk, but the truth is that I was pulling a fast one on him!”* That was Eighth Sib.

*“What I’m most interested in finding out is which mysterious high god actually chose to cooperate with him. And where is that god from? Is it really as our previous analysis indicated?”* That was Princess Fifth.

The Heir Apparent chuckled. *“We’ll get the answer here eventually. What’s more, the dark souls in the valley below contain a very ancient energy that could provide some rare nourishment for us.”*

As Xu Qing listened to the voices, he surreptitiously looked around. The spot they’d traveled to was actually high in the sky. Looking down from that point, the dark canopy of heaven almost seemed like it was in the abyss.

When viewed from the base of the mountains, the ‘scar’ in the canopy of heaven wasn’t very noteworthy. But from this vantage point, it looked like an enormous valley. Lightning danced back and forth within it, but that wasn’t enough to dispel the darkness and gloom. The only thing that emerged from it was a deep rumbling sound.

Noticing what Xu Qing was looking at, the Captain walked over and clasped his shoulder.

“Little Ah Qing, the second challenge is going to be dangerous. But don’t worry. Your Eldest Brother came prepared. Let me tell you, that valley is full of countless souls. And they’re unique souls, as they have an ancient energy in them. If you get close to them, your life force will be infected with something extremely ancient that will cause you to age rapidly and wither into death.”

As he spoke, the Captain took out a pile of what appeared to be paper talismans, which he distributed.

“Once we’re inside, burn these as you walk along. This time, we’re not going to split up. We need to stick close together. As long as the fire keeps burning, the souls won’t get close. These strips of skin are very useful. Don’t waste them....”

The Captain seemed slightly reluctant to pass out the talismans.

Xu Qing took some talismans. As soon as he touched them, he realized they were actually made from the Captain's skin. He cast a sympathetic look at the Captain.

At the moment, he didn't think it was the right thing to tell the Captain that the Heir Apparent and the others were with them. Otherwise, the Captain's good mood would probably sour. Although it seemed likely the Heir Apparent and the others would show themselves soon enough, keeping the Captain happy for even just a bit longer seemed like the best choice.

Sighing inwardly, he proceeded into the long, deep valley. The moment he did, everything turned upside down. The dome of heaven became the land. The land became the dome of heaven. The valley which had been in the sky now looked like two cliff faces towering up on either side. The sky was now just barely visible through the narrow gap overhead. What was more, the blade-like mountain range they had just walked through was now in the canopy of heaven. From the way it was angled, it really did look like a big saber, hanging up in the sky, ready to drop down at any moment into the valley. If it did... it would fit perfectly into the valley.

The unusual sight naturally created a sense of stifling pressure in those below. After all, it was like a literal blade hanging above their heads.

As the group looked up in shock, the Captain took out one of the strips of paper and lit it on fire. The surrounding darkness became like ink that swept away from them in rivulets.

"Don't waste them. Burning two at a time should be enough. I'll keep one going at all times, the rest of you take turns to burn them one at a time. Big Jianjian, you're first. After that will be Little Ningning. Then Li Youfei, Big Boo— er, Big Sis Nether, and finally little Ah Qing."

Warmth spread out from the fire, covering all of them. The darkness beyond the light stirred, and Xu Qing could see numerous eyes there, staring coldly at them. In fact, based on how they moved, Xu Qing could sense that there were massive entities out in the darkness, eying them *like tigers eying prey*. A sense of deadly crisis began to build within him.

However, when he thought about how the Heir Apparent and the others were nearby, he calmed down a bit.

Meanwhile, Wu Jianwu also lit one of the skin talismans, causing the light of the fire to spread even further.

"Let's go." The Captain took a deep breath and started walking. Xu Qing followed. As a group, they proceeded into the darkness and gloom of the valley.

As they walked, the fire made them the only source of light in the dark world. And though the light kept the evil things away, it also attracted a lot of attention. That, combined with the steep mountains on either side, created a sense of stifling pressure.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu already regretted coming along. Li Youfei tried to stay as close as possible to Xu Qing, believing that to be the safest spot. Nethersprite was in the back, laughing coldly as she repeatedly slapped the skin lantern.

Two hours passed. They were about halfway through the valley, and they had already burned a few dozen talismans. The further they went, the faster the talismans burned. Although the Captain had

prepared a good stockpile, seeing them being burned away so quickly left him feeling very disappointed.

After all, each talisman had been made by slicing off his own skin. Given the rate they were burning through the talismans, he was worried that they might run out, forcing him to cut more skin off himself.

“There’s no way...” the Captain said with another sigh.

Finally, Xu Qing couldn’t take it anymore and spoke softly into his mind. “*Senior...?*”

“*I know,*” the Heir Apparent replied. “*Enough of them have gathered.*”

All of a sudden, the burning talismans in the hands of the Captain and Ning Yan went out.

The Captain’s eyes widened, and everyone went on guard.

As the flames went out, everything turned dark. And the voracious souls in the darkness instantly lunged forward. Ghostly howls rang out everywhere. However, those howls quickly turned into exclamations of terror. It was as if they had run into something that horrified even them. Sadly for them, they realized that too late.

Xu Qing sensed his sleeve rustling as several figures popped out. Next, the cries of terror turned into bloodcurdling screams.

Then, chewing sounds could be heard as countless souls were devoured. Then, a crashing sound rang out as a bolt of lightning fell. As the darkness was briefly dispelled, Xu Qing caught sight of the Heir Apparent and the others, all of them like vortexes sucking in the surrounding souls. Countless souls were sucked into the vortexes and ripped to shreds.

Normally, these ‘grandpas’ and ‘grandmas’ seemed kind and amiable, but not now. Right now, they seemed profoundly cold.

Xu Qing’s expression was the same as ever. None of this was very surprising to him. After all, they were Smoldering Gods. Considering that their cultivation level had the word ‘god’ in it, that went to show that they were in a higher category of existence.

They acted kind and amiable because of Xu Qing and the other youngsters in the Green Spirit Pharmacy. But to others, the fact that they were Smoldering Gods... made them almost no different from actual gods!

#### Chapter 636: An Unusual Role

Xu Qing had experienced god-glimpsing, so he understood some of what was happening.

The illumination provided by the lightning disappeared, and the darkness returned. The agonized shrieks now sounded like they were farther away, evidence that the Heir Apparent and his siblings were moving out into the gloom.

The Captain sighed and looked at the strip of flesh in his hand. He suddenly felt prickling pain, both on his skin and in his heart.

“Little Ah Qing, isn’t this a classic case of evil intentions? I asked them if they wanted to come and they said no! Then I had to use my own fat to make candles and my own skin to make talismans. Do you know... how much all of that hurt?”

Xu Qing nodded and offered some consolation. “You can put them away now, Captain. I doubt we’ll need them going forward. And don’t waste the skin. Who knows, you might be able to stick it back on yourself later.”

Looking miserable, the Captain sighed again as he took back the skin talismans, then kept moving.

The valley was still dark and the surroundings were icy cold. However, there was no longer any danger. Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were sighing inwardly. It was the same with Li Youfei. In contrast, Nethersprite didn’t seem to care at all about the new developments. If anything, she was excited; as long as Chen Erniu was unhappy, she felt great. In fact, she felt so great she just kept hitting the lantern.

Another two hours went by, during which they simply walked along until they reached the far end of the valley. The moment they emerged from the narrow path, they caught sight of a dilapidated altar.

Back before the altar crumbled into ruins, it had obviously been an incredibly majestic thing. It was fully 30,000 meters across, and roughly 3,000 meters tall.

However, it was now barely more than a pile of boulder-like debris. There were also some statues around the altar. The statues were all 30,000-meters tall, and were in varying states of damage. Though they were clearly very old, they were also quite impressive.

Xu Qing and the others felt like they had entered into a kingdom of giants.

The area was full of extremely strong rancorous aura, as well as baleful energy. It was so intense that it created rippling distortions as they looked around.

Because of that, the sky looked different to Xu Qing. And it was so high above his head that it seemed almost like a heaven beyond heaven.

The rancorous energy and the baleful energy mixed together, making a giant vortex that spun endlessly overhead. Wind. Rain. Thunder. Lightning. Suns. Moons. Stars. Heavenly bodies. The vortex contained boundless magical laws that constantly shifted and transformed, releasing terrifying fluctuations.

Xu Qing looked at the vortex, his heart pounding. He could sense that it contained the fluctuations of a god. It was Crimson Mother’s aura, as well as a majestic might, a tyrannical dao that seemed capable of causing heaven and earth to prostrate in front of it. Xu Qing could just barely make out a roar of rage coming from the most ancient times, mixed with a piercing shriek. It caused blood-colored light to spring up around Xu Qing. His god trove appeared, daybreak light swirled, and taboo poison pulsed, creating a protective barrier. Despite all of that, he coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered backward.

This vortex is so strong that I doubt even the Heir Apparent would casually step into it....

If Xu Qing was shocked by what he was seeing, it went without saying that the others had similar reactions.

Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and Li Youfei were visibly stunned, and were all coughing up blood like mad. Ning Yan's bloodline had been aroused, and he shone with glowing yellow light. However, not even that was enough to protect him, and he passed out.

Li Youfei shivered. He was in the Nascent Soul level, yet in the presence of this vortex, neither Nascent Soul cultivators nor Gold Core experts were worth much. Blood sprayed out of his mouth and he fell over, injured and unconscious.

Wu Jianwu had an even weaker cultivation base. However, he had a lot of children. In that moment of crisis, he called forth a host of them, who clustered around him and bolstered him with bloodline power. Though he coughed up blood, he actually didn't pass out.

Nethersprite's expression was very serious as she looked at the vortex up above. Five secret troves appeared around her, keeping her safe.

The Captain coughed up blood and staggered backward. However, his eyes shone with excitement. Pointing at the crumbled altar, he laughed crazily and said, "See that, little Ah Qing! That's what we're here for!"

"This is the very spot where the Imperial Sovereign of the Moonrite Region beheaded Crimson Mother before she reached godly ascension! At that time, Crimson Mother was also an Imperial Sovereign!"

"Based on all the information I gathered in past lives, I determined that this location contains a convergence of Imperial Sovereign divine abilities in the form of the God Decapitation Altar. That altar right there is where Crimson Mother's head was taken off. Of course, after that event, shē loathed this place so much that shē destroyed the altar. However, that doesn't matter!"

"It won't affect my big plan. There are some things I can say here that I wasn't able to say before. I don't have to keep them a secret in the fear of arousing the wrong karma and waking up Crimson Mother."

Xu Qing looked at the Captain, his eyes shining.

"Little Ah Qing, do you know why my script is entitled *God Decapitation*?"

Voice calm, Xu Qing said, "Because you're going to recreate the scene in which the Imperial Sovereign beheaded Crimson Mother!"

He had long since come to this conclusion. However, because the Captain hadn't brought up the subject, he hadn't talked about it.

The Captain laughed heartily. "Exactly! I'm going to make it as realistic as possible. Then we'll film it and process it. Afterward, we'll use the power of all the artificial suns I've collected to broadcast it throughout the entire Moonrite Region!"

“One of the artificial suns is in the desert. There are two that I released before coming here, and are already in the canopy of heaven above the Moonrite Region. And there are a few more that I’ve secretly set up in different places.

“Once the filming is complete, it can be broadcast immediately! When that happens, all living beings in the Moonrite Region, regardless of where they are, will be able to look up and see it all play out!”

In concert with the loud rumbling of the vortex, the Captain’s voice seemed extraordinarily grand and lofty.

“Right now, the living beings in the Moonrite Region are wallowing in despair. They need some hope! They need a reason to fight back. And the contents of my broadcast will bring them that hope. It will give them that reason!”

Everything finally clicked for Xu Qing, and he said, “The broadcast will show them that gods aren’t unkillable. They aren’t eternal.”

“Exactly right!” The Captain looked very excited. Obviously, he had been thinking about this moment for a very long time, and had been making a lot of preparations for it. Now, it was finally about to become a reality.

Looking thoughtfully at the Captain, Xu Qing said, “There must be more to it than that, Eldest Brother.”

“You understand me the best, little Junior Brother. Hahaha! You’re right, I have three goals in mind!

“First, to arouse the fighting spirit of the people of Moonrite. It would be too difficult for us to devour Crimson Mother using our strength alone. We need to borrow the strength of the people of Moonrite. Remember, a few sparks can set a grassland aflame!

“Second, only by accomplishing the first goal can I then gather the strength of the people of Moonrite in the same location where I filmed the broadcast. In other words, right here. That’s going to be very useful, although you’ll have to wait to see the details.

“As for the third goal, it’s this: when the living people here see that broadcast, it will plant a seed in their hearts! Furthermore, the experience of being beheaded is one of Crimson Mother’s most painful memories.

“Little Ah Qing, you’ve glimpsed what it means to be a god, and therefore you have a clear understanding of the connections between human nature and godly nature. As a result you must surely understand why Crimson Mother is so hungry. It’s because Crimson Mother... isn’t complete.”

The Captain licked his lips and looked at Xu Qing, the crazy look in his eyes more intense than ever, to the point where the faces were visible in his pupils. What was more, there was a faint sensation of hunger that pulsed uncontrollably in the Captain.

Xu Qing nodded. “Based on what I’ve sensed, I can guess that Crimson Mother has only reached a state of equilibrium. In the final analysis, shē isn’t complete. Otherwise, if hēr human nature was completely erased, shē wouldn’t feel any hunger.”

The Captain smiled malevolently. Even Nethersprite shivered when she saw it.

“Therefore, what we’re going to do is break that equilibrium! Later on, I’ll use sacrificial dance techniques to deliver the recording right to Crimson Mother the moment shē arrives. Hēr most painful memory will be what summons hēr human nature! After all, emotions are one of the manifestations of human nature! Think of them like a see-saw that keeps human nature and godly nature constantly at odds.

“When it all happens, Crimson Mother will go insane. With hēr equilibrium broken, shē’ll have a weakness! And that’s only one part of my larger master plan. When the entire plan is carried out, Crimson Mother.. could very well be beheaded again!

“What do you think, little Ah Qing? Is your Eldest Brother amazing, or is he amazing?”  
The Captain stood there proudly.

Xu Qing was happy to agree, so he clasped hands and bowed.

The Captain felt even more pleased as a result. Laughing heartily, he walked over to Ning Yan and slapped him. Ning Yan coughed up some blood and regained consciousness. The Captain also woke up Li Youfei.

“Little Ningning, take this script. You have one incense stick’s worth of time to memorize your lines. You’re going to play the role... of the Imperial Sovereign of the Moonrite Region!”

Ning Yan shivered from head to toe. Wu Jianwu, meanwhile, was starting to get a bit worked up. Pushing aside his children, he stared at the Captain.

The Captain waved his hand, sending a jade slip flying to Wu Jianwu.

“Little Jianjian, as your dear friend, how could I possibly not know about your biggest dream in life? Well, today, I’m going to make it come true. You are going to play the part of... Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity!”

Wu Jianwu was already getting very excited. The Captain was right that he had long dreamed of being Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. Of course, that couldn’t literally happen, but being able to play the part of the Ancient Emperor was still profoundly meaningful. And when he thought about how many people would see his performance, Wu Jianwu got even more excited.

The Captain patted Wu Jianwu on the shoulder and gave him an encouraging look. Then he turned to Nethersprite.



“Big Boo— Big Sis Nether, as per our agreement, you’re going to play the role of Crimson Mother.”

Nethersprite glared at him maliciously and let out a cold harrumph. “Give it to me!”

The Captain quickly took out a jade slip and handed it respectfully to Nethersprite. Finally, he looked at Xu Qing. After blinking a few times, he smiled.

“Little Ah Qing, you’re going to play a somewhat unusual role. You’re not going to be a person. You’re going to be... blood. Using your authority, I want you to make sure there’s a lot of blood spraying around when Crimson Mother gets beheaded. It needs to be extremely realistic.”

Xu Qing looked expressionlessly at the Captain.

The Captain cleared his throat. “Although, considering that you *are* my little Junior Brother, I guess I could give you a second role. That of... the godpriest of the God Decapitation Altar! What do you say?”

Chapter 637: The Hottest Show in Moonrite

When the Captain finished speaking, Wu Jianwu felt incomparably wonderful. He definitely got the best role of the performance, and it caused a poem to pop into his mind.

Erniu seems like he’s tearing things apart, a well-rounded hero always has a heart!

He didn’t speak the words aloud, but the sentiment was visible on his face.

The Captain noticed that look and smiled approvingly.

When Ling’er realized that roles were being distributed, she stuck her head out of Xu Qing’s sleeve and looked at the Captain.

“What about me, Elder Brother Erniu? What about me?”

Without a moment of hesitation, the Captain said, “You? Well you’re the godpriest’s little daoist partner, of course!”

Ling’er was very pleased to hear that.

“And then there’s you, Little Li. You’ll stick close to Little Ningning, as you’ll be the court eunuch who reads out the imperial decree.”

Li Youfei didn’t have any expectations about the role he was to play, and considering that Xu Qing was assigned to be the stage crew, he simply nodded agreeably.

“What about you?” Xu Qing asked calmly.

“Me? Hahaha! Well, I’m getting a bit too old to have an onstage role. I’d rather you young whippersnappers get a chance at fame. You’re our future, after all. Therefore, I’ll simply be serving all of you from behind the curtain.”

Looking completely calm and collected, the Captain went on to distribute jade slip scripts to everyone.

Wu Jianwu was carefully studying his script, and had already started practicing some of his lines. Ning Yan was also interested in the script, although not as much as Wu Jianwu.

Nethersprite did little more than glance at it and snort coldly. Then she went back to smacking the lantern. Perhaps because she was able to vent her killing intent, or perhaps because the lantern just felt good, she found the practice of smacking it to be very enjoyable.

The Captain didn't seem bothered by what Nethersprite was doing. He looked immensely pleased as he studied his little team. He was getting very excited about what was to come shortly.

"Study your lines closely, everyone. Remember, every living being in the Moonrite Region is going to be watching you. After this, we're doing makeup and then putting on the period costumes. With the assistance of Big Sis Nether, everything is ready."

Wu Jianwu nodded enthusiastically. Ning Yan suddenly seemed to be taking the situation a lot more seriously.

The only one who didn't seem very excited was Xu Qing. His script was fairly simple, and he didn't even have any lines to memorize. In fact, there wasn't really any information at all in his script. All he had to do was make sure a lot of blood sprayed everywhere when Crimson Mother was beheaded. His main role really was to handle the blood. And his other role, that of the God Decapitation Altar's godpriest, didn't have any speaking lines. He just needed to slash a saber down. Although the Captain had named the role 'godpriest,' the reality was that he was the executioner.

Given that he didn't have much to do, Xu Qing started looking more closely at the ruins of the altar. Its ancient aura was very strong, and the ravages of time were clearly evident everywhere. It reminded Xu Qing of the temples where he had studied the Supreme Vastness Solitary Saber. They imparted the same sensation of the passage of countless years.

I wonder if there's any enlightenment to be gained here.

Xu Qing's thoughts began to wander.

Meanwhile, as the director, the Captain figured he should do as much as possible to help everyone understand their roles. Therefore, he decided to give a little bit of an explanation about the performance. Clearing his throat, he hopped up onto a large chunk of stone, then looked down.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the Captain said passionately, "we will be performing a play in two acts. If you look at your scripts, you can see the work you have cut out for you. Act 1 is called Demon Mother Disrupts Revered Ancient!"

Xu Qing wasn't paying any attention. As he stared at the rubble of the altar, he could sense how ancient it was. In fact, the Captain's voice almost seemed like it was coming from a different time.

"The story basically explains how Crimson Mother, before reaching godly ascension, was arrogant and despotic, threw Revered Ancient into chaos, spread torment and suffering, and ultimately displeased the Imperial Sovereign so much that he crushed her. Of course, there will be some narration during this part, which will be provided by yours truly!"

“When the scene opens, the Imperial Sovereign will appear, surrounded by suns, moons, stars, heavenly bodies, wind, thunder, lightning, and rain. Long story short, a host of divine abilities and magical techniques will be used to create a dazzling, colorful image. It will be incomparably beautiful. I’ll handle all of that, of course.”

As he spoke, the Captain’s eyebrows danced up and down. Clearly, he was going to be taking center stage in his own way. Meanwhile, Xu Qing was so immersed in his senses that an image had formed in his mind.

“After that?” the Captain continued, “Well, upon establishing the grandeur and might of the Imperial Sovereign, he will berate Crimson Mother in front of all creation, and will list out her nine criminal offenses! Crimson Mother, being completely arrogant and wicked, will try to devour the Imperial Sovereign. The Imperial Sovereign will then launch a palm strike, severely injuring Crimson Mother.

“We really need to impart the Imperial Sovereign’s invincible majesty. Ning Yan, you need to capture that feeling. Remember, the Imperial Sovereign is like a king. Just tap into your memories and imagine what a truly exalted individual is like. You can do it. I have full confidence in you.”

Thanks to the Captain’s encouragement, Ning Yan thought of his father. He nodded.

“As for Big Sis Nether...” The Captain turned to Nethersprite.

She looked back at him coldly.

He chuckled.

“Big Sis Nether,” he said warmly, “you don’t really have to say very much. However, acting as Crimson Mother is going to be a bit of a challenge for you. After all, Crimson Mother is inherently vicious and evil, unlike you, ma’am. Big Sis Nether, you’re inherently honest and kindhearted. So basically, you just need to act in the exact opposite way you normally would. That will make your performance perfect!”

Nethersprite smiled sarcastically.

The Captain blinked a few times, then continued, “Next is act 2, which is where the climax of the play comes. The story picks up after the Imperial Sovereign arrests Crimson Mother and brings her here. No matter how hard she struggles, she can’t free herself. She’s been ruthlessly restrained.

“We’ll need some magical techniques to add to the effect. You know, wild colors flashing in heaven and earth. Winds screaming around. Things rumbling. It needs to be a very dramatic scene.

“As the tension builds, Crimson Mother is forced to kneel in front of the Imperial Sovereign. In turn, the Imperial Sovereign clasps hands to heaven, beseeching Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity to bear witness. A projection of the Ancient Emperor

arrives, and the court eunuch reads out the decree. Like before, we'll need a lot of dramatic stuff happening in the background!"

The Captain was really going all out. He'd clearly put a massive amount of thought into the script.

As the entire play was explained in a very eloquent manner, Xu Qing shivered. Peering at the outline of the image in his mind, he realized a wind had picked up, carrying with it chanting from the ancient past. However, he couldn't quite make out what was being said.

"And then?" the Captain said, his voice echoing loudly. "The Imperial Sovereign will give the order, and Xu Qing, you, as the godpriest of the God Decapitation Altar, will raise the guillotine blade high into the air and then chop it down! However, don't forget that you're also in charge of the blood effects. Make sure to time it well so it looks real. [1]"

"Although this isn't exactly how it happened down to the finest detail, there's not much we can do about that. We have no way to imitate the Imperial Sovereign's divine abilities, the type that uses heaven as the blade and earth as the altar, and connect to the sun and moon to create an insurmountable grandeur. As such, we'll just do what we can."

The Captain sighed. He really wished he could put an Imperial Sovereign's divine abilities on display. That would have been absolutely shocking. Sadly... without being an Imperial Sovereign, it wasn't possible to show off an Imperial Sovereign's divine abilities.

If only the Heir Apparent and his siblings would give a helping hand. That would be so great....

The Captain scanned the area but didn't see any sign of the 'grandpas' and 'grandmas.' Pushing that idea away, he looked at Nethersprite.

"Big Sis Nether, remember to plaster a look of extreme hatred onto your face the moment you're beheaded. To do that, you—"

"All I have to do," Nethersprite interrupted venomously, "is look at you and my hatred will reach the most extreme level possible!"

The Captain blinked a few times, backed up a few steps, and looked at Wu Jianwu. "Little Jianjian, you just do your thing as usual. That'll be fine. Little Ah Qing, you... hey, what are you doing?" The Captain looked in surprise at Xu Qing and realized he seemed to be seeking enlightenment. "Little Ah Qing, you can't just randomly seek enlightenment here...."

Xu Qing nodded.

Curious, the Captain continued, "What are you seeking enlightenment of?"

"I hear some sort of chanting," Xu Qing said, looking off into the distance.

The Captain was so shocked his jaw nearly dropped. *Where'd you get these powers of understanding??* He cleared his throat. "Well then... just carry on."

Turning away from Xu Qing, the Captain took a deep breath and threw his hands into the air.

“Okay everybody,” he said excitedly, “the time has come for the first rehearsal of *God Decapitation!*”

Wu Jianwu immediately got into character, clasping his hands behind his back and standing straight. Li Youfei hurried over to stand next to him.

Ning Yan flew up into the air and looked down at Nethersprite. Thinking back to how his father would speak and act, his facial expression gradually turned dignified.

“Demon woman!” he barked.

Nethersprite glared up coldly at Ning Yan. Ning Yan’s majesty collapsed under her gaze.

“Stop!” The Captain looked very anxious. “You’re not putting the right emotion into it, Little Ningning. Start over from the beginning!”

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As the rehearsal went on, everyone worked hard. Ning Yan had trouble a few times, but in the end, there was nothing the Captain could do to change that.

Finally, Xu Qing took to the stage. Continuing to work on enlightenment, he drifted out expressionlessly, then floated in the air looking down at Nethersprite. His gaze caused Nethersprite to frown and her gaze to seem a bit more serious. Inside, she was feeling an inexplicable pressure.

Ning Yan noticed that, and tried to imitate Xu Qing’s expression, and it turned out to be a big improvement.

The Captain saw that and sighed inwardly. The truth was that the script they were working with was different from the original script he’d created. In the original version, there had been more romance and grudges. That had made the script more emotionally impactful. But when he realized that the Heir Apparent and his siblings might be watching, and that the play was actually depicting their father, the Captain decided not to include those parts.

Seeing that Ning Yan was still struggling to pull off a good performance, the Captain stepped out and prepared to offer some more direction.

However, before he could, a cold harrumph echoed out, causing everyone who was part of the rehearsal to feel like they were being shaken down to their soul.

“This entire thing is a hot mess!”

The voice boomed like thunder as the Heir Apparent appeared in the air with his siblings. Fifth Sister looked down expressionlessly. Princess Brightblossom was frowning slightly. Eighth Sib had his arms crossed over his chest as he sneered at Chen Erniu.

Xu Qing clasped his hands and bowed.

“Grandpa...” the Captain said fawningly, and was about to offer an explanation.

Before he could, the Heir Apparent said, “Your play is completely wrong! Xu Qing, you don’t need to provide any blood effects. And you also don’t need to act as a godpriest. Go over to the God Decapitation Altar and continue seeking enlightenment from the lingering killing intent there. It’s going to be a big help to your cultivation.

“If you can gain enlightenment of the killing will of the God Decapitation Altar, you’ll have acquired amazing good fortune, and this trip will not have been made in vain. Of course, it’s all going to come down to your powers of understanding. How much you gain enlightenment of will depend on you.”

“Yes, sir,” Xu Qing said, his eyes shining. Hurrying over to the altar, he sat down cross-legged on one of the crumbled boulders. Closing his eyes, he focused all of his senses on the surrounding energy.

Next, the Heir Apparent pointed at the Captain. “Now, you’re going to be the godpriest. You have experience as a guard, right? Just act like that.”

The Captain shrank back a bit. He had no desire to have a role like that, yet didn’t dare to reveal his inner thoughts. He quickly hurried over to the spot Xu Qing had been occupying moments before.

“Alright, start over, and I’ll make some adjustments!” With that, the Heir Apparent dropped out of the air and sat down cross-legged, to be joined by his siblings.

Everyone else was vastly more nervous now, but they started the rehearsal over. This time, the person stopping them constantly wasn’t the Captain, it was the Heir Apparent. Thanks to him, the script and the lines were changed. As everyone slowly got into character, the images that the Heir Apparent remembered witnessing personally began to take shape. He exaggerated some things, but that just made things more realistic than the Captain’s version.

As the four siblings watched, gleams of reminiscence appeared in their eyes.

Xu Qing was no longer part of the rehearsal. He sat cross-legged at the ruined altar, focused entirely on the surrounding energy. As time passed, he gradually sensed a wind blowing out of nowhere. When it touched him and reached his heart, ripples spread through him....

Chapter 638: Everything That Exists Leaves Behind Evidence of Itself

At the edge of the shattered altar, Wu Jianwu was carefully studying his script. He intended to take everything he knew about Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity and make it a part of his performance. It wasn’t a very difficult task for him, nor was it his first time doing something like this. Back in the Dark Serenity Sect’s pocket dimension in the Eight Sect Coalition, he had done something similar to get a reaction from the demon snake skeleton. [1]

With the Heir Apparent directing, Ning Yan and Nethersprite essentially had to start from ground zero with their lines. It went without saying that the Heir Apparent was definitely a more suitable director for this play than Chen Erniu. With his insights, everyone was able to bring a higher level of realism to their roles.

Princess Brightblossom, Fifth Sister, and Eighth Sib sat next to the Heir Apparent watching the rehearsal and discussing it amongst themselves.

“That Wu Jianwu kid has some pizzazz after all. Forget his cultivation base. His facial expressions and wording really do remind you a lot of the Ancient Emperor.”

“Ning Yan isn’t bad either. He’s at least channeling some of our father’s imperial majesty.”

“Comparatively speaking, though, the hatred in Nethersprite’s eyes is the most realistic. Probably the highlight of the performance.”

“The worst of the group is Chen Erniu. Why’s he just standing there stock still?”

As they chatted and nodded, they would occasionally look over at Xu Qing. The frown on Xu Qing’s face seemed to please the Heir Apparent.

“The boy looks like he’s having a rough time. The God Decapitation Altar is a manifestation of one of father’s divine abilities. It was a trump card that combined all of his experiences and his cultivation base power. Forget the kid. Not even I could learn that divine ability back in the day. Countless years have passed since then, and this place is in total ruins. I don’t care how he seeks enlightenment... there’s no way he’ll fully succeed.” The Heir Apparent shook his head. “Only Ninth Sib was able to continue that tradition....”

Thinking about his ninth brother made the Heir Apparent sigh.

Off to the side, Eighth Sib suddenly said, “Big Brother, I don’t really approve of this rubbernecking attitude of yours. You obviously know he can’t gain enlightenment here, so why are you having him try? It’s so unscrupulous! I mean, do you want him to get enlightenment or don’t you?”

The Heir Apparent’s expression darkened as he looked at Eighth Sib. Eighth Sib shrank back a bit. Realizing he’d said the wrong thing again, he smiled ingratiatingly.

“The Heir Apparent is worried that Xu Qing will get a big head because of his powers of understanding,” Princess Brightblossom said. “He wants Xu Qing to come to understand his limitations. That will give him the best foundation for future growth. Besides, with this experience, when Ninth Sib awakens in the future, he can pass on the God Decapitation Altar magic, and Xu Qing will be in a much better position to learn it.”

Fifth Sister nodded. By now, she fully approved of Xu Qing.

Eighth Sib hesitated. There were some more things he wanted to say, yet didn’t dare to. In the end, he just said, “Okay, but... what happens if he actually does gain enlightenment of the killing will? After all, father used to say *everything that exists leaves behind evidence of itself.*”

The Heir Apparent sat there quietly. Princess Brightblossom was similarly silent.

Fifth Sister looked at Xu Qing and quietly said, “That would prove that his powers of understanding actually surpass the shocking level of Ninth Sib. Remember, back then, he was said to have powers of understanding similar to father’s....”

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Everything that exists leaves behind evidence of itself.

All things in heaven and earth were governed by that principle. People. Objects. Concepts. And also divine abilities. The wind had a memory. The land had a memory. The dome of heaven. All living things. No matter how many ages and eras passed, they could remember. Even heavenly daos had a memory. And if a heavenly dao forgot something, it was always possible that there was some higher will that existed above heavenly daos. If something like that existed, perhaps it would remember everything that had happened over the countless years of history.

That said, such ‘evidence’ was sometimes hard to spot, to the point where it would be logical to assume it had disappeared forever. But the reality was the opposite.

*“Divine abilities are only constrained by your own imagination....”*

Those words spoken by Princess Brightblossom had profoundly affected Xu Qing. It was as if they had opened a window that let him see all of heaven and earth. The image outside that window wasn’t fixed. It was determined by the limits of his imagination.

As Xu Qing sat on the broken stone remnants of the altar, he felt the wind. Because this world fragment was isolated from the outside world, the wind that blew here was from ancient times.

Xu Qing sat there quietly. He was thinking, not just about his actions, but his inner self, his physical body, his soul, and everything else that made him up. As the wind blew, all of those things became extremely calm. All outside sounds ceased. He wasn’t looking at anything. He felt utter tranquility covering him. His mind became blank. His thoughts were empty. He lacked intentions. He lacked will.

The only sensation he experienced was the wind. It didn’t stir his hair or garments, but it caused ripples in his sea of consciousness.

As the ripples spread, images appeared like ink on water. They were blurry, and didn’t have a fixed shape. They moved back and forth, merged and split apart, seemingly working hard to form a specific image. It was as if they wanted to take a memory and impart it to the outside world. Impart it to someone who existed now. Impart it to Xu Qing.

Unfortunately, perhaps the evidence that had existed since ancient times had grown so faint that the ripples created by the wind weren’t capable of making the image complete.

Xu Qing’s powers of understanding really did have a limit when it came to *bringing the past to the present*. As a result, he wasn’t really able to seek enlightenment from the ink on the water. The ink and water had lost their power, and were gradually going still. The water was the water. The ink was the ink. They no longer mixed together. They began to vanish.

However, at the exact moment in which the ink was about to vanish, the defiance that existed in Xu Qing’s heart caused his sea of consciousness to surge. Subconsciously, he knew that this was an amazing destined opportunity. And when destined opportunities came along... you only had one chance to succeed. If that ink vanished, then he would lose the chance for all eternity.

Thus, seven-colored daybreak light exploded in his sea of consciousness, casting radiance everywhere, seeking to extract, to imitate, and to comprehend the ink.

In the past, Xu Qing wouldn’t have been able to do this. But now, his enlightenment of daybreak light had reached the point where he could use it to imitate things. With that, just about everything was within the realm of possibility. The ink and water seethed as seven colors spread through them,



causing the countless images on the water to turn into numerous projections. They were only imitations. However, there were far more of them than there were originals.

The images that formed were full of even more detail. People became visible within them. As the images collided and merged with each other, they started to form a larger, more complete image.

Within that image, it was just possible to make out two figures. One was in heaven, the other on earth. The figure in heaven extended its hands. The figure on the earth looked up. The moment it became clear, a will of intent flickered into being inside. It was killing intent.

The moment it appeared, Xu Qing's sea of consciousness seethed as if it had been struck by lightning from the highest heavens. Wind, rain, thunder, and lightning seemed to coalesce. Suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies erupted into being in the killing intent. It was something that would strike fear into the hearts of other Imperial Sovereigns who faced it, and in fact, would even frighten gods. The moment the intent flickered into being, the image shattered and faded from view.

A tremor passed through Xu Qing, and his previously empty thoughts stirred again. All of a sudden, he was struck with the realization that he had just experienced the killing will the Heir Apparent had mentioned.

If I can find it and imitate it, then... perhaps I can turn the image I just saw into a reality.

From what Xu Qing could tell, gaining enlightenment of the killing will wasn't important. That was just part of the process. The important part was the image. With that thought in mind, he sent seven-colored light sweeping through his sea of consciousness, both to search and to imitate. Instantly, the ink and the water seethed.

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The rehearsal went on. As everyone got used to their roles, they started to gain more confidence. It was getting to the point where the actual performance could begin.

Ning Yan and Nethersprite had already changed into their costumes.

Before things got started, the Captain walked out, clasped hands to the Heir Apparent and his siblings, then cleared his throat.

"Everybody, just do your best job. Of course, I have multiple roles to play. For one thing, I'm going to use Little Roundy to film the show. The film will then be transmitted to Big Roundy. After being processed, it can then be broadcast out into the canopy of heaven."

With a flourish, the Captain produced a glowing sphere, which he tossed up into the air.

But then the Heir Apparent waved his hand, sending Little Roundy right back to the Captain.

"There's no need for all that! Your way isn't exactly very convenient. For one thing, everyone will have to crane their necks to see. And that's not to mention that there will be some places where people *can't* see. You just concentrate on doing a good job as the godpriest. As for the filming, don't even concern yourself with it."

The Heir Apparent extended his right hand, and something crystalline shot out of his sleeve and up into the sky. High above, it stopped in place, revealing that it was actually a huge mirror fragment. It was fully 3,000 meters across and irregularly shaped. However, it emanated a majestic feeling. In fact, the Captain could clearly sense the aura of the Moonrebel Congregation in it. The Captain's eyes gleamed, and everyone else was visibly surprised.

The huge mirror hovered in the air, slowly rotating and reflecting all of the surroundings. It also locked onto everyone present. The image it created was incredibly clear.

"This was a precious treasure that belonged to my father," the Heir Apparent said. "Its name is Eye of Heaven. It can see to the highest of the nine heavens and to the lowest of the ten hells. Years ago, right before my father lost to Crimson Mother, the mirror shattered into numerous fragments that scattered into the surrounding lands. In the final moment, my father gave orders to the spirit automaton in the mirror to respect the will of the people.

"Later, as the spirit automaton absorbed the faith of the people, the Moonrebel Congregation came to be. What you're looking at here is the largest of the mirror fragments that formed after the Eye of Heaven shattered. The images reflected in this mirror can be transmitted to the spirit automaton in the Moonrebel Congregation. And then, it can be sent directly into the minds of all the living beings in the Moonrite Region.

"We won't have to worry about dealing with a recorded broadcast. It will happen live! And now...."

The Heir Apparent looked at the group.

The Captain was clearly excited. Ning Yan and the others were in very high spirits. At the same time, the realization that their performance was going to be broadcast live made them all feel more nervous than ever.

"Everybody to your places! Let the show begin!"

The giant mirror fragment glittered brightly. At the same time, in the secret location where the Moonrebel Congregation existed, everything started shaking. All of the temples suddenly shone with dazzling light. The numerous cultivators in the Moonrebel Congregation were stunned to the core as an image appeared in their minds. It wasn't just them. The same thing was happening throughout the Moonrite Region. All mortals. All animals. All cultivators.... Even the members of the Red Moon Cathedral were seeing the same thing.

An amazing play was officially starting.

Chapter 639: The Play Debuts!

"In a moment," a hoarse voice said into the minds of the audience, "all of you will witness a crucial event that played out in ancient times. It is a complete recording of

the time when the Imperial Sovereign of the region upon which we all stand viciously beheaded Crimson Mother!

“The gods believed this recording to be evil, and thus banned it for all time. However, after the countless years that have passed, today... we managed to dig up a copy of the recording, and will now play it in full for you.”

The voice itself seemed ancient, as if it had been dragged through countless years of time. At the same time, it seemed full of sighing and emotion.

“Hopefully, everyone in this region, including cultivators and mortals of all species, we who are stuck in an endless loop of fate, can remember this extremely important scene. And that is because, after this recording is released, it will once again be locked down by the gods.”

The wind was blowing in Moonrite! Everyone in the Moonrite Region, regardless of where they were, and regardless of what they were doing, now had the same image and the same voice in their mind. The image was incomparably clear, and the voice didn't contain even a hint of static. It was clearly the result of the sudden use of some incredibly powerful magic.

At first, most people were taken aback. However, they quickly realized that everyone around them also had blank looks on their faces, indicating that everyone was seeing the same thing. Waves of astonishment began to spread through all the cities of all the species in the region, building up into an unheard-of tempest.

Some cities had devolved so deeply into insanity and despair that they were little more than ruins filled with dazed survivors. However, as the tempest built, the numbness of their heart was shaken. They emerged from the ruins in their shabby clothing, climbing out of the holes in the ground and the piles of corpses, to look in shock up at the sky.

The sky was red, and there was no image projected there. But by looking up, they were able to focus even more clearly on the image in their mind.

Scenes like that played out everywhere in the Moonrite Region. In some cases, people came out alone. In other cases, they were in groups. Refugees in the wilderness had previously been trudging along silently with no destination in mind. Some of them even reached the point of just falling to the ground and closing their eyes. But now, as that image appeared, their hearts and minds stirred.

Some cities controlled by major species had remained mostly peaceful despite the insanity sweeping the region. However, the impending arrival of Crimson Mother hung over them like a sharp blade. With that blade hanging there, they had no choice other than to accept their fate. They couldn't resist. They couldn't fight back. And thus, when the image and voice appeared, their silent hearts trembled.

Most shaken of all were the cultivators in the region, especially those who were part of the Moonrite Region. They were powerful experts from all places, all species, and all sects. When the red moon had appeared the previous month, all of them had been filled with alarm. However, they still had the will to fight back. They were organized into small resistance squads. Unfortunately... not everyone could be like the Moonrebel Congregation cultivators. Most cultivators didn't have the courage and valor to defy a god. After all, those who didn't resist might survive until Crimson

Mother showed up. Those who resisted... could very well be killed in battle with the Red Moon Cathedral. Therefore, the image was like a huge blow to their minds.

That blow was even more dramatic to the cultivators of the Red Moon Cathedral.

And thus, as everyone in the region paid close attention, the big play began.

In the image, the dome of heaven was like a mass of fish scales rippling constantly. Endless clouds of blood formed, filling the sky and making it seem like a blood hell was taking over. Thunder rumbled, and black bolts of lightning snaked out, connecting with each other to form a huge cage within the blood hell.

Suppression was the main theme of the image. The ground below was also the color of blood. Countless corpses had been piled together to form 9,999 mountains. Each of those mountains was 3,000 meters tall. They loomed over the lands, organized into a circular pattern that was a huge spell formation. Endless blood flowed down the corpse mountains, which gathered in the middle of them all to make a massive blood lake.

In the middle of the lake was a woman, submerged up to her waist, her back to the audience. She seemed to be bathing. She had long hair, skin as fair as snow, and seemed extremely alluring. As she bathed in blood, she sang a song.

*“Some people take flight into the sky, their ambitions utterly bright and high.*

*“At the Red Moon Sea they heave and sigh, visiting the frontier by-and-by.*

*“As reincarnation exemplified, they become good food that satisfies.*

*“Sunlight having burned out the eyes, ideals will never possibly run dry.*

*“Into the vast expanse I spy, atop the high red moon... I will fly!”*

The lyrics float in all directions, thrumming with a determination and staunchness that made them seem dreamlike.

Except, the background music for this dream was a group of 9,999 mountains of corpses, filled with innumerable bodies. And they wept. Endless cries of grief provided the music for the dream. It was easy to imagine that this woman, in pursuit of that dream, had left behind far more mountains of corpses than were visible here.

As the woman sang, waves rolled out over the lake of blood as 9,999 tentacles emerged to link with the corpse mountains. The wriggling tentacles accepted the sacrifice of blood from the corpse mountains, causing the corpses to wither up, turning into nutrients and being swept into the lake of blood, and thus, the woman. As countless souls cried out in anguish, the mountains collapsed and entered the woman's mouth.

The living beings in the Moonrite Region were shaken by the sight of it. And because of the curse that existed in all of them, they all could tell that the woman... was Crimson Mother of the red moon!

Next, a heaven-rending, earth-crushing crash of thunder erupted in the blood-colored canopy of heaven as a pair of hands stretched down and started ripping open the sky. Deafening noises shook

all heaven and earth. The hands ripped open a huge gap in the sky, allowing boundless light to flow down, spreading out and driving away the color of blood. Wickedness was suppressed.

The blood clouds crumbled as a middle-aged man dressed in a long golden robe appeared. His expression was threatening without being angry as he strode forth. Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth as the blood clouds continued to fall into nothing. The ground quaked. The entire world was shaken.

Massive waves appeared on the surface of the blood-colored lake, and the blood-red tentacles whipped about wildly. The woman, meanwhile, looked up into the sky and released a piercing shriek. Then she leaped up, emerging from the lake and shooting toward the dome of heaven. The blood lake began to spin, creating a vortex that sent forth a blood will that seemed capable of devouring anything and everything.

The middle-aged man in the sky looked down expressionlessly. He didn't pause for even a moment as his foot extended in a second step forward. That single step caused the blood-colored vortex to collapse into pieces, thus revealing the woman's true form. Her torso was just like any ordinary human. But her lower half was made of endless tentacles. Overall, she was horrifying and extremely ugly.

The man took a third step. The sky vibrated, shattering into countless fragments that fell toward the woman. The ground sank in as a huge crack appeared. Screaming and coughing up blood, the woman fell back.

Next came the fourth step. Heaven shattered, and the earth crumbled. The woman slammed into the ground, seriously injured. Then the man took a fifth step, and his foot headed right toward the struggling woman's head.

He smashed her head into the ground. Having accomplished that, he looked down, just as expressionless as before.

“Because of your origin, the Ancient Emperor chose to ignore your behavior. He didn't wish to be infected with the karma of the place you come from. But... the song you were singing was just too unpleasant to hear. It interrupted my fourth son's dream.”

That voice echoed into the minds of all living beings in the Moonrite Region, creating unprecedented waves of shock within them. It was truly a shocking scene. And the mortals of the region were especially astonished to see Crimson Mother smashed with a single stomp. And all of it was because her singing interrupted the dream of this man's fourth son.

The subversive image was so shocking that many people just couldn't believe that it was true. However, the image was incredibly realistic, and the pressure it created was real. Everyone felt their hearts pounding like mad. When all was said and done, most people were too suspicious. That was especially true of the top experts from the various nonhuman species in the Moonrite Region. There was no way that one simple image was going to completely alter their belief system.

The Captain had actually predicted that would happen, which was why he had organized the play into two acts. Now that act 1 was over, the image blurred, and the hoarse voice once again spoke into the minds of the audience.

“Now, there will be a short intermission. After enough time has passed for an incense stick to burn, the second act of this amazing historical play will begin.”

The Heir Apparent turned off the Eye of Heaven’s recording function. Nodding, he said, “That’ll work.”

The moment the words left his mouth, Ning Yan, who had been performing as the Imperial Sovereign, quickly pulled his foot up. His majestic nature vanished, to be replaced with ingratiating nervousness.

“Big Sis Nether...”

Nethersprite got to her feet and looked coldly at Ning Yan. Ning Yan shivered. He had really put everything he had into that final stomp. In reality, from the very beginning of act 1 until the end, the Heir Apparent and his siblings had been secretly using their magical techniques to make things look perfectly realistic. As a result, Ning Yan had been left with the mistaken impression that he had been more effective than he really had been.

“Everyone get ready for act 2,” the Heir Apparent said. With that, he gave some more instructions to Ning Yan, then some detailed pointers to Wu Jianwu. Finally, he had Chen Erniu do a few run-throughs with the executioner’s saber.

Princess Brightblossom, Fifth Sister, and Eighth Sib also gave some advice. They wanted act 2 to be very realistic.

After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, the Heir Apparent activated the Eye of Heaven. Ning Yan and everyone else took their places, and the image again appeared in the minds of the people of Moonrite. The performance was about to begin.

However, at that exact same moment, a wind picked up on the stage! It came suddenly, filled with an ancient aura, causing the hair and garments of everyone present to stir. And their hearts trembled as a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering killing sensation appeared. That killing sensation was just the beginning. The land started to tremble, and wild colors flashed in heaven and earth.

All of the performers were visibly shocked. Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, Nethersprite, Li Youfei, and the Captain all turned to look at Xu Qing.

Chapter 640: True History

The wind came from Xu Qing, who was sitting cross-legged off in the distance, completely unmoving. As the wind picked up, lightning crashed and everyone looked on, confused. The vortex in the sky started emitting loud rumbling sounds.

A moment ago, everyone had sensed a vague fluctuation that came along with the wind that seemed to originate with Xu Qing. Around them, the entire world fragment shivered. The ground shook, and the distant mountains, shaped like a blade, trembled. Boulders crashed down into the valley, scattering in all directions.

“What’s going on?” Ning Yan said with a gasp.

The Captain’s eyes widened as he looked at Xu Qing sitting there cross-legged.

The Heir Apparent turned to look at Xu Qing, his expression flickering. “What’s this...?”

Princess Brightblossom and the other siblings also looked in the same direction, their eyes gleaming.

Eighth Sib shivered. “?????? He’s actually gaining enlightenment?”

As everyone reeled in shock, a consummate killing intent began to build up! It was formless, and would take time to appear fully, but it was clearly on the way.

Except, there was even more to come.

The Heir Apparent was looking at Xu Qing, and he should have been very pleased. After all, Xu Qing was accomplishing this under his tutelage. Unfortunately, what he felt instead was unshakable helplessness. All of a sudden, he thought about Xu Qing’s Master. And then he instinctively turned to look at Princess Brightblossom. Princess Brightblossom had turned to look at him. They shared a glance silently.

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It was impossible to say if you could assign an age to the wind. If not, then how could it contain evidence of the memory of all things? If it did have an age, how could you determine it?

Few people could answer questions like that.

Perhaps the age of the wind was determined by the events it had witnessed from ancient times until modern. As it blew on all the living beings in the Moonrite Region, stirring their hearts, the Red Moon Cathedral was taking action. The images from act 1 were nothing short of blasphemy as far as they were concerned! They wanted to find out where the play was being broadcast from and put an end to it.

As a result, innumerable cathedral cultivators were out scouring the lands. Sadly for them, there was no way they would easily be able to find that altar hidden in the green sand of the desert. The ancient wind blew across the altar, stirring hearts and minds, and slowly transforming into a huge wave.

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Act 2 was about to begin, and the broadcast couldn’t be stopped now. It didn’t matter if Ning Yan and the others were feeling shaken, they just had to buck up and get on with the performance.

Heaven and earth swayed as the ancient wind blew, becoming part of the background imagery as the Eye of Heaven sent the image of the play into the minds of the people. The play began again.

Although the audience didn’t realize it, the ancient evidence dredged up by Xu Qing, plus the killing sensation it brought, made the play significantly more realistic.

The first thing people saw was an altar. It was gargantuan, and seemed to pulse with majestic godly might. The altar had countless magical symbols on it, and they flickered with the light of endless destroyed suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies. It was absolutely terrifying.

In the middle of the altar was Crimson Mother, sealed by the shattered remnants of countless stars, kneeling in front of a burly man in golden armor. She struggled to free herself, but it did no good.

The burly man in the armor had a mask on, making it impossible to determine his facial expression. He stood ramrod straight, pulsing with a somber and desolate aura. He had one hand gripping Crimson Mother by the hair, and in the other hand, he held a long saber. The saber glittered with

gold light, and it emanated shocking fluctuations that spread into the air and created a 3,000-meter projected image. This burly man was the godpriest in charge of the execution.

Beyond the altar was Ning Yan, still in his role as the Imperial Sovereign. He seemed to be surrounded by countless respectful figures.

Everyone was waiting for the Ancient Emperor's decree.

The solemnity on display, and the killing sensation that kept growing stronger and stronger, left everyone in the Moonrite Region feeling deeply shaken. After all, the killing intent on display was astonishing, and was capable of inundating both body and senses. Although everyone had been suspicious of the play's content, as of now, the realism of the killing intent shook the doubts of even the top experts from the various species. The higher their cultivation base was, the more pronounced the effect. All of them were sensitive to killing intent in varying degrees, and what they sensed now was on another level entirely.

“And this is just a transmission of killing intent....”

“Just sensing it fills me with fear and trepidation!”

“Don't tell me... that this recording is actually real??”

The audience was shaken, especially the cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral, who were holding nothing back in their search for the perpetrators.

Unbeknownst to everyone, the performers were actually feeling just as shaken.

Ning Yan was struggling to contain his anxiety as he glanced at Xu Qing. He could sense the intense killing intent building up, and it had him scared witless. The Captain was also bewildered. Nethersprite, as she played Crimson Mother, was trembling, and it wasn't an act. The wind was really just too powerful. The killing intent within it grew stronger and stronger, affecting the magical laws in the area, and causing snowflakes to start falling.

The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom both had very serious expressions on their faces. At this point, they didn't care about the performance at all, and were instead focused on Xu Qing.

Xu Qing was still seeking enlightenment. By using his daybreak light, he was able to continually search for and imitate the fluctuations in the ink. In fact, just a moment ago, he had found the evidence he sought within the ink in his sea of consciousness.

Daybreak light shone into it. Along with the imitation and the enlightenment, his heart and mind filled with rumbling sounds, until eventually, he heard what sounded like chanting. The fluctuations were the source of the chanting, and also the source of the wind. Now, it was all becoming increasingly clear.

Countless voices spoke together, howling one single word that filled Xu Qing's mind. His mind spun, and the ink in his sea of consciousness rippled violently.



The ancient wind blew stronger, using Xu Qing like a mouth to exhale itself onto the shattered altar, through the Eye of Heaven, and into the minds of the people.

All living beings were shaken to the core. The top experts of all the species felt their hearts pounding in their chests, and many of them shot to their feet with their hair standing on end. All of them could sense that the killing intent in the image they were seeing was something like a fiend from the ancient past, erupting right in front of them. It was incomparably realistic.

That was especially true for the cultivators in the Moonrebel Congregation. The mysterious vice-bishops, all in their various respective hiding places, were visibly shocked. They were taking this situation very seriously. Before, they had been suspicious about why this recording was being transmitted with the help of the Moonrebel Congregation. Although most of them had been suspicious about act 1 of the play, they still took it seriously. But then act 2 came with its towering killing intent, and there was no way they couldn't be deeply shaken.

“This is real??”

Inside the Red Moon Cathedral, a terrifying aura suddenly exploded out. After the godchild went into seclusion, the pontiff had taken charge. Now, he emerged from the cathedral, his expression grave. Even he was feeling jumpy because of what was happening. Before, he had assumed that all of this was the work of the Heir Apparent. But now... he wasn't so sure.

Meanwhile, Ning Yan and everyone else stood there with their hearts pounding. According to the script, this was the point in which Wu Jianwu was supposed to take the stage. However, he was standing there as stiff as a board, unable to step forward. But then he thought about how many eyes were on him, and he forced himself to gain his composure. Clad in an imperial robe, with an imperial crown on his head, he appeared in the sky. Looking down, he locked gazes with Ning Yan the Imperial Sovereign. He didn't need to release any might or majesty. The ground shook. Mountains rocked. Rumbling filled the sky. The killing intent transformed everything, creating a very dramatic scene.

Previously, the Heir Apparent had been the one to amp up the drama of the scene. But right now, he wasn't even looking at the play. He was focused on Xu Qing.

Just as the Heir Apparent predicted, Eighth Sib's eyes went wide and he murmured, “The brat still hasn't snapped out of it? He's gonna gain enlightenment!”

Hearing that, the Heir Apparent replied, “He's still seeking enlightenment. The killing will alone isn't his limit.”

Princess Brightblossom nodded.

Eighth Sib chuckled coldly and looked at them. “How come both of you look like you knew this was going to happen? Very different from what you said earlier. So fake! What, you think I'm stupid or something?”

Face completely expressionless, Princess Brightblossom waved her hand, resulting in a loud thump echoing out from inside Eighth Sib before he was sent flying off into the distance.

Heir Apparent nodded in agreement.

Fifth Sister also agreed. Looking at Xu Qing, she said, “I very much look forward to seeing what happens after he gains full enlightenment of the God Decapitation Altar. How far will his enlightenment go...?”

Meanwhile, the ink inside Xu Qing’s sea of consciousness was in turmoil as killing intent spread out and filled him. He shivered as he felt pain building inside. And yet, he didn’t even consider opening his eyes. Instead, he remained cross-legged and deep in thought and ignored the pain. He was waiting for the ink image to be complete! That had been his goal all along.

He had laid hands on the killing will fluctuations, then released them. As a result, the image... was no longer being destroyed. As the ink and the seven-colored light mixed, the image... gradually took shape.

In the image, the sky was split into two parts. The white part became green. The black part became red.

In the green sky stood a giant who could prop up heaven and earth. He wore an imperial robe, with auspicious clouds obscuring his facial features. An intense, domineering pressure from ancient times emanated off him. The gaze of the giant sent time spinning away, and the giant’s breath caused everything it touched to return to the void.

In the red sky was a second figure, mostly obscured. It was a majestic woman in a red gown. She had ordinary facial features, deep eyes that seemed to contain stars being constantly born and destroyed. She had no legs, only a mass of tentacles that spread through the red sky. Shockingly, each of those tentacles contained a star within it. Fluctuations of godliness rolled out in all directions.

“Li Zihua, I never thought it would be you... who stopped me from reaching godly ascension.” [1]

“Big Sib is ill,” the hulking figure in the sky said. [2]

The woman thought for a moment, then quietly said, “Do you remember my song?”

She began to sing.