

Timescape 641

Chapter 641: God Decapitation Altar in Ink

There were many records that contained historical accounts. Due to individual objectives and personal karma, it was common for people to try to cover over things that they didn't like, to adjust the story to make it more palatable before spreading it further. After enough time passed, it would become impossible for people to know what really happened.

The image that Xu Qing was seeing was something no other living being could see. It had been hidden in time and ravaged by the wind, but now the memories were being sent into Xu Qing's sea of consciousness, and revealed through the ink there. Normally speaking, the images wouldn't have been easy to reveal. Whether it was the influence of the killing will, or the fact that the memories had degraded thanks to the passage of time, it was no easy task to pull them all together.

The daybreak light added color to the image, filling in the missing spots, until gradually an outline formed, revealing to Xu Qing's senses that which had been buried in history.

He saw the Imperial Sovereign. He saw Crimson Mother. He heard the words spoken by the former. He heard the song sung by the latter.

The lyrics soared. They contained heart-wrenching attachment and dedication, the willingness to pursue an ideal no matter what happened. Apparently, compared to that ideal, all other living things were meaningless. Even if everyone alive ended up dead, even if heaven and earth wept in sorrow and agony, they counted as nothing more than nutrients necessary for godly ascension. They weren't important.

Neither the figure in the green canopy of heaven, nor anything else, could possibly wipe out that hope for godly ascension. She would become a god, and she would stand on the red moon. To reach that goal, she would do anything.

The lyrics of the song reverberated in the image, creating ripples that eventually swept forth, wiping out the voices and blurring everything.

Xu Qing struggled to control his breathing. His chest heaved as he sat there, the image in his sea of consciousness blurred to the point where he couldn't see what was happening or hear what was being said. Inside his sea of consciousness, the green became white. The red became black. And they swirled together to once again turn into ink. Not even adding daybreak light could make it complete.

As a result, what happened after the part Xu Qing witnessed was not clear. He couldn't directly observe, but rather, was forced to rely on vague sensations to guess at what was happening. Yet Xu Qing chose not to open his eyes. Instead, he stayed immersed in his sea of consciousness, trying to sense what was happening.

Inside the image, white clashed with black. Water swirled with ink. Just barely, Xu Qing could make out a sky in the image.

Within the white, there's a green sky....

He could also make out what appeared to be land.

The black soil has become as red as blood.... Heaven and earth are connected by something. It looks like... an altar?

He felt confused. He had long since forgotten about what was happening outside. All of his concentration and senses were focused on the ink and water. Gradually, he saw a majestic altar, slowly becoming clear within the blurriness.

The reality was that the image wasn't turning clear. Ever since the Imperial Sovereign and Crimson Mother vanished, the ink in Xu Qing's sea of consciousness had been in a constant state of flux, and had not formed any new images.

But to Xu Qing's senses, things were rapidly becoming clear. Of course, to say it was happening 'rapidly' was subjective. That was because the clarity... was a process.

Everything so far had been the result of Xu Qing's hard work and determination. If he relaxed his senses for even a moment, that altar would disappear. He needed to keep his heart and soul focused. It was like he was fishing. And yet he still hadn't managed to hook the fish. His mental faculties were being drained by the ever-building force. Slowly but surely, Xu Qing came to realize that his consciousness was being drained, and that he couldn't hold out for much longer. And the altar still wasn't completely clear.

I'm going to fail. I just can't dredge the altar up out of the ink because... I'm missing a receptacle. A receptacle....

Meanwhile, outside on the stage, as Xu Qing's session of enlightenment wound down, the rumbling grew fainter, and the quaking sensation died down. The vortex in the sky wasn't exerting the same influence as before. Things seemed about to end.

Ning Yan and everyone else breathed sighs of relief. The pressure that had been building up over them had been very anxiety-inducing. But now, they could focus on completing the performance.

Inside, the Captain was sighing. Although he had felt from the beginning that it was extremely unlikely Xu Qing would gain enlightenment, after the scene from earlier, he had harbored a bit of hope.

Oh well. Even just the experience will be useful. At the least, he's become more familiar with killing will.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings were all sighing as well. Hindered by karma, they couldn't see what was happening in Xu Qing's sea of consciousness, but they could sense that he was mentally spent. They could also see that Xu Qing's attempt to gain further enlightenment after the killing will was a failure.

"He's currently seeking enlightenment of father's divine ability. The God Decapitation Altar."

"What a pity...."

"Actually, it's not really his fault. The vestiges here are too degraded and weak. Otherwise, he might not have failed."

Despite the fact that Xu Qing had failed, his powers of understanding left all four siblings deeply moved.

Right now, act 2 was playing out in the minds of everyone in the Moonrite Region, and the critical moment was near.

All of a sudden, someone materialized out of thin air next to Wu Jianwu. He wore an extravagant garment, his eyes glittered, and his fair complexion emanated a soft and feminine air, but at the same time, he pulsed with terrifying fluctuations. He was one of the Ancient Emperor's high-ranking eunuchs, present to read a proclamation. Multicolored light glittered in heaven and earth as the extravagantly clad eunuch extended his right hand and unfurled a scroll made of auspicious clouds.

"According to the dao of Revered Ancient, I, an Ancient Emperor, hereby decree that the felon citizen from Brilliant Heaven has caused calamity and chaos to sundry living beings.

"Moon King Zihua is therefore ordered to act in my stead as the executioner, and take the head of this criminal.... Any resulting karma will be borne by me!"

The voice boomed like thunder into the minds of the people, bolstered by the efforts of the Heir Apparent and his siblings.

After the proclamation was complete, Ning Yan as the Imperial Sovereign turned his gaze to Crimson Mother on the altar. Then he looked at the burly man in golden armor standing behind her.

"Godpriest," Ning Yan said.

"Here, sir!" the Captain said loudly, one hand on Crimson Mother's head, the other holding his saber.

"Execute her!"

"Your orders shall be followed!"

The Captain's eyes shone with cold light as he lifted the saber. Intense hatred flashed in Crimson Mother's eyes, and she again struggled to free herself. The countless magical symbols on the altar made that completely and utterly impossible.

In the broadcast, the wind screamed as the Heir Apparent and his siblings continued to propagate dramatic effects. After all, the image of Crimson Mother being executed was profoundly significant to everyone else in the region.

In the broadcast, thunder crashed, and countless bolts of lightning smashed down, forming a massive sea of electricity. Princess Brightblossom took action, creating a river of time, the flowing of which caused an ancient aura to spread out and enter the senses of the audience. Eighth Sib wasn't willing to be outdone, and lent his voice to the thunder. As a result, the emotional fluctuations of all the performers became more intense, and exerted a greater influence. Finally, the Heir Apparent caused suns and moons to appear in the lightning. Countless heavenly bodies flickered brightly, and it was even possible to make out the vague will of a heavenly dao.

The audience was deeply moved by the dramatic scene, and everyone was wondering how it would end.

Then, the Captain's blade danced!

Blade light glimmered, shining like lightning. It contained suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies, as well as a profoundly ancient aura that tugged on the emotions of all onlookers.

Nethersprite's eyes shone with hatred as she prepared to speak her final lines.

However, right then...

Something dramatic happened!

Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth! Lands shook and mountains were rocked! An intense rumbling sound descended from the sky, like the roar of a dragon filled with the power to dry up rivers and drain seas. Countless rifts opened up in the sky, which then collapsed! Countless rocks tumbled down from above, smashing into the ground. At the same time, a cold light appeared in the canopy of heaven. The ground quaked as countless craters opened up, all while a screaming wind battered down everything in its path.

There was more. A boundless killing intent erupted. These things vastly surpassed any of the effects unleashed by the Heir Apparent and his siblings. The living beings in the Moonrite Region had already been entranced thanks to the effects they had seen so far. But this unexpected upsurge of killing intent caused them to cry out in surprise and alarm.

This killing intent was vastly more intense than anything before. As it exploded into their hearts and minds, it became like tsunami waves that battered their souls. It was realistic in a completely unparalleled way.

Everyone present at the actual performance was also shocked.

Nethersprite's face went pale as the unprecedented shadow of death suddenly loomed over her. She possessed an undying body, yet at that moment, she felt overwhelmed by the sensation that she was about to die!

Is this really it? she thought, shaking from head to toe.

The Captain's blade stopped in midair as his heart started racing. Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and Li Youfei all felt like their minds were being smashed by lightning.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings all turned to look at Xu Qing.

As of this moment, the same Xu Qing who they had believed to have failed in his enlightenment now had a bottle in his sea of consciousness. It was true that he was unable to dredge up the image out of the ink. But the reason was that he didn't have a receptacle. And so... he put his timescape bottle into his sea of consciousness. That was what he would use to contain the ink. He planned to take it away.

I can't dredge it up, so therefore, I'll take the last remnants that are affecting my enlightenment and completely extract them!

The ink flowed toward his timescape bottle, pouring inside. As it happened, Xu Qing felt the altar getting clearer. The process didn't take very long. From the moment he focused his attention on the task, it took only a short time for almost all of the ink to vanish into the bottle.

What remained... was a very unique altar!

And that altar was the source of the dramatic things happening outside. Heaven and earth seemed to be crumbling, and the massive vortex in the sky was bringing ruin to everything. Deafening rumbling echoed out everywhere as the area of the first challenge they had passed, the mountain range that tilted up to touch the sky... suddenly exploded.

As the rubble rained down, cold light emerged, and the true nature of the mountain range was revealed in full.

Shockingly, it was an enormous green saber!

Chapter 642: Heavenly Saber Beheads Crimson Mother!

The moment the blade appeared, an icy will towered into the sky, causing everything to tremble. The ground cracked and crumbled. The second challenge they had overcome, the long valley, was now revealing its true form as the boulders crashed down. It was actually a trough for the blade! It was crimson red, as if it had been stained with endless amounts of blood. And it emanated a terrifying baleful aura.

As for the area where Xu Qing was seated, the crumbled stone made a roughly circular altar that formed the base of the execution platform. A heavenly saber hovered above, which was connected to the execution platform below.

Together, they formed an astonishing guillotine!

By means of the Eye of Heaven, all of this imagery was transmitted directly into the minds of the people. A thrumming sound echoed everywhere as the performers reacted with utter shock, and the audience remained thoroughly stunned.

“God Decapitation Altar!” Eighth Sib blurted.

The God Decapitation Altar was the ultimate trump card of Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua. Legend had it that after manifesting the divine ability for the first time, Li Zihua used it to behead himself!

The technique was very heaven-defying, and was incredibly difficult to cultivate successfully. Among Li Zihua’s children, only Ninth Sib was able to master it. None of his other sons or daughters could do so. Neither the Heir Apparent nor Brightblossom ever succeeded, which was one reason they were so astonished by what was happening.

“He’s... really doing it?” the Heir Apparent murmured, looking at Xu Qing, then the canopy of heaven, and then the world in general.

In this world, heaven was the saber, and earth was the altar. The green saber contained world-killing power, and the earth was soaked with the wicked blood of sinners. Most terrifying of all was the killing will inside of the horrifying guillotine. Countless beings had been beheaded with it, so the killing intent was so strong it caused heaven and earth to tremble.

“I never thought I would see the God Decapitation Altar in my lifetime...” Princess Brightblossom murmured, her eyes flickering with reminiscence. Fifth Sister was reacting similarly. Eighth Sib stood there silently. All of them seemed to be thinking about good memories, but at the same time, the losses their family had suffered.

Meanwhile, out in the Moonrite Region, members of all species were reeling in astonishment. They couldn't even control their own thinking. Every single person was completely immersed in what they were seeing in their mind. To the mortals, the shocking scene was profoundly moving. It was as if flames of anticipation had been ignited in their hearts. They anticipated... the moment of the beheading!

It wasn't just the mortals who felt that way. The cultivators did too. Earlier, they had suspected the nature of the images they were seeing, but right now, those doubts vanished like smoke in the wind. This was absolutely, positively real!

That was especially true of the Moonrebel Congregation cultivators. In their various locations in the resistance forces, they were now fully aware of the impact this broadcast was having on the people. Everyone was forced to hold a tight rein on their excitement as they simply waited... for the blade to fall!

The Red Moon Cathedral had devolved into a state of sheer madness. Even their pontiff was on the move. They were using all sorts of divine abilities and magical techniques to try to find the source of the broadcast. By this point, they had focused their search on the Greenhair Badlands, and countless cathedral cultivators were rushing in that direction, including the pontiff.

The pontiff could also tell that the broadcast was real, and he knew full well the significance of what was being depicted. The truth was that the images everyone was seeing had transformed. And that was because when the God Decapitation Altar actually formed... images recorded in ancient memories were revealed.

Those images surpassed Ning Yan and the other performers, becoming the only thing visible. They were the memories of the last execution ever performed by the God Decapitation Altar. An ancient wind blew through the green sky, touching the blood-colored canopy of heaven and sending out ripples as far as the eye could see.

In fact, that sky looked exactly like the sky that Xu Qing had seen in the ink. But at the same time, it looked different. The similarity was in the way the canopy of heaven was partly green and partly red. The difference was that the two sides were obviously participating in a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering fight.

The dome of heaven was like a mirror that had cracked in half. The lands below also crumbled, turning into a violet sea. Within it were innumerable corpses. There were men, women, young ones, and elderly folks. There were mortals and cultivators alike. It was horrifying beyond comparison.

As for the towering figure, he was visible to all of the people as he sent fluctuations out into the sky.

This was the first time anyone had seen Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua. He had his eyes closed, but was uninjured, and stood tall, as if he could prop up heaven and earth.

He was facing Crimson Mother, whose lower half of tentacles was largely destroyed. She had lost many of the stars as well. And as the stars shattered, they sent huge quantities of blood raining down. It looked extremely ghastly. That was the blood of all the countless living beings Crimson Mother had devoured up to this point.

When the mortals and cultivators of the Moonrite Region saw Crimson Mother, they gasped. For them, it was also their first time seeing Crimson Mother.

In the broadcast, Crimson Mother looked at the stars collapsing, and her eyes turned crimson.

“Li Zihua,” she shrieked, “we’re both from the same place! Back when you left, you told me you were going to pursue godly ascension! You were going to change our fate! Countless years passed in which I followed in your footsteps. I searched far and wide for you. And now I’m here!

“Except, you’ve changed! Why? Why not do the same as me and achieve godly ascension? Why would you rather bow your head to Dark Serenity?”

“We... are the true rulers of this star ring!” [1]

Crimson Mother’s eyes filled with venomous hatred. Meanwhile, the surrounding blood sea rose up, turning into numerous blood moons that emanated shocking power as they shot toward Li Zihua. As they accelerated, space shattered around them, creating innumerable rifts in the air. Finally, they slammed into Li Zihua, transforming into countless sealing symbols that could shatter great daos and collapse the souls of gods.

The most powerful of them hit Li Zihua’s forehead. He didn’t dodge the blow, and thus, his forehead caved in and blood poured onto the ground.

Massive waves rolled across the violet sea as Li Zihua opened his eyes. Looking at Crimson Mother, he softly said, “I did become a god... and then I destroyed my own godfire. Why? Because that’s not the future I want. Nor is it what *you* want... When did gods show up in Revered Ancient? It was when the primordial taboos were removed, and the Great Terror from the starry sky awoke. Go back.”

Crimson Mother’s eyes filled with even more vitriolic fury. The surrounding sea of blood seethed, and as both heaven and earth were covered with crimson, an enormous blood moon rose in the distance!

Li Zihua sighed, then lifted his hand and pointed at Crimson Mother.

“Let thirty meters of land in the Moon Region become the executioner’s block.”

Deep rumbling echoed everywhere as the land started to shake, starting from where Crimson Mother stood and then spreading beyond.

The mountains in the region collapsed. The plains rose into the sky. Countless amounts of dirt and rocks surged like waves toward the center. Wherever the wave passed, the land sank down by thirty meters. The soil moved with stupefying speed as it closed in on Crimson Mother.

In the blink of an eye, it piled together to form a shocking altar. It wasn’t a round altar. Rather, it was rectangular. A huge trough ran straight through the middle of it, out of which rushed endless amounts of blood and an explosive killing intent. This was a divine ability that could shock the masses.

The rancor in Crimson Mother’s eyes grew more intense. As she rose up into the sky, the air around her shattered, and her tentacles used her remaining stars to send red light out into a sea of blood. It spun into a vortex as she prepared to flee. The surrounding air dissolved, the natural laws shattered, the magical laws collapsed, and all heaven and earth spun wildly.

And yet, with Li Zihua looking on, there was no way she could escape this area.

“Let the sky above this region be the sharp blade!”

As Li Zihua’s calm voice echoed out, the sky shook as it tilted onto its side and became a huge saber! The canopy of heaven served as the blade. The lands below were the altar. The vortex Crimson Mother was in resounded with a terrified shriek filled with unending animosity.

Li Zihua said nothing. Eventually, he lifted his hand, plucked the sun out of the sky, and connected heaven and earth. Instantly... the massive God Decapitation Altar appeared. It was shocking beyond belief.

As Crimson Mother’s shriek rang out, and as the image filled with a sensation of horror, the audience looked on. Li Zihua’s right hand slowly dropped.

The sun rumbled, bursting into flames and rotating rapidly, causing a terrifying might to flow into the heavenly saber.

The heavenly saber slashed down! It was a case of heaven slashing earth! The blood vortex around Crimson Mother spun with violent intensity as it attempted to fight back. It couldn’t. The heavenly saber hit the vortex and didn’t stop. It crushed through it like a hot knife through butter, slicing down until it was right in front of Crimson Mother’s terrified face.

The blade then bit directly into her.

CRUNCH!

Crimson Mother’s head was cut clean off. Endless quantities of blood sprayed everywhere.

The saber didn’t just cut away Crimson Mother’s head. It also cut the fetters in the hearts of the audience. They watched as Crimson Mother died. It was like watching a myth die. The living beings in Moonrite Region felt their minds being assailed by heaven-shaking, earth-toppling waves of shock. They trembled violently and couldn’t control their breathing.

The scene continued to play out. As blood rained down, heaven and earth grew dim. A defiant curse exploded out, to ring into the ears of the living beings of Moonrite.

“If I come back to life, Li Zihua, then your soul will howl in grief! Your flesh and blood will be ripped apart, and your people will experience torment through all cycles of reincarnation! And you... will kneel to me until Revered Ancient collapses!”

The voice was so piercing it could reach to the soul.

Li Zihua hovered in midair amidst the echoing voice and the rain of blood. Then he looked off into the distance at something. He seemed lonely and desolate.

The image blurred, and Li Zihua slowly faded away. The moment before he did, he murmured something that could only be heard by the people on the stage, not anyone in the audience.

“The curse you mentioned? I already saw it, in the moment I reached godly ascension....”

Chapter 643: Xu Qing’s Face Reveal in Moonrite

An image from antiquity existed in the minds of the people of the Moonrite Region, and it quickly became like a clap of thunder, ripping out with explosive force.

The hearts and minds of all living beings were hit by massive waves of shock. The things they had seen today surpassed their understanding, toppled their thinking, and shook them down to their souls. Previously, they had been devolving from madness and despair into pure numbness. Previously, they had existed in an iciness as cold as death. But now... cracks appeared in that ice, and it was now poised on the brink of collapse.

The blade that severed Crimson Mother's head had also severed the fetters in their hearts! Or perhaps, if the fetters had not been completely severed, a chink had at least been cut in them.

And underneath that gap was countless years of resentment and insanity. That breach... was extremely important!

Although the image was a depiction of Crimson Mother in the past, before godly ascension... that didn't matter. What mattered was that a myth had been shattered. What mattered was that Crimson Mother had once been mortal! Crimson Mother had been beheaded!

But....

Who would actually want to live like that? Who would be willing to exist in darkness and gloom? And thus, when that gap opened, it was like a tsunami slamming into the soul, or a complete collapse of the heart and mind.

As the oppressive blood-colored light of the red moon shone in the dome of heaven, the living people of Moonrite felt everything turn around, and suddenly erupted with the desire to resist! It erupted in the ruins of Moonrite, the cities, the species, and the countless cultivators. As of that moment, a few sparks were about to cause entire grasslands to burst into flame.

And yet, something was missing. The sparks were there. The fuel was ready. But they were waiting!

The Red Moon Cathedral was furious. Countless cathedral cultivators were already combing through the Greenhair Badlands looking for the source of the broadcast. The broadcast went on, like oil being added to a fire, causing the sparks to gather into a sea of flames.

At the same time, the situation at the scene of the broadcast was one of mind-toppling shock.

The image of the God Decapitation Altar was astonishing, especially the aspect of heaven forming the blade, earth forming the altar, and a sun forming the axis. It was an image imbued with a spirit that could conquer mountains and rivers, and everyone was completely focused on it. Ning Yan and the others had long since stopped acting, and were instead backing up, trembling. Thankfully, the images from antiquity had taken over, so no one in the audience realized what was happening.

It didn't take long for everyone to gather by the Heir Apparent. Nethersprite was actually one of the quickest, as she feared something going wrong on the God Decapitation Altar. The Captain was right behind her.

Even being close to the Heir Apparent, all of them felt like their minds were being overturned. The images of the God Decapitation Altar were beyond astonishing, and contained massive amounts of information that seemed capable of ripping them to shreds.

The implications were monumental.

Most terrifying of all was that it was years after Crimson Mother was beheaded that the broken face of the god arrived.... Was that the Great Terror spoken of by Li Zihua? Was Crimson Mother's godly ascension what brought the broken face?

Everyone stood there silently. All they had was speculations, no concrete answers. Very few people knew the secret of why the broken face had come. Perhaps there were some such people in the audience. However... the vast majority of people had no idea.

The Captain looked down to hide the gleam in his eyes.

The most astonishing thing of all was the last thing that Li Zihua murmured. The members of the audience actually didn't hear that part. But the people at the scene of the recording could hear it very clearly! It seemed to surpass heavenly lightning. It was like something that could sunder the heavens and crush the earth, a deafening sound that could exterminate the past and eradicate the present.

That was especially true of the Heir Apparent and his siblings.... All of them were reacting with visible shock. Eighth Sib's eyes were wide. Fifth Sister's expression was vacant. And the Heir Apparent seemed to be looking far off into the distance, in the direction of the Penitence Steppes. That was the location of the Red Moon Cathedral's headquarters, and also the enormous statue that had formed from the fleshly body of the dead Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua.

Father, if you knew all of this from the beginning, then... what exactly were you trying to accomplish?

Princess Brightblossom slowly looked up at the images coming from the God Decapitation Altar, including her father, who was slowly vanishing from sight.

The memories from the God Decapitation Altar were slowly drifting away in the ancient wind, turning into grit and dust and fading from existence. But as they vanished, something was left behind. The heavenly saber from the first challenge was still there in the sky. The trough that was the valley of the second challenge also still existed. And upon the altar where heaven and earth met, as Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua faded away... a person appeared!

He was a young man in a black daoist robe, with long black hair bound by a crown of jade. As the wind blew, strands of his hair stirred, shifting aside to reveal his face. He was unusually handsome, to the point where he could topple the minds of countless living beings. As he sat there cross-legged, his eyes were closed, however, it was easy to imagine that, if they were opened, they would surely glimmer as if with starlight.

He was none other than Xu Qing.

All living beings in the Moonrite Region were reeling. After all, the broadcast was still live, and as a result, all of them could see Xu Qing.

This was the first time Xu Qings facial features were revealed in the Moonrite Region, and it was for everyone to see!

Hes...

The Imperial Sovereign left, and this guy showed up. Is there some deeper implication to that?

Is this a memory from antiquity, or is something actually happening right now?

If it was a memory, then who is he? And if its actually happening... then could it be that this guy is the one who pulled up all of those precious memories from the past?

Who is he?

Speculations went wild. The cultivators in the Moonrite Region were all shaken to the core, especially the powerful experts, who were able to glean deeper information thanks to the higher level of their cultivation base.

Hes seeking enlightenment?!

Dont tell me that the images we saw were actually the subject of his enlightenment?

Is it possible this guy figured out where Crimson Mother was actually beheaded, and went there to seek enlightenment? Then, during the process, he activated the natural and magical laws there, which resulted in the images we just saw?

If thats the case... then this enlightenment... well, I dont believe anybody can actually get enlightenment like that!

Gasps could be heard in all corners of the Moonrite Region, especially in the Moonrebel Congregation. People there were shaken, and some were already starting to seek information about Xu Qings identity. It seemed logical to them that someone who borrowed the power of the Moonrebel Congregation was highly likely to already be a member of the congregation.

As everyone looked on with varying levels of bewilderment, the Imperial Sovereign disappeared completely, and Xu Qing became fully visible.

Then his eyes slowly opened. They glittered with starlight, and pulsed like deep waters. Everyone saw the image. There seemed to be a flicker of enlightenment in them, and when the audience saw that, whether they were mortals or cultivators, they were nearly struck senseless.

As the ripples of shock spread, exclamations rang out.

He really got enlightenment!

Th-this... this shouldnt be possible. All of this happened because of his enlightenment! He brought memories of antiquity back to the present!!

This type of enlightenment... is absolutely heaven-defying!!

Who exactly is he?

Astonishment and incredulity reigned supreme.

Xu Qings terrifying powers of understanding were now rocking all living beings in the Moonrite Region.

The forces of the Red Moon Cathedral picked up the pace in the Greenhair Badlands. Now that they knew what his face looked like, the pontiff issued orders declaring Xu Qing as most wanted!

In the Red Moon Cathedrals headquarters, an astounding red glow rose up, becoming a huge net in the canopy of heaven, which connected to the red moon itself and exerted pressure on the entire region. Within that huge red net, it was just barely possible to see a headless corpse that radiated immense majesty. That corpse... was the mortal husk of Crimson Mother that had been beheaded!

Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth, affecting even the Eye of Heaven that was currently still recording and broadcasting. In fact, at that moment, the images of the broadcast blurred, then vanished.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings couldnt do anything further... and the broadcast ended. However, just before it did, a voice rang out into the hearts and minds of the people of the Moonrite Region.

Gods are by no means eternal....

Each word echoed like thunder, shaking everyone to the core. Those were the words that the hearts of the people had been missing.

They were like an explosion of sparks that caused everyone to immediately open their mouths and release a cry of defiance that came from their very souls.

Hope exists from time immemorial and into forever!!

Their cries became a howl filled with all of their pent-up fury. As it raged out through the gap in the fetters in their heart, the sparks finally lit the grasslands ablaze! And the fire spread through the mountains, across the plains, and out over all of the region. Countless despairing cultivators looked up with bloodshot eyes. They were now ready to fight back. Countless numb mortals howled. They were ready to resist.

The power of hope finally appeared within the people of the Moonrite Region, spreading, growing, and finally... gathering at the God Decapitation Altar!

Chapter 644: Smoldering God Blood Verifies, Primordial Tribulation Certifies

That ‘power of hope’ was the power of expectation and longing. It was also the power of emotion. It was an instinctual drive to resist. Under normal circumstances, it might appear in moments of excitement or piety. However, the former lacked purity, and the latter lacked frequency.

Now, after the two acts of the play they’d witnessed, and especially after memories from antiquity revealed Crimson Mother being beheaded... The living beings in Moonrite felt unprecedentedly excited. The desire to live and be free now exploded within them. And it contained the will to resist

and fight back! Resentment that had been building for generation after generation had now been ignited, and it contained a terrifying power of hope.

As the power of hope continued to build, the sky over Moonrite, which up until now contained only the crimson light of the red moon, now saw another type of light. It was pure white. Countless motes of light shone in the canopy of heaven, visible to anyone in the Moonrite Region. There were even places that never saw light during any time of the year that were now being illuminated. The motes of light resembled stars, and they glittered resplendently as they pierced through the air toward a specific destination.

And that was... the God Decapitation Altar atop which Xu Qing sat. In the blink of an eye, innumerable white motes of light appeared there, proliferating rapidly and bringing shock to everyone at the site of the recording.

The Captain looked excited. He had picked this spot specifically because of how it related to the power of hope within the people.

There's not enough yet. Just a bit longer...

As the Captain forced himself to remain patient, his heart swelled as he looked at the dramatic power of hope.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were both breathing heavily as they looked around at the motes of light, moved by the mere sensation of what was happening. They could sense the struggle and hope contained in those motes. It was a struggle against fate, laced with deep anticipation and longing.

Nethersprite licked her lips, looked at the Heir Apparent and his siblings, then looked at Xu Qing. Finally, she suppressed the impulses in her heart. That power of hope would have been incredibly nourishing to her, and the sight of so much of it lit a fire inside of her. But she didn't dare to try to take it. For one thing, she feared the Heir Apparent. But also, she could sense that it contained karma, and that consuming it wouldn't be beneficial to her.

Li Youfei looked on, stunned. However, it didn't take long for him to calm down. He was getting used to this sort of thing.

As the power of hope converged, Xu Qing looked around at the white motes of light. He could sense that they weren't here for him. The motes had come because of hope, and they contained karma from all living beings.

Xu Qing didn't say anything.

However, right then, the Heir Apparent suddenly said, "Xu Qing, take out that Spirit Trove fruit and eat it!

"Take what's left of the energy here and use it to provoke a lightning tribulation from antiquity! You can push your nascent souls to the four-tribulations level! A baptism of tribulation from antiquity will contain the power of time. That's a rare chance for you! And this time, I'll once again activate the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command for you. Just remember, this is an opportunity! It's... an opportunity to create that trump card!

“You might have gained enlightenment from the God Decapitation Altar, but once you leave here, you won’t be able to use it outside of very specific circumstances. You have to come up with some other way of using it!

“Change it into a trump card that truly belongs to you! The tribulation will be limited by the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command, but the burden cannot be shared like before. You need to turn the God Decapitation Altar into your trump card. Use it to destroy the heavenly tribulation. Only then will you be able to share the burden.

“If you succeed, then the power of hope will converge on the tip of the blade, and henceforth... will be a host of karma for your godly guillotine!”

A tremor passed through Xu Qing as he looked at the Heir Apparent. His eyes gleamed as he thought for a moment. Then he took out the Spirit Trove fruit Princess Brightblossom had given him. He put it in his mouth. The fruit dissolved, turning into a wave of heat that swept through him like the eruption of a volcano. That Spirit Trove fruit contained the power of an entire secret trove.

At the same time, Xu Qing heard a howl of rage coming from inside the fruit. It was the howl of a heavenly dao.

Instantly, all of Xu Qing’s nascent souls opened their eyes. The golden crow danced in flight. The Ghost Emperor mountain trembled. The daybreak light glittered. The timescape bottle trembled...

All of his nascent souls, with the exception of the violet moon nascent soul, became like twelve black holes that devoured the heat flowing through Xu Qing. The golden crow nascent soul was the first to finish, and it erupted with a tribulation summons. Xu Qing’s heavenly dao nascent soul awoke. The bluegreen dragon roared and shot toward the secret trove’s heavenly dao. With the help of the violet moon, it viciously devoured it, pushing it to the great circle of three tribulations. Next came the nascent souls of taboo poison, daybreak light, timescape bottle, and Ghost Emperor mountain.

One after another, they soared to higher heights. Taboo poison spread around Xu Qing, creating something like a haze.

Daybreak light glittered, creating projections of countless living things. The timescape bottle emanated the feeling of time. And the Ghost Emperor mountain’s eyes opened and its majesty surged.

The final one was D-132. Inside D-132, the god’s finger didn’t dare to even move. The head and the other prisoners all trembled. All of them could see Xu Qing’s nascent soul, which sat cross-legged in D-132 just like the boy made from destiny aura. The nascent soul was currently performing an incantation gesture, and was surrounded by the broken fragments of a host of bamboo slips.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as eight of Xu Qing’s nascent souls emanated terrifying fluctuations. However, things weren’t over yet.

Next, his five sundial life lamps shivered and transformed into five vortexes. As they spun madly, they absorbed the power of the Spirit Trove fruit rushing through Xu Qing.

As the process continued, the gnomons seemed to be rotating rapidly. As they spun, the power of time bolstered Xu Qing from within. Soon... the five life lamps turned into five sun nascent souls,

which pulsed with the fluctuations of the great circle of three tribulations. As of now, all of Xu Qing's nascent souls, with the exception of the violet moon nascent soul, had all reached the great circle of three tribulations.

The summoned tribulation power was at a peak.

Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth in this isolated world. The ancient wind once again sprang up, stirring the dust. The huge vortex in the sky emitted thunderous booms. It seemed like a sound that contained many ancient years.

It was at that moment that... the Heir Apparent turned and looked at Fifth Sister.

She waved her hand, causing a flock of little chickens to fly out. They were only some of Fifth Sister's chickens. The moment they appeared, they clucked with terror and despair.

The Heir Apparent waved his hand, and instantly, a connection sprang into being between the chickens and Xu Qing.

Thanks to that, the heavenly tribulation's assessment of Xu Qing changed. He was no longer a Nascent Soul cultivator in the great circle of three tribulations. He was actually a combination of a whole host of top experts!

Thunder rumbled with even more shocking intensity. Meanwhile, the Heir Apparent looked deeply at Xu Qing, then suddenly bit the tip of his tongue and spat out some blood. Princess Brightblossom, Eighth Sib, and Fifth Sister all did the same. The blood from the four of them turned into a screen that swept over the blade in the sky and the altar on the ground. It also covered Xu Qing and the chickens.

It wrapped all of them up and turned into a blood cocoon! From a distance, it looked almost like an egg!

Having accomplished that, the four of them stepped forward and took positions around the blood-colored cocoon. Sitting down cross-legged, they performed incantation gestures and then pointed out. Then they spoke in unison, their voices thrumming with the passage of time, rumbling like thunder as they uttered what seemed to be an oath.

"The blood of a Smoldering God verifies that this child is permitted to learn our father's divine ability."

"Tribulation from primordial times certifies the method to absorb all lives and assimilate the cosmos."

The gigantic blood cocoon shivered. Thunder rumbled even more loudly from the vortex in the sky as sparks of electricity built up within it. The lightning bolts were green, and as they multiplied and converged, they created a huge magical symbol. The deafening nature of the lightning caused everyone to react with shock.

Ning Yan's thoughts were chaotic. *This is a fourth tribulation? This is a freaking fourth tribulation? What exactly is going on here?*

The destiny aura of Sea-Sealing County forced the first tribulation to retreat. He passed the second tribulation thanks to the fluctuations of magical laws. In the third tribulation, he used the Greenhair

Badlands as his body. And this fourth tribulation... is a tribulation from ancient times, and he has Smoldering Gods helping him train?

In that case, what's the fifth tribulation going to be like? What could possibly surpass this fourth tribulation? Don't tell me a god's going to help him pass it?

Ning Yan shivered from head to toe. Wu Jianwu was doing the same. Li Youfei smiled proudly, and looked as calm as ever, although he was actually trembling. Nethersprite looked at the blood cocoon with mixed feelings. Given her experience, she could guess what the Heir Apparent and the others were trying to do.

The Captain looked up and smiled. "Become a cocoon and turn into a butterfly.... Little Ah Qing, the Moonrite Region is where we fly to new heights.... Crimson Mother is going to be your fifth tribulation!"

As everyone looked on with various emotions, the vortex above grew louder. Then a bolt of lightning appeared that pulsed with an ancient aura. And it dropped right toward Xu Qing!

The moment it was about to hit...

The Heir Apparent performed an incantation gesture and touched his forehead. "Let heaven and earth in this world now belong to this child!"

Eighth Sib placed his palms together to make a hand sign, then shouted, "Let all desires in this world now belong to this child!"

Princess Brightblossom waved her hand, causing a river of time to appear. "Let time in this world now belong to this child!"

Fifth Sister spoke in a soft voice. "Let all new life in this world belong to this child!"

Thunder crashed, like a dragon from primeval times. The lightning hit the blood cocoon, causing a deafening boom as innumerable sparks showered everywhere. Next, the vortex above spun, and ancient lightning fell.

Chapter 645: Noon is Here!

One bolt of lightning hit. Then another. Then one after another, falling from the vortex onto the blood cocoon.

The cocoon shrank.

Unending amounts of dazzling sparks cascaded to the ground, creating a lake of lightning. This tribulation was far mightier than the third tribulation. In fact, each individual lightning bolt contained the power to destroy the heavens and extinguish the earth.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings were using the power of their individual authorities to make sure that all of the surrounding heaven and earth belonged to Xu Qing. Along with that came what remained of the God Decapitation Altar, as well as the history it bore testament to. All of that was why the lightning was so appallingly powerful. At the same time, all four of them drew on their Imperial Sovereign bloodline to give Xu Qing the right to obtain the divine ability of the God Decapitation Altar. It would henceforth be the source of the divine ability's power, and would represent their father Li Zihua's approval of Xu Qing.

It was a case of *having a just cause*. And it made the heavenly tribulation even more terrifying.

That was exactly the result the Heir Apparent and his siblings were hoping for. They wanted to be able to use ancient tribulation lightning to refine the surroundings, shrink down heaven and earth, and seal it on Xu Qing. That was how they were giving a helping hand.

With all of that, Xu Qing could *do half the work, and get twice the effect*. It would speed things up, and also give him a much higher chance of successfully getting control of the God Decapitation Altar. It wouldn't just appear in his sea of consciousness, it would turn into a real trump card.

To Xu Qing, that process was like refining both body and soul. Outside of him, the heaven and earth formed by the blood cocoon was being crushed down by the lightning. Inside of him, his sea of consciousness rumbled as the image of the God Decapitation Altar expanded outward.

The clash between outside and inside made Xu Qing feel like his body was being smashed apart and his mind and heart were withering up. At the same time, his thirteen nascent souls were all erupting with abandon. The violet crystal was proving its worth as well. It sent out healing power like waters from a spring, nourishing Xu Qing and making it easier for him to stand up to the pressure. Naturally, it also bolstered his chances of success.

Lightning continued to fall. The blood cocoon continued to shrink.

Xu Qing shivered as cracks spread out on his skin. Blood flowed out. The glow of electricity entered through the cocoon as it sought to melt everything.

As the blood cocoon shrank down by a full measure, the heaven and earth within it crumbled. The blade trough on the altar started to fall, causing intense rumbling sounds to echo out. It became a cloud of ash that shot toward Xu Qing. Next, the heavenly saber in the cocoon's canopy of heaven fell to pieces, turning into a cloud of rubble that swept toward Xu Qing. After that, the altar itself shattered.

Some of the chickens that had been thrown inside wailed in grief; because of their connection to Xu Qing, they had no choice but to substitute for him to face the tribulation and even die. As the immense pressure weighed down on Xu Qing, they began to wither up and die one after another.

As the blood cocoon shrank down further, everything inside of it crumbled into lightning-illuminated ash that surrounded Xu Qing. The blood cocoon had now shrunk down so significantly that it was only about nine meters from end to end. And it was shaking so hard it looked like it might collapse.

The lightning still pounded down.

"I told him I would use the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command after he achieved his first measure of success," the Heir Apparent said. "I did that to make sure he was fully determined to turn the God Decapitation Altar into a trump card. But the reality is that I employed the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command from the very beginning."

The Heir Apparent and his siblings looked on with serious expressions. The Captain and the others were off in the distance, full of shock. They were all waiting.

An hour later, the vortex above seemed to tap into an even larger reserve of heavenly lighting. As a result, the lightning never ended. The blood cocoon was now surrounded by so many bolts of lightning that it wasn't possible to see it. However, it emanated a withered sensation that caused worry to build in the hearts of the onlookers.

But then, even as that sensation of withering increased, a killing will suddenly erupted in all directions. Ripples of astonishment ran through the minds of everyone present as a chanting sound drifted out from the cocoon.

“Let the Ghost Emperor mountain become the altar. Let D-132’s destiny be the trough!”

Cracks spread out over the cocoon, as if some terrifying power were building up inside.

“Let the heavenly dao be the body of the blade. Let the godly curse of taboo poison be the edge of the blade. And let daybreak light be the blade’s light!”

At that point, the blood cocoon started crumbling to pieces.

“Let the golden crow be the connection. Let the violet moon be the seal!

“Let the timescape be the container...”

“Let the sundial life lamps be the catalyst....”

As the chanting spread out, Wu Jianwu, Ning Yan, and everyone else slowly backed up, ashen looks on their faces. All of them could sense the terrifying fluctuations coming from the cocoon. Those fluctuations contained the power of natural laws, which caused the lightning falling from the vortex to start to blur.

Finally came the last bit of chanting.

“When the sundials hit noon, heaven and earth will be jointly severed!”

The blood cocoon exploded as a beam of blade light emerged, full of boundless power and consummate killing intent.

The moment it appeared, the dome of heaven trembled, and the lands quaked. Cracks spread out through the damaged world. The bluegreen dragon swirled through the air, transforming into an enormous blade. The blade contained the will of Supreme Vastness, as well as a resonance to sever daos. It was the heavenly saber.

The power of taboo poison converged rapidly to make the edge of the blade. Now the blade contained a peak level of taboo poison, ensuring that anyone struck with it would be instantly cursed by the poison. Next was the daybreak light, which formed the cold blade light. It was a shining light that could sever all living beings, pierce all magics, and melt all techniques. It was a mystery within a mystery!

The lands shook as the Ghost Emperor mountain and D-132 became the blade trough. The Ghost Emperor mountain’s hand rose, and within it was a huge prison cell full of destiny aura.

The golden crow danced in the air, connecting heaven and earth. The violet moon sent out lineaments connecting it all. Within it, the god trove blessed everything. After that, the five sundials became heaven. As the gnomons spun, the aura of time seeped out everywhere. Then, all five of the gnomons stopped together, all of them pointing exactly at noon!

And then...

A saber slashed into the sky!

It raced right toward the lightning falling from the vortex, moving with heaven-rending, earth-crushing force. The lightning was severed. The lake of lightning shattered. The heavenfate tribulation... was slashed to nothing! Heaven and earth trembled. The God Decapitation Altar blurred, then rapidly transformed into a timescape bottle.

The bottle fell, until Xu Qing stepped out of nowhere and grabbed it. He looked at the bottle, his eyes glittering. Then he put it away, turned to the Heir Apparent and his siblings, and clasped hands.

“Many thanks for helping me to succeed, Seniors!”

Ning Yan and the others were struck speechless. The Captain’s eyes shone. The Heir Apparent and his siblings smiled.

“Does the divine ability have a name?” asked Princess Brightblossom.

Xu Qing looked out at heaven and earth.

“It’s called... Noon is Here!”

Princess Brightblossom smiled and nodded. She seemed to look at Xu Qing with even more approval than before.

Off to the side, the Heir Apparent cleared his throat. Eyes also glittering with admiration, he said, “Not bad. But don’t get complacent. Your other nascent souls need tempering. That’s the only way you’ll be able to unleash the true power of this trump card. Now, are you going to take the power of hope here and absorb it to be the tip of the blade?”

As the Heir Apparent spoke, his gaze shifted to the Captain.

The Captain cleared his throat and waved his hand, causing six motes of white light to appear in front of him. Those six motes of light contained the hope and spirit of resistance of the living beings of Moonrite Region. In fact, it was possible to see countless faces within them.

Those motes of light were some of the power of hope that the Captain had managed to take during Xu Qing’s tribulation.

“Eldest Brother probably has some better uses for them,” Xu Qing said quietly.

He knew full well how much experience his Eldest Brother had in accomplishing big things. In most cases, those big jobs were multilayered. And in this case, he had obviously set everything specifically for the hope power of the living beings of Moonrite.

When the Captain heard Xu Qing’s words, he seemed to brighten up, and even laughed heartily. He felt anticipation in his heart, but at the same time, felt like something was a bit odd about this job. Normally speaking, though Xu Qing often ended up looking amazing, he was usually not far behind. They were like a pair of world-shaking heroes drawing their amazing swords. But this time, he got the short end of the stick.

He had unsealed this area. He had made the arrangements for the script. He had also prepared all of the assets necessary. But in the end, the Heir Apparent and his siblings just took over. And the Captain even ended up having to act in the play.

All of that could have been acceptable. But then, halfway through the play, little Ah Qing just went totally out of control....

If he had just gone out of control, that could have been acceptable. But it hadn't been a case of simply going out of control once. It kept happening over and over again. First was the ancient wind, then the God Decapitation Altar, then the memories from antiquity, and finally that tribulation lightning.

When the Captain thought about that, he suddenly felt very tired. Being little Ah Qing's Eldest Brother really wasn't a simple thing.

Finally, it's my turn!

Taking a deep breath, the Captain strode forward and then floated up into the air until he was next to Xu Qing.

"Watch closely, little Junior Brother. Next up... it's time for our actual big job! Our true goal!"

Xu Qing blinked a few times and then plastered a look of anticipation onto his face.

Noticing Xu Qing's facial expression caused the Captain to feel very pleased. Proudly looking up, he waved his right hand forcefully and said, "In compliance with the treaty from long ago, I hereby use the power of hope as the instigator, to create a summoning symbol. A path for gods! Let the Firemoon Door open! High God Moonfire, I summon you to me!"

As the words left the Captain's mouth, the power of hope flew up, spinning around to create a huge circle in front of them. The circle pulsed with powerful fluctuations, as if it were opening a tunnel. It was... a pathway leading to the resting place of another god!

The unique and terrifying aura of Crimson Mother seeped out of that pathway. It was just a bit, but it was enough to visibly move the Heir Apparent and his siblings. Everything around them blurred, and the mutagen levels soared.

Outside... strange things were also happening in the Greenhair Badlands.

Chapter 646: A Green Hair the Path; Firemoon the Door

The Greenhair Badlands shook dramatically. From the look of it, the Captain's words had released some unknown taboo, causing the terrifying power of the desert to suddenly erupt.

Grains of sand started floating up into the air. Every single one vibrated as faces appeared on them, which looked up into the sky and roared in rage. The sound of the roar became like heavenly thunder that resounded in the canopy of heaven. The wind swirled in all directions, transforming the gap between heaven and earth into a sea of sand.

Looking at it from a distance, the countless particles of sand floating into the air significantly lowered visibility. As the wind took hold of the sand and swept it about, loud rumbling sounds echoed out. The grains smashed into each other, transforming into ashes, which fueled the growing sandstorm.

The faces howled in pain. However, as they clumped together, they gradually formed an enormous face. It looked like a young woman. Shē was laughing, but at the same time crying, and the sound of it filled the Greenhair Badlands.

Mutagen spread out, obscuring the world. A god had come!

Heaven and earth in the Greenhair Badlands became dark and gloomy. Divine sense was useless, and physical eyes couldn't see clearly either. There was only endless, deafening rumbling. All cultivators native to the area went into hiding in the mountains and then looked on in shock.

It was hard to determine who did it first, but before long, all of them were prostrating in the direction of the huge face.

"White Mother!"

As Xu Qing and the others raced toward the exit, the Wind Guardians there seemed to be getting extremely excited. Dropping to their knees, they started chanting an ancient chant.

"White Mother is awake, enjoying the fiery river.

"The godchild cometh, to bring salvation hither.

"All beings are dazzled, in confusion they quiver.

"I will become the soil, a nourishing caregiver."

The chanting reverberated across the desert, spreading with the wind. Although the violent wind was shocking, it didn't seem particularly malicious to the Wind Guardians, who were natives of these lands.

In contrast... the cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral who were here looking for the source of the broadcast had no choice but to back away from the tempest. The sandstorm seemed intent on venting all of its malice on any outsiders in the area. In the shortest of moments, countless cathedral cultivators were sent tumbling this way and that, looks of shock on their faces. Some were overwhelmed and ripped to pieces. As their souls were shredded, they released howls of grief.

Even the pontiff was visibly taken aback.

"Everybody, retreat from this area!"

Without any hesitation, he issued orders for the cathedral cultivators to fall back. It was only when they were out of the desert that they were no longer in danger.

After that, the pontiff, along with some of his Void Returning godheralds, pierced through the sandstorm like a spear, heading right toward the exit where Xu Qing and the others were just emerging.

They got closer and closer. However, as they continued on their way, the dramatic things happening in the Greenhair Badlands continued to unfold. As the sand continued to float up into the air, and as the huge face grew larger, the desert's horizon dropped downward.

30 meters. 240 meters. 450 meters....

Shockingly, in the end, the surface level of the entire Greenhair Badlands dropped down 3,000 meters! From a distance, the Greenhair Badlands consisted of a huge sea of sand... with nothing beneath it.

It was a massive basin, within which were ancient lands that hadn't been seen since before the desert formed. There were also a host of mountains of varying sizes. Some of them had long been buried in the desert, and hadn't been seen in countless years. Others had been visible above the

desert sands, such as the Bitter Life Mountains. But now, they were exposed in their entirety. Compared to the huge basin, the mountains resembled massive, terrifying spikes.

The ground was made of pitch black muddy soil, rife with decay. There were innumerable scars in the land, immense gullies and pits that seemed to indicate a shocking battle had been fought here in the past.

The dramatic transformation surpassed what any cultivator could imagine happening. The cultivators native to the Greenhair Badlands were astonished, and at the same time, devoted themselves to worshiping White Mother with even more piety.

The sea of sand churned, with grains slamming into each other and shattering, creating more ash that mixed into the wind. Gradually, it seemed to be taking a shape.

Those who were witnessing it couldn't help but gradually think of a certain legend. It was said that the entire Greenhair Badlands had once been a massive basin, and that many years ago a strand of hair fell from heaven and turned into sand, which filled in the basin and made the desert. Today, that legend... was being proven true. The sea of sand floating in the air continued to take shape, ultimately turning into... a strand of green hair! [1]

The moment that hair appeared, the pontiff from the Red Moon Cathedral and his people all felt shaken to the core.

It was as if time had stopped in the Greenhair Badlands. The magical laws went still, and the natural laws froze in place. Everything went quiet. The wind no longer blew. Time no longer advanced. Everything, living or not, ceased to move. Godly might spread.

The Greenhair Badlands was instantly separated, as if it wasn't part of the Moonrite Region anymore. Instead, it was hidden in its own gap in space-time.

The strand of green hair shrank down, rapidly turning into the size of an ordinary piece of hair. It disappeared, only to reappear... right in front of the Captain in the sealed world. It floated down onto his palm. The two ends of the hair extended past either side of his hand and slowly drooped down.

The Captain turned to look at Xu Qing with an enigmatic smile on his face.

“Surprised, little Ah Qing?”

The moment Xu Qing laid eyes on the hair, he saw everything that happened earlier on the outside. He saw the dramatic transformations, and the appearance of the huge basin. He was understandably shaken. They knew that the Captain's big jobs were always exciting, but this was downright hair-raising.

Taking a deep breath, Xu Qing lowered his voice and said, “Eldest Brother, is that hair from the same High God you said you worked with in your past life?”

Xu Qing's reaction was very pleasing to the Captain. He was glad that things now seemed to be back in his control. This was how things were supposed to go on his big jobs.

“That's right,” he said, waving the hair back and forth. “This individual had a very bad temper, but extremely high personhood. Whether it was my hiding spot for my past-

life body, or the sealing done here, it was all thanks to hēr assistance. And the Greenhair Badlands were formed from one of hēr hairs.

“At the same time, it’s an authentication device left behind for me. One day, when the opportunity came around, I could use the hope power from all living beings to turn the Greenhair Badlands back into this strand of hair, and use it... to connect to hēr door.”

The Captain glanced at the Heir Apparent and his siblings, and was very pleased to see the serious expressions on their faces.

The Heir Apparent looked closely at the hair in Erniu’s hand. “You worked with one of the Three Gods of Sun, Moon, and Star of the Firemoon Darkheaven people? High God Moonfire?”

The Captain chuckled and nodded proudly. “The three high gods of the Firemoon Darkheaven people all wanted to give me face. But in the end, I thought about how thēir species is the mortal enemy of us humans, and therefore, I refused thēir offer.

“And yet, Little Moonie shamelessly *demand*ed to help, and I eventually had no choice but to reluctantly agree. Considering how hard shē worked, I promised that when the time came, I would give her a few chunks of Crimson Mother’s flesh to eat.”

The Heir Apparent’s face remained completely expressionless, almost as if he hadn’t heard any of the Captain’s nonsense. Princess Brightblossom sneered, but also ignored the Captain. Ning Yan and the others had experienced quite a few shocks on this day, yet their first reaction upon hearing Erniu’s bragging was that it seemed too fake. Xu Qing was used to this sort of thing, and didn’t react at all.

Seeing that nobody believed him, the Captain sighed again. “Ah, whatever. Look, I’m telling the truth. One of these days, all of you will realize that what Chen Erniu says isn’t even remotely untrue. Thēy really did beg me!”

The Captain cleared his throat, and with a helpless swagger that bemoaned how ignorant everyone else was, he stepped forward and threw the hair into the vortex made from hope power.

The hair drifted through the air, and when it touched the vortex, the vortex suddenly stopped moving. Then the hair grew longer and longer, stretching out to form a pathway. It was long and winding, and headed far out into the void.

At the very end of the path was a wooden door, extremely ancient, and seemingly very inauspicious. The black wood was covered with numerous very deep scratch marks, and even some chunks of flesh. Most horrendous of all was that black blood oozed out of the edges of the door. The blood emanated an overwhelming sensation of sinister decay.

It also contained the aura of a god. When Ning Yan and the others saw it, they groaned as their mutagen levels started rising. Xu Qing’s vision swam, and his mind trembled. The Heir Apparent and his siblings looked at the black wooden door as if it represented the impending arrival of a dangerous enemy.

Only the Captain seemed relaxed. Stepping into the vortex and onto the path made by the green hair, he looked over his shoulder at Xu Qing and grinned.

“Want to come with me to take a look, little Ah Qing?”

Xu Qing was about to reply when blood started gushing out of the edges of the door. At the same time, a loud, incessant banging started on the other side.

Bang-bang-bang-bang!

It was a deafening sound that shook them down to the soul.

Apparently, whatever entity was on the other side had sensed newcomers, and was banging on the door. The force caused the door to shiver with each blow, and more damage appeared on its surface.

The sudden banging seemed to catch the Captain by surprise. After blinking a few times, he continued to smile. “What the hell? How come everybody who gets locked up seems to love violently banging on the door?”

Off to the side, Eighth Sib glared at the Captain and snapped, “Shē’s cursing you.”

Chapter 647: It’s Called Love

The Captain grinned. Looking very sincere, he said, “Senior, that’s totally impossible. Back then shē was the one who begged for the honor of helping me.”

His calm voice, relaxed demeanor, and the reminiscence in his eyes made it seem like he had absolute trust in the entity behind this door, all based on their previous beautiful relationship.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu exchanged a glance. Based on what they knew about Erniu, and especially this specific facial expression, they were very suspicious about what they were hearing.

Without the slightest hesitation, Xu Qing backed up a few dozen meters until he was standing by the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom. That seemed like the safest spot. He didn’t even bother thinking about the Captain’s invitation to come along. He thought of himself as a reasonable person who never went too crazy. It was all about costs and benefits. In that respect, he was different from the Captain. That was why, when it came to crazily courting death, the Captain always had the edge.

Seeing Xu Qing backing up caused a flash of bitterness to appear in the Captain’s eyes.

“Shē’s pretty good at cursing,” Eighth Sib said, looking at Chen Erniu. “In fact, from the way shē’s cursing you, it sounds like you were a heartless rat who seduced hēr, then tossed hēr to the side. Shē wants to eat your flesh, drink your blood, absorb your soul, and dig out your marrow. Oh, right. Shē’s been looking forward to you coming.”

The Captain’s expression flickered slightly, and his heart started pounding a bit. Instinctively suppressing that, he cleared his throat. “There’s no way! We were just friends, that’s all!”

When Eighth Sib noticed that his older brother and sister weren’t interrupting him, he started to get excited. Sneering, he continued, “My authority relates to emotions and longing. By means of hēr aura, I can tell that this High God Moonfire views you with the utmost loathing, as well as infinite madness. Hunh. The fluctuations are *really* intense!”

Eighth Sib seemed to focus on the fluctuations for a moment. An admiring expression appeared on his face.

“Erniu, you got hēr emotions so stirred up they’re very close to transforming into human nature. That’s not easy!” When Eighth Sib saw that the Captain was about to launch into another explanation, he got visibly annoyed. He hated it when people didn’t believe what he said. Glaring, he continued, “If you don’t believe me, fine. Just walk up to the door and see if the banging gets louder!”

His heart starting to race a bit more, the Captain thought back to his bragging, then gritted his teeth and started walking forward. However, he’d only taken a few steps when the banging on the black wooden door grew more frantic.

BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG!

It was more anxious than before. Almost maddened. And the door was shaking so hard it looked like it might shatter at any moment.

As of now, even people without authority related to emotion, for instance Ning Yan and the others, could tell that the voice behind the door was terrifyingly furious. All of them inhaled sharply and backed away.

Eighth Sib chuckled coldly.

Seeing all of that, the Captain sighed. “You *still* hate me, Little Moonie?”

All of a sudden, the banging stopped. Everything went quiet. The hidden implication of the Captain’s words caused Xu Qing’s gaze to harden. Wu Jianwu and Ning Yan both looked astonished. Nethersprite frowned as she looked at the door. She’d been hoping to see Chen Erniu simply die, except now everything seemed peaceful.

Meanwhile, the Captain’s expression was one of loneliness. Walking up to the door, he stopped in place, eyes flickering with reminiscence.

“Little Moonie,” he said in a near whisper, “just wait a bit longer. Everything’s going to be fine.

“Truth be told, I was lying to my friends just now. Even little Ah Qing. Oh, right, you don’t know who little Ah Qing is. He’s my Junior Brother in this life. Once you’re out of there, I’ll introduce him to you.

“Ai. I told them that you and I were just good friends. But the reality is... that our relationship couldn’t possibly be described with the word ‘friend’ alone....”

The Captain’s words drifted along the pathway made by the green hair, through the vortex created by hope power, and into the ears of Xu Qing and the others.

At first, none of them had believed anything the Captain said. But as he kept talking, and as the door went silent, it started to seem like maybe he was actually telling the truth. Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and Li Youfei were all starting to believe. Nethersprite just frowned.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, looked very closely at his Eldest Brother's hands. At the same time, Erniu sighed and looked back at everyone.

"Let me do the introductions again. On the other side of this door is my ex-wife."

His words struck like lightning bolts. Ning Yan let loose an exclamation of shock. Wu Jianwu's eyes couldn't have opened wider. Li Youfei was dumbstruck. Nethersprite was deeply shaken.

"Ex-wife?"

"A god?"

"W-what's... what's going on here?"

Xu Qing didn't react in the same way. He was looking thoughtfully at his Eldest Brother's right hand, which was clenched into a fist.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings also reacted slightly differently. Eighth Sib seemed suspicious, Princess Brightblossom's eyes narrowed, and Fifth Sister seemed thoughtful.

"What are you holding in your hand?" the Heir Apparent asked.

Such reactions caused the Captain to rejoice inwardly. But he kept the emotions off his face. He sighed. "Please, don't laugh at me. Years ago when Little Moonie attempted godly ascension, shē could hardly bear to part with me. But in the end, we went our separate ways. Shē became a god in heaven, while I remained a person on earth.

"Yet I still loved hēr. And that's why, in reincarnation after reincarnation over the countless years that have passed, I was willing to be hēr anchor. I am what lets hēr keep a grip on hēr human nature, and not become lost in godliness."

As the Captain's sorrowful words echoed out, he opened his right hand. There wasn't anything there.

Everything was silent. Ning Yan and the others were shaken by what they were hearing, but at the same time, realized it sounded vaguely familiar. Xu Qing looked at the Captain and could guess where he'd come up with the storyline.

Princess Brightblossom looked at the black door, and then back at Erniu. "If we hadn't come along, those were the lines you planned to have our 'father' say in the performance. Right?"

Eighth Sib couldn't help but add, "I remember that High God Moonfire was born a god. Shē wasn't a postheaven god. So what would shē need an anchor for?"

The Captain blinked a few times and was about to answer when, all of a sudden, the banging resumed on the door, this time, louder and more insistent. Cracks spread out on the door, and even started to bulge out in some spots. The bulge was the same shape as a seven-fingered hand. Along with the banging came gasping sounds that pulsed with greed and longing. There were also some hoarse cries.

Xu Qing's expression turned serious. The Heir Apparent and his siblings all looked on gravely. As for the Captain, he was definitely alarmed, but was working hard to look calm and casual.

He even reached up and rapped lightly on the door.

“The time hasn’t come yet, Little Moonie! I can’t open the door right now. But don’t worry. How come you still have the same little temper as before? I just came to wake you up and make sure you don’t go back to sleep. And I also wanted to let you know you should keep activating all the things you prepared over the years.

“In less than a year, I’m going to live up to our agreement. And that’s because, in no more than a year, I’ll make sure you lay eyes on the sleeping Crimson Mother. That’s what I promised you years ago, and I’m going to live up to it.

“Finally, I have a little authentication device for you. It’ll enable you to ignore the might of Crimson Mother and walk right up to her.”

The Captain reached up, dug his eyeball out of the socket, and smashed it onto the wooden door. The eyeball sank through the door to the other side.

“The authentication device is inside my eyeball that I just—”

Before he could finish speaking, chewing sounds drifted out from the door...

Xu Qing said nothing. Ning Yan and the others had strange looks on their faces. The Heir Apparent looked at Erniu. But it was Eighth Sib who spoke.

“Shē ate it.”

The Captain cleared his throat. “It’s called love.”

With that, the Captain started growing a whole bunch of eyeballs, which he sent into the door one after another. The chewing sounds never stopped. Finally, after about a hundred eyeballs, the Captain angrily said, “Alright, no more! Worst-case scenario, I just get help from another High God!”

A huge bang on the door was the only response the Captain got. As a result of the bang, the path made by the green hair started to collapse, and the hope power began fading away.

The Land of God Decapitation in general started crumbling.

Xu Qing hurried over to the entrance of the vortex in case he needed to help the Captain.

Thankfully, after that huge bang, there were no more noises from behind the door. Instead, one of the Captain’s eyeballs suddenly appeared on the surface of the door. It was staring at the Captain. Inside of the eyeball was a wriggling strand of gray hair that almost resembled a worm of some sort. It emanated a terrifying aura that far surpassed anything from the previous green strand of hair.

The Captain’s eyes narrowed and shone with blue light. Reaching out, he took the eyeball, then started backing up. The moment he moved backward, the palm print that was bulging out of the door wriggled and transformed into a vicious face. Opening its mouth, it lunged toward the Captain.

Blue light flared around the Captain as he raced backward toward the exit. The path beneath his feet was crumbling, and the vortex of hope power grew dim.

Seeing that, Xu Qing reached out, grabbed the Captain by the shoulder, and dragged him out.

Even still, the face closed in with a gaping maw, and then a crunch rang out as it bit into the Captain's waist. Blood spread out of his mouth. The path collapsed into nothing. The vortex of hope power disappeared. And Xu Qing was left holding the upper half of the Captain.

"Happy, Eldest Brother?" Xu Qing sighed.

The Captain laughed heartily. "Totally! When you do big things, you have to be thorough. Otherwise, how could they be considered big? Please, everyone, don't laugh at me. This is just how my ex-wife and I bid farewell to each other."

The Captain didn't seem worried at all about his missing lower half. Looking pleased, he opened his right hand to reveal the eyeball. After squeezing it, he managed to extract the gray hair, which shot through the void into the outside world.

In the blink of an eye, it reached the air above the Greenhair Badlands, where it expanded to cover the entire desert. Then it started breaking apart. It turned into countless grains of gray sand that fell down, once again filling in the huge basin. The process made the desert gray. And a gray wind blew over it...

According to the legends, there were different types of wind in the Greenhair Badlands. In addition to the green, white, and black winds, there was a fourth type. It was said that the fourth type had only appeared once in the entire existence of the Greenhair Badlands. Now it had appeared a second time.

Chapter 648: The Wind Locks the Desert; Missing a Dao Son

The gray wind blew through the gray desert, begging the question of whether people would soon start calling the Greenhair Badlands by a different name. After all, the sand was all gray now. As the wind blew, it rapidly intensified to the point of being a storm. It was a tempest containing godly might, and as it spread, it imparted the sensation that it would never die down. Even the canopy of heaven changed. It was no longer filled with red light. It was as if the entire desert had been separated out of the Moonrite Region.

For anyone outside, entering the desert would now be a very deadly risk. Even the pontiff from the Red Moon Cathedral didn't dare to stay inside. Bedraggled and broken-down, he had no choice but to fall back. He had even lost some of his godheralds in the retreat.

Once outside the desert, the cathedral cultivators looked back into the storm.

"This place is cut off from the outside now."

"The gray storm isn't going away. It's preventing anyone from going in."

"The people inside can leave, but people on the outside have to deal with that storm if they want to go in."

The Red Moon Cathedral finally had no choice but to label the place a forbidden region and leave it be.

The people already inside of the gray storm didn't look any different from before, although they were all incredibly shocked.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing and everyone else left the Imperial Sovereign's Land of God Decapitation and reappeared out in the gray wind and sand.

In the past, when Xu Qing and the Captain finished a big job, they usually had to teleport randomly to safety. But this time, there was no need for that. The gray storm was their protection. For all intents and purposes, the Captain's deal with the black wooden door ensured that they were now in the safest location in all of the Moonrite Region.

And thus, the entire group returned to the Green Spirit Pharmacy in the mudbrick city. Everything was normal back at the medicine shop.

Patriarch Inkrule had been standing guard the entire time, and had been doing a good job of it. After everyone left earlier, he'd been feeling very nervous. And then those images appeared in his mind... Although hardly anyone in the Moonrite Region could have recognized the people in those images, he recognized all of them instantly. And that was especially true of Xu Qing. After all of that happened, he had decided to just do his best to guard the shop. Later, the green sand transformed, and the massive basin was filled with gray sand and wind. All of that convinced him that the best course of action was just to stay where he was. He had worked hard to take good care of the chickens, fattening them up as much as he could. That included his old apprentice. When he finally spotted Xu Qing, the Heir Apparent, and everyone else on the street, he started trembling with excitement, and rushed forward to receive them.

The next day, the Green Spirit Pharmacy opened for business again. Ling'er's face was flushed as she worked on the accounts, all while occasionally looking happily at the back room. Her cultivation base was very different from before. She had now thoroughly assimilated the destiny aura from Emperor Ancient Spirit. That was all thanks to the good fortune of that blood cocoon.

Xu Qing wasn't the only one to benefit from good fortune. Ling'er had also been blessed thanks to the Heir Apparent and his siblings.

Ning Yan and Li Youfei went back to scrubbing the floor. The Captain resumed his guard duties and kept an eye on Nethersprite as she boiled water. Nethersprite hadn't returned her little toy. Thus, as she boiled water, she always took every opportunity to slap and chide the skin lantern. She also had the lantern do the blowing to keep the fire hot.

Wu Jianwu was again reciting poetry. He hadn't seen Patriarch Inkrule for quite a while, and missed him a lot. *"It feels like forever since I went on my way; yet it seems like I've hardly been gone a day."*

Patriarch Inkrule pretended not to have heard him.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings went back to their routines. Fifth Sister was in the backyard, happily tending to the chickens. Eighth Sib clasped the Captain's shoulder and chatted like before. However, when Xu Qing occasionally listened in, it seemed like the Captain was often getting more information out of Eighth Sib than the other way around. Whenever that happened, Princess Brightblossom would shake her head.

Xu Qing was once again focusing on cultivation.

On the third day after their return to the Green Spirit Pharmacy, the Heir Apparent called Xu Qing over. As he sipped tea, he talked to Xu Qing in the meaningful and heartfelt manner of a true Master.

“Xu Qing, you might have reached the four-tribulation Nascent Soul level. However, there are still some abilities that you haven’t been able to unlock. Therefore, you need to keep that sun at your waist, and you can’t take the hat off.

“Things are going to be chaotic out there. Thankfully, things are going to be relatively peaceful here in the desert. Therefore, I want you to take advantage of the time you have to speed up the pace of your tempering.”

Xu Qing nodded. After returning, he’d visited the Moonrebel Congregation to find that the statues there weren’t active like before. An atmosphere of nervousness had come to fill the place. Almost all of the discussion was about the images everyone had seen in their heads a few days before. Everyone agreed that something big was coming. As a result, everyone seemed to be interested in stockpiling medicine.

Because of the gray wind that blocked off the desert, things were very peaceful around the Green Spirit Pharmacy. And that wasn’t even to mention there were four Smoldering Gods there.

Settling his thoughts, Xu Qing looked at the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom. Respectfully bowing he said, “I look forward to your advice, Seniors.”

The Heir Apparent was very pleased with Xu Qing’s attitude. “The first thing you need to do is study your heavenly dao. I don’t know the details of how you got it, but it looks like you plundered it years ago.

“Situations like that would occasionally occur back in the day. But heavenly daos aren’t simple things. They exist on an extremely high level! And thus comes today’s advice. You’ve overlooked something relating to your heavenly dao.”

The Heir Apparent’s expression looked very serious. In order to avoid exhausting himself, he was weighing his words very carefully before speaking.

“Given the level of that heavenly dao, if you don’t keep a close eye on it, it could very well leave you. What’s more, although you aren’t in the Spirit Trove level, considering that you had the destined opportunity to plunder a heavenly dao like that, then, theoretically speaking, you should be able to command at least some heavenly dao magical laws.

“It’s just that it hasn’t manifested very clearly on you so far. Keep digging. Keep seeking enlightenment of your heavenly dao. Sense the magical laws it contains. And more importantly, treat it well, guide it, and make sure it follows you willingly.

“In addition, though heavenly daos contain all of the usual magical and natural laws, yours does have a specialty. It will just take some effort on your part to discover what it is.”

Xu Qing was very taken aback. Acting on instinct, he took a look at the heavenly dao inside of him. The bluegreen dragon was in his sea of consciousness looking back. And though Xu Qing couldn’t be totally sure, it seemed almost looked like it had a fawning expression on its face. Xu Qing put

some thought into the matter of the heavenly dao bluegreen dragon. He was wondering what part of his study and research into it had been lacking.

After some thought, he decided that the Heir Apparent's advice made a lot of sense, and that he should study the heavenly dao more thoroughly. One thing that stuck out to him was that he had acquired this heavenly dao through enlightenment. It was actually a manifestation of his life essence bluegreen dragon. He had formed it, not plundered it.

The most important thing was that he needed to assert his authority. The bluegreen dragon had been acknowledged as an heir by the heavenly dao at the Ten Entrails Tree. And that meant that Xu Qing... counted as its grandfather.

In other words, he didn't need to study it too deeply. He fundamentally understood a lot about it already. And he wasn't worried at all about it leaving him. As for treating it well, that would depend on how it behaved.

In view of all that, Xu Qing looked at the Heir Apparent. "Senior, I can actually sense the specialty in my heavenly dao's magical laws."

"Oh?" the Heir Apparent said, looking at Xu Qing. Princess Brightblossom also looked over. Before, the two of them would have reacted much more sharply to someone under their tutelage acting so casually. But not now. The Heir Apparent looked at Xu Qing seriously, and Princess Brightblossom seemed somewhat excited.

"Seniors, my heavenly dao formed when I experienced enlightenment of dao-severing. That's its specialty. It's probably also connected to slaughter and tribulation lightning. That's why I was able to convert it into a heavenly saber."

Xu Qing waved his hand, causing a small bluegreen dragon to fly out from the top of his head and start gliding around.

The Heir Apparent nodded. His expression unchanging, he said, "Hmm. It's just as I thought. You used a destined opportunity to plunder enlightenment from heaven and earth."

A short distance away, Eighth Sib's eyebrows shot up and he opened his mouth to speak. Before he could, Princess Brightblossom looked at him. A tremor passed through Eighth Sib, and he forced himself to stay silent.

Despite what the Heir Apparent had said, he was actually bewildered. He rarely made mistakes, especially considering his experience as someone with a Smoldering God cultivation base. What was more, he had observed Xu Qing's heavenly dao quite a bit. He had seen a deep level of approval in that heavenly dao, as well as an independent spirit. Those things didn't seem to match with what Xu Qing said about his enlightenment.

Gaining enlightenment of an illusory heavenly dao wasn't enough. It required constant cultivation and growth to succeed. If you likened heavenly daos to a species, then heavenly daos of that level were like ordinary citizens who need to develop significantly before becoming royalty. Besides, that was something of a dead end. It didn't matter how much a heavenly dao grew, it could never become like the heavenly daos of ancient times in the Revered Ancient mainland. *They* were the royalty.

But Xu Qing's heavenly dao was somehow different. It had a deep level of approval that the Heir Apparent could sense was connected to one of the ancient heavenly daos. It seemed outrageously unbelievable. Upon sensing it, the Heir Apparent had assumed that it must have been something that Xu Qing surreptitiously plundered and added to his assets.

Princess Brightblossom muttered to herself briefly before looking at Xu Qing and his heavenly dao. "Xu Qing, did your heavenly dao experience some incredibly momentous event?"

Xu Qing was about to answer the question but didn't have the chance.

The Captain proudly laughed and said, "Of course! It was back when little Ah Qing and I were on a big job."

"What job?" Eighth Sib asked curiously.

"Oh, nothing worth talking about. We just gave the little bluegreen dragon a daddy, which is when it became our grandson. You see, little Ah Qing and I had a child together. Ai. It's been such a long time since we saw our son. I'm really starting to miss him."

The Captain looked up into the sky. All of a sudden, a rumbling in the dome of heaven seemed to respond to him.

The Heir Apparent shot to his feet. Princess Brightblossom's expression flickered, and even Fifth Sister looked moved.

Eighth Sib gasped and looked at Chen Erniu, then Xu Qing. Finally he pointed to the sky. "That's your son?"

Xu Qing hesitated briefly, then said, "After waking hīm, hē'll likely be one of the ancient heavenly daos."

The Heir Apparent sat back down and grabbed his teacup. Yet again he was starting to feel exhausted. Princess Brightblossom and Fifth Sister both sat there quietly. Eighth Sib's jaw was hanging open.

Ning Yan continued scrubbing the floor, his heart aching with regret. *I had a chance too... to be the father of a heavenly dao!*

Chapter 649: A Storm in Your Heart; Now That's Living

There is no turning back in life. And thus, it didn't matter how much Ning Yan sighed inwardly. The past was the past.

Xu Qing noticed the regret on his face but didn't say anything. Meanwhile, the Captain looked very pleased. Back in the leadup to that event, he had given some suggestions to Ning Yan. But Ning Yan hadn't believed what he said. He didn't cut out his entrails for the Ten Entrails Tree. And that wasn't the Captain's fault. [1]

Silence reigned in the Green Spirit Pharmacy.

Shortly thereafter, the Heir Apparent put down his cup of tea. Smiling, he gave Xu Qing a slight nod. "Not bad at all."

Xu Qing hesitated. The Heir Apparent's smile seemed a bit forced, and he should have been surprised to learn the origin of Xu Qing's heavenly dao. Instead, the Heir Apparent changed the conversation topic.

"I suppose I'll leave the heavenly dao matters to you. Just get the enlightenment you need. Forget about that for now. Let's talk about your Ghost Emperor mountain. That mountain—" Before the Heir Apparent could continue speaking, Princess Brightblossom lifted her teacup.

That motion caused the Heir Apparent to stop talking. After a moment of thought, he continued speaking, his voice hoarse. "The fact that you can put a Smoldering God in your sea of consciousness for use as a nascent soul indicates to me that you must have some plans for it going forward. In that case, just upgrade the mountain in whatever way you see fit. The reason I called you over here is that I wanted to talk with you about your heavenfiend clones!"

"Heavenfiend clones?" Xu Qing waved his hand, causing over a hundred shadowy figures to appear, all of them emanating cold auras. They seemed like souls, yet they weren't. Their blurry nature made them hard to see clearly, but their baleful aura was so intense it caused the temperature to immediately drop in the medicine shop.

Fifth Sister looked at them closely.

Eighth Sib studied them and made an exclamation of surprise. "What divine ability is that? Assimilating live souls, mixing in the will of the Yellow Springs, adding the feeling of the Nine Serenities. It's mysterious and bewitching, and definitely not something that ordinary people can control!"

Princess Brightblossom suddenly looked thoughtful.

The Heir Apparent seemed enlivened. Given Xu Qing's strange nascent souls and his terrifying powers of understanding, the Heir Apparent had already decided that it wasn't necessary to give him advice in that regard. That said, when it came to divine abilities and magical techniques, he felt that he still had the right to speak.

"Your Master gave you that Nascent Soul technique and it works well with your heavenfate-absorbing skill. It's exceptional custom work. However, you haven't done sufficient study of this skill. The reality is that your heavenfiend clones have another, even better, use."

Moved, Xu Qing looked at his heavenfiend clones and thought back to what his Master had told him. Specifically, Master Seventh had mentioned using the heavenfiend clones to step in for him when dealing with heavenfate tribulations. However, as things developed, it reached the point where Xu Qing didn't think that was necessary. After the Heir Apparent came along, the heavenfate tribulations got so terrifying that it didn't seem to make sense to use the heavenfiend clones.

"I look forward to your advice, Senior." Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed respectfully to the Heir Apparent.

When the Heir Apparent saw that he was finally in control of things again, he felt a bit more at ease. However, he was still worried that something unexpected might happen, so he glanced at his third sister.

“Xu Qing,” Princess Brightblossom said, “these heavenfiend clones of yours clearly contain the will of the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command. Your Master is no simple individual. In order to create this divine ability for you, he obviously had to refer to the Duskmurmur Extirpation Command. These clones are inherently capable of substituting for you in tribulations.

“However, did you ever consider that you could use your daybreak light to cover them with an outer disguise to make them look like you? If you used that in a fight, then your enemy would see a whole host of you fighting at the same time, and they would have no way of determining which one was the real you. You could use them offensively or defensively. There’s really no limit to the possibilities.”

Hearing that, the Heir Apparent smiled and nodded. “That’s exactly what I meant. If you can hide your true form among them, then it would be a big boost to your battle prowess, and would make you a lot harder to deal with.”

The Captain seemed excited by what he was hearing, while Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were amazed. They could just imagine what it would be like to be fighting someone, only to have them summon over a hundred clones that looked exactly like their true self. It would be a fantastic scene.

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered. He hadn’t thought of doing that, and he couldn’t help but admire Princess Brightblossom for the idea. That said, Xu Qing was actually a lot more interested in transforming his nascent souls than he was in altering his magical techniques. Therefore, he looked at the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom in the hopes that they were going to give him more advice.

“Seniors, my nascent souls have another unique quality. I have the finger of a god locked up inside of me in a prison cell that I call D-132.”

“Don’t be over-ambitious,” the Heir Apparent said, his gaze sharpening. “For now, go back and improve your heavenfiend clones. Don’t get anxious. You need to focus on tempering first.”

Xu Qing nodded. *I guess I am getting a bit too worked up.*

With that, he went into the back room, sat down cross-legged, and got to work.

In that manner, time passed. It was now six days since they left the Imperial Sovereign’s Land of God Decapitation. During that time, the gray storm persisted in the desert, covering everything.

Outside the desert in the various parts of the Moonrite Region, another storm was raging. However, it wasn’t a literal storm. It was a storm in the hearts of the people. The storm started because of the broadcast of Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua executing Crimson Mother. After seeing that, all living beings felt their hearts racing, and the desire to resist was ignited in their hearts.

The countdown had already begun. If they didn't fight back within a year, they would become food. Of course, even if they fought back, they would still die. But at least it would be a dazzling and explosive finale to the nightmare that was the life they led.

At the very least, they could *truly* live!

"Gods are by no means eternal; hope exists from time immemorial and into forever."

In that case... some struggle, some madness, and some fighting back would bring something unique to the final moments of their lives. At the very least, they had hope! As the storm built in the hearts of the people, all species, sects, and cities filled with rallying cries.

Meanwhile, the resistance armies put together by the Moonrebel Congregation welcomed the shocking development, as countless previously numb cultivators flocked to join their ranks. Numerous species and sects looked with maddened eyes toward the Red Moon Cathedral, and in their hearts, prepared to fight.

For the very first time, the five vice-bishops of the Moonrebel Congregation chose to reveal their true identity to help the recruitment efforts. Some were chiefs from influential clans, while others were high-ranking elders from important sects. Still others were people who had been extremely famous but then gone missing. Shockingly, all of them had cultivation bases at the peak of fourth-stage Void Returning. Because of their status, cultivation, and valorous reputations, all five of them caused a rush of new recruits.

And there were now five battlefields! The Red Moon Cathedral was furious, and immediately tried to crush them. Strangely, though... the pontiff didn't personally join the effort. He seemed leery, and preferred to remain in the headquarters.

Even still, the Red Moon Cathedral sent a powerful force out to fight. The flames of war burned in various locations throughout the Moonrite Region.

Meanwhile, the desert was like a paradise.

Xu Qing was focusing on covering his heavenfiend clones with daybreak light to make them look exactly like himself. It wasn't easy. Their inner structure was different from an ordinary person, which posed an obstacle for changing their appearance. Therefore, Xu Qing switched to focusing on concealment. Concealment techniques could be very useful in catching someone off guard in combat.

By means of the Moonrebel Congregation, Xu Qing was able to keep tabs on the war outside. He got the sense that it wouldn't be very long before that war got close to him. And that was because he'd noticed that Eight Sib and Fifth Sister had disappeared. He had no idea where they went.

Xu Qing had some speculations. Then he noticed that his Eldest Brother was acting strange. He seemed to be working even harder to curry favor with the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom. And the majority of his efforts seemed focused on the Heir Apparent. He took it upon himself to boil water, and even offered to massage the Heir Apparent's shoulders. He really was acting very filial.

Xu Qing quickly came to the conclusion that his Eldest Brother was going to ask a favor of the Heir Apparent.

The truth was revealed five days later. Xu Qing was in the middle of studying his heavenfiend clones when he heard the Heir Apparent calling from the main floor of the shop.

“Come over for a minute, Xu Qing.”

Xu Qing opened his eyes and looked out toward the main floor. He saw the excited Captain fanning the Heir Apparent.

Xu Qing gathered his thoughts, and then walked out. The Captain met his eyes, chuckled, then swung the fan more vigorously.

“Senior,” Xu Qing said coolly.

“There’s something I’d planned to give the two of you soon,” the Heir Apparent said, sounding very calm and collected. “But Erniu is getting anxious and suggested I give it to you earlier.”

He produced a mirror shard. It was the same Eye of Heaven that he had used to broadcast the events in the Land of God Decapitation through the Moonrebel Congregation to the people of Moonrite.

The Captain’s eyes shone with longing as he looked at the mirror fragment. It was why he had been working so hard over the past few days.

Xu Qing looked at the item. He was well aware how extraordinary it was.

Rubbing his finger over the surface of the mirror, the Heir Apparent said, “The precursor of the Moonrebel Congregation was my father’s precious treasure, the Eye of Heaven. However, during the fight with Crimson Mother, it shattered. This is the biggest shard.

“Using this mirror to enter the Moonrebel Congregation is different from using ordinary mirrors. Doing so will activate the Moonrebel Congregation’s archbishop trial. Whoever passes the trial will become the Archbishop of Moonrebel. Even failure will result in earning the place of vice-bishop. It’s how the current five vice-bishops earned their positions.

“Unfortunately, once the trial is activated and the two of you enter, then the mirror won’t be able to activate the trial again until after the Moonrebel Congregation declines and then revives again.” The Heir Apparent put the mirror shard on the table. “The two of you can enter. Then we’ll wait and see who can take advantage of this good fortune.”

The Heir Apparent stood and walked out of the medicine shop. He had a lot of tasks to handle to prepare for the coming war.

After watching the Heir Apparent leave, the Captain’s eyebrows danced up and down. Excitedly picking up the mirror, he said, “I finally got this opportunity, little Ah Qing! Hahaha! As I guessed, you’re Pill Nine, right? Well, that’s fine. You might be Pill Nine, but now... I’m going to be the Archbishop of Moonrebel!

“I’ve been preparing for this for a long time. After we go in, little Ah Qing, you can just focus on fooling around and having fun. Don’t feel any pressure. Also, don’t worry about me. Whatever form I take, just pretend you don’t notice me.

“I have a plan!”

Chapter 650: New Ways of Thinking in a Land of Ambitions

Seeing the Captain this excited caused Xu Qing to smile. He couldn’t care less about the position of archbishop, and considering how hard his Eldest Brother had been working for so long, Xu Qing wouldn’t mind at all if he became the leader of the Moonrebel Congregation.

“Allow me to congratulate you in advance, Eldest Brother,” Xu Qing said with a faint smile.

The Captain laughed heartily. “What’s mine is yours, little Junior Brother! Let’s go!”

The mirror shard flickered with light that rapidly spread out and enveloped the two of them. Some rumbling sounds could be heard, and then they vanished from sight.

The mood inside the Moonrebel Congregation was bleak.

The mountain was still there, and it still looked majestic. But the temples atop it were dark. In the past, innumerable statues could be seen traversing the paths on the mountains, but with the advent of war, they were currently nowhere to be seen. The vast majority of congregation cultivators were completely focused on leading the resistance armies into battle against the forces of the Red Moon Cathedral. As a result, people had less time to come to the Moonrebel Congregation.

Therefore, there was only a small group present to exchange information and do business. They numbered in the hundreds. Most people hurried to take care of whatever business was at hand, and then left. No one wanted to waste any time. However, just now... something unusual suddenly happened.

High in the dome of heaven, higher than the nine main temples atop the mountain, in the shocking temple that hovered above everything else, brilliant light glittered into existence. There was also a deafening rumbling sound that swept out. The light and the sound filled the mountain of the Moonrebel Congregation, causing the other temples to tremble.

Stunned, the cultivators present all looked up. When they realized where the sound and light was coming from, they were even more astonished.

“Paramount Temple!”

“What’s happening? Paramount Temple represents the Archbishop of Moonrebel. It was dark before, but now it’s shining brightly.”

An uproar was already spreading. After all, to the cultivators of the Moonrebel Congregation, this was an absolutely astonishing development.

That was Paramount Temple! It was the highest temple in the Moonrebel Congregation, and it represented their archbishop! For innumerable years, there had been no Archbishop of Moonrebel.

The vice-bishops had managed everything. Thus, it was only natural that a development like this would be unusual.

That said, there were some old-timers present who, though they were surprised by what they were seeing, weren't exactly flabbergasted. They had seen this happen before and knew what it implied.

"Some big-shot has come along to take the archbishop trial."

"I've seen this happen twice before. Sadly, on neither occasion did the entrance to Paramount Temple actually open. And afterward, it went dark again."

"I saw this happen once, and in the end, Fifth Vice-Bishop walked out."

The sighs of the old-timers clued the newcomers in. That said, there was still a keen air of anticipation. Few people believed that a new archbishop would come out of the trial, but even having an additional vice-bishop would be a big matter for the Moonrebel Congregation. Considering the conflict going on with the Red Moon Cathedral, having a new vice-bishop would be a big boost to morale.

As word spread, more and more people started returning to the Moonrebel Congregation. One statue after another walked out into the open and looked up into the sky. Discussion and chatter spread. In fact, some of the vice-bishops' temples lit up.

Of the five vice-bishops, two stepped out and looked up at Paramount Temple.

On the other side of the Moonrebel Congregation's dome of heaven was a location that no one could take the initiative to enter. It was a mist-filled void. Roiling mist spread out in all directions, and at the far end of the void was a lake. Rather, it was a huge mirror covered with a layer of water. As a result, the lake was crystalline and incomparably clear. In fact, it seemed holy.

Atop the lake was a huge figure. It was an old man in a white robe, with his hands crossed into the opposite sleeves. His head was bowed as he seemingly looked down into the lake, unmoving. The only thing moving was his white hair, which stirred slowly as if having been touched by a breeze. Faint ripples rolled out across the water, as if something was forming beneath the surface.

The mirror the old man stood atop seemed like a barrier that separated one side of the void from the other. And the figure that was forming was on the other side.

After a certain period of time passed, the figure below took shape. It was Xu Qing. He looked around seriously, heart pounding. Eventually, he looked down. Earlier, when the light of the mirror enveloped him and his Eldest Brother, everything suddenly felt empty. Then, only a moment later, it went back to normal, and he was standing on this lake. In addition to the lake, there was a void and nothing else other than the mirror...

The mirror seemed to contain another world, and within it, he could see the old man in the white robe.

The two of them looked at each other, separated by the mirror lake.

Xu Qing could see two cold, apathetic eyes. His guard went up and he looked around, but didn't see any sign of his Eldest Brother.

“The person who came with you is in another mirror, contemplating how to go about this trial.” The calm voice came from the lake beneath Xu Qing’s feet, and it echoed out with great majesty into the void. “All cultivators who come here, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, come prepared for the trial.

“If you pass the trial, you will become the lord and master of the Eye of Heaven, and will also become my lord and master. If you fail, you will receive a lesser rank. What is your decision? Will you take the trial?”

The voice seemed cold and emotionless to Xu Qing. After a moment of thought, he decided not to agree immediately.

“What kind of trial is it?” he asked.

“A statement of ambition,” the white-robed man said coolly. “Use the power of ambition to reach an agreement. And demonstrate your qualifications. That’s how you pass. You have a limited time to complete your ambition.

“The extent of your ambition will determine your level of privileges with the Eye of Heaven. If your ambition is only average, then you won’t become the lord and master of the Eye of Heaven. You will receive a lesser rank.

“Only those with incredible ambition have incredible karma. That being said, do not behave unscrupulously.”

The old man waved his hand, and intense rumbling could be heard as waves spread out over the water. At the same time, dozens of ice sculptures appeared. They featured men and women, all of whom emanated extraordinary auras. However, their life force fluctuations had been sealed.

“These are trial-takers who have failed throughout the years in this epoch. Some of them had ambitions so exaggerated that they were deemed to be false, and thus, they were punished. Others had no way to make good on their promises, and were thus bound to this spot until now.”

Xu Qing scanned the group, and when he didn’t spot the Captain, breathed a sigh of relief.

“What is your ambition?” The old man in white looked through the mirror and the water at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing thought about it for a bit. Given that the Captain had prepared for so long for this, it seemed likely that he wouldn’t have any trouble. After all, though his Eldest Brother wasn’t always perfectly reliable, he certainly went crazy when going on big jobs.

As for Xu Qing, he didn’t think it was necessary to take a risk and say something about destroying Crimson Mother. Answering from the heart seemed like the best idea.

He thought some more, then locked eyes with the old man.

“My ambitions aren’t particularly amazing. The main thing I’ve been trying to do here in the Moonrite Region is make a medicinal pill that can get rid of the curse. Especially for humans.”

That was the whole reason Xu Qing had traveled to the Bitter Life Mountains in the first place. He wanted to get into the Moonrebel Congregation so that he could find research information about the curse.

In response to his words, the water rippled and the old man’s facial expression flickered. If some other trial-taker had said something like that, he would call them out as a liar. But as the spirit automaton of the Moonrebel Congregation, he could sense certain things on Xu Qing, for instance, his cursequelling lozenge. He could tell that this person really was making progress toward the stated ambition.

A moment later, the old man waved his hand, causing the surface of the water to roil as a large pill furnace rose up.

“In this place you can easily *create something from nothing*

. Although everything you create will be illusory, you can have access to any ingredient or material you need.

“Your trial will begin here with a concocting session. Time flows differently here than in the outside world, so don’t feel the need to track it. Create a medicinal pill that can reduce the curse by at least twenty percent and you will pass the assessment.”

With that, the old man disappeared.

Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed as he looked at the pill furnace. After a moment, he approached to inspect it. His heart started pounding as he realized that the pill furnace seemed real in every aspect. It didn’t seem illusory at all.

“This place can create anything?” Xu Qing murmured. “I need ten lifespan flowers!”

The moment the words left his mouth, ripples flowed out on the water as ten water drops rose up and floated to Xu Qing. Along the way, the drops rippled and transformed into ten lifespan flowers. Whether it was the fragrance of the flowers or their medicinal strength, they seemed completely real in every way.

Moved, Xu Qing studied them for a while, then put one in his mouth, chewed, and swallowed.

It’s so realistic. Even the medicinal effects. That said, I can sense that they don’t really exist. But it does feel like I consumed it. This place clearly has the ability to alter one’s perceptions, although it’s different from what the Heir Apparent can do.

The latter can use his power whenever he wants to affect the world around him. But here, it’s like some of that type of authority was placed here to use like a tool! It also seems more domineering.

Looking around again, he marveled at how amazing this place was. Then he started thinking about some of the difficulties he’d faced so far in working on his cursequelling lozenges.

Because of the environment in the Moonrite Region, there are a lot of medicinal plants that don't grow here....

Eyes gleaming, Xu Qing said, "1,000 stalks of one-hundred-year-old earthsole benevolence bamboo. 3,000 blades of skymist immortal cagegrass! 10,000 immature leaves from a dragonsoar tree that's been struck by lightning! And I need cloudmist quasi-illusion flowers, nine-wither seven-wilt weed, and thousand-year-old mulberry root...."

Even in Sea-Sealing County, precious materials like this would be considered very rare. But as Xu Qing rattled off dozens of different medicinal ingredients... they popped up instantly. Delighted, Xu Qing went on to list over a hundred different ingredients. There were some ingredients that didn't come out as he expected. But all he had to do was describe their appearance and medicinal properties, and they would form anew. After making various adjustments, he had a huge collection of plants and vegetation that conformed exactly to his requirements.

Xu Qing was deeply moved. He was obviously in a location that would be a dream to any alchemist. After taking all of the rare medicinal plants and studying them closely, he started concocting according to his train of thought. Failures didn't matter. He would just start over.

There was no limit to the medicinal plants he had access to. Because he didn't have to worry about waste, Xu Qing happily focused on research. Every single theory or idea he had was tested.

I'm already going in the right direction with my cursequelling lozenges. Concocting a version that will reduce the curse by twenty percent shouldn't be a problem. In fact, I might be able to make one that's even better than that. However, there's something else about this place that I can't forget. It can make... poisonous plants!

His eyes burned with passion.

Any poisonous plant I can imagine is available here! They're not real. But perception is reality. And I can still hone my instincts here. In that case, I should be able to finally complete the process of getting poison into my gaze!