

## Timescape 651

Chapter 651: Cultivating the Taboo God Poison Gaze (part 1)

As Xu Qing was enthusiastically pursuing his train of thought, the Captain was on another lake. He was dressed in a black robe and had his hands clasped behind his back as he looked out into the void. His expression was wistful, as if he were simply enjoying the sights and thinking about the past. Shortly after, he sighed, a sound filled with mixed emotions as it drifted out in all directions.

“The heaven and earth here,” the Captain murmured. “The plants and vegetation. Everything. It’s all so familiar.”

“Are you blind?” a cold voice said before the sound of the Captain’s voice even faded into nothing. “There’s no heaven or earth here. There are no plants or vegetation. The Imperial Sovereign created this location. It’s a void from beginning to end.”

The Captain blinked a few times. His facial expression didn’t change, and he didn’t betray even a hint of embarrassment at having been seen through. Inside, he was thinking, *You crappy little spirit automaton. I was uttering an enchantment, you idiot.*

The enchantment was complete, so the Captain suddenly looked up and said, “I’ve already decided about my ambition for the trial!”

The water rippled beneath his feet as the old man in white looked at him coldly. “State your ambition.”

Looking very haughty, the Captain said, “My ambition is to rescue all living beings in the Moonrite Region from the sea of bitterness. I will lead them to fight back against the red moon. And then, just like the Imperial Sovereign of old, I will execute Crimson Mother, devour hēr, unite everyone, and found a new world!”

The old man in the mirror didn’t react in any way. He seemed unmoved. However, a frigid energy spread out from his feet, filling the lake. “How will you do that?”

“That’s simple. First I’m going to become the Archbishop of Moonrebel. And then I have a whole series of steps to go through. By the way, I have a second ambition. I’m going to change the name of the Moonrite Region. It will be... the Heavenly Ox Region!”

The Captain’s eyes shone with dedication, and his voice echoed with pride.

The white-robed old man said nothing, and the frigid energy grew stronger as it slowly surrounded the Captain.

The Captain was pleased to see that, yet was also thinking that he hadn’t laid it on thick enough. After all, that frigid energy was spreading too slowly.

“I’m not finished!” he said loudly. “I have a third ambition. Ultimately, I’m going to eradicate that broken face in the dome of heaven. Then I’ll become the newest Ancient Emperor in Revered Ancient, and I’ll conquer the entire mainland! I’ll smash

the holy lands with my fists and crush Brilliant Heaven with my feet. Countless species will bow to me, and the many heavens will prostrate to me.”

At this point, the Captain was so excited that he threw his head back and laughed heartily.

As he laughed, the frigid energy exploded, rushing toward him and surrounding him in the blink of an eye. It only took a moment for him... to turn into an ice sculpture. As a sculpture, he still maintained the laughing posture. He looked truly mad. Then he slowly sank down into the lake, ultimately disappearing into the void...

Clearly, the Moonrebel Congregation’s spirit automaton took his ambitions to be a scam, and thus sealed him as a punishment.

Back at the other lake, Xu Qing was getting very excited.

After some thought, he couldn’t come up with any reason not to experiment with his taboo poison. His only concern was whether or not the spirit automaton would realize what he was up to. After all, it would be a case of using the trial to achieve a personal desire. In order to forestall any misunderstandings, Xu Qing decided that the best thing would be to start by working on the cursequelling lozenge, then use that as a cover to do additional work. That way, if he were called out, he would at least have a way to explain things away.

With that, he waved his hand, causing a massive amount of medicinal plants to fly into his hands. He prepared each plant differently. He extracted sap from some, deveined others, catalyzed some, and grafted yet others.

The foundational pills he started working with were the cursequelling lozenge he had concocted on the outside. Those pills could reduce the curse by about ten percent, and he had concocted quite a few of them in his spare time recently.

As he started working with them again, he found that by adding the medicinal plants from the trial, the transformations that would occur were partly real and partly illusory. However, the lake itself ensured that whatever ingredients were added to a pill would fuse perfectly with it.

Most importantly of all, each medicinal plant was perfect in every way, which made the concocting process go a lot more smoothly.

If he needed something, he just asked for it, and it would appear instantly. If a given ingredient wasn’t old enough, he could just add age to it. If the medicinal effect wasn’t right, he could simply switch it out for another ingredient. All of the theoretical knowledge he had built up was now being employed all at the same time. He was even able to summon medicinal plants that he had never even laid eyes on before. Thanks to that, his skill in plants and vegetation advanced by leaps and bounds.

From a distance, it was possible to see Xu Qing seated crosslegged, his hands dancing back and forth as masses of medicinal plants swirled around him. As the various medicinal plants were catalyzed, the pill’s ability to reduce the curse increased. In fact, it was already getting close to the twenty percent point.

Seeing that got Xu Qing very enthused. Now he was sure that his previous research direction had been correct.

The main theory behind using plants and vegetation to reduce the curse effects was the principle of *fighting poison with poison*.

For one thing, the pills already contained some of Xu Qing's violet moon power as their foundation, or you could say, the source of their power. Another factor was that the plants and vegetation had all come to exist within the invasion of the broken face of the god. As a result, they all had very unique medicinal properties. Those medicinal effects all contained certain levels of mutagen.

By using the dao of plants and vegetation imparted by Grandmaster Bai, he could use the technique of *fighting poison with poison* to suppress Crimson Mother's curse.

Of course, that was easy to say. But to actually pull it off required a lot of experience and flexibility. And outside of this trial, it would have been very difficult for Xu Qing to do this using his own power alone. The most difficult aspect would have been the ingredients. There just weren't enough precious materials for him to experiment with and eventually narrow down the correct formula. But here, that wasn't a problem.

Xu Qing's eyes shone brightly.

"Plants really are the key to opening the path to godhood," he murmured. Of course, Torchlight had come to the same conclusion.[1]

In that manner, time passed.

Seven days passed in the trial, although on the outside it was only two hours. Most people would have no way of knowing about that. But because of the sundials inside of Xu Qing, and their gnomons, he was able to spot the changes to time.

For every two hours that pass outside, seven days pass in here. In other words, a day on the outside is almost three months in here?

Xu Qing was surprised at how powerful this place was. However, he also got the impression that it wasn't exactly as the old man had said. There wasn't unlimited time for the trial. There would definitely be an ending point.

It's not as if I can just stay in here forever... there's definitely a time limit.

With that thought in mind, Xu Qing switched pill formulas. Although it looked like he was still doing the same concocting work as before, the reality was that for every seven or eight plants he summoned, he would slip in a poisonous plant.

And when he had enough, he started working on a poison pill.

"Dropmoon crushstar leaf. Ninenether spirit centipede root. Undying zombiehowl blood...."

Xu Qing kept his facial expression under control and suppressed the excitement he felt in his heart. After summoning the various poisonous plants he needed, he started concocting poison pills. They were pills that, despite all of his progress in the dao of poison over the years, he had never been able to experiment with because of lacking the ingredients. As he worked, he felt increasingly relaxed. This place really was a holy land for alchemy cultivators.

Thanks to the work he was doing, his skill with plants and vegetation was increasing. He didn't limit his practice to rare poisonous plants. He summoned other precious and unique ingredients. After all, everything he could ever want was available at his fingertips. He even attempted to craft some poisonous animals, but sadly, this place couldn't create living beings. That was a bit disappointing.

However, he still had lots of plants and vegetation to work with. Days began to pass, and Xu Qing concocted more and more types of poison: jadespirit germgrain powder; yin-extinction rouge-crimson pills; three-headed zhen-feather pellets; cry of the thousand-nights deceased souls; heart-breaking soul-shattering serum; flameburn thundersoar powder; quinine suicide poison; halfside month; sevenbreath laughter; yangfire face; nine serenities bridge.

Xu Qing looked down at all of the multi-colored concoctions of various sizes. He wished he could take all of these medicines with him when he left.

With these poisons... my battle prowess would be far, far higher.

In the end, he could only sigh. Obviously, it wasn't realistic to hope he could take the poisons out of the trial. Finally, he started consuming them to see how they worked.

Instantly, a tremor passed through him as the poison effects erupted. Around then, the surface of the mirror lake rippled, and the old man in white appeared.

Chapter 651: Cultivating the Taboo God Poison Gaze (part 2)

Looking at Xu Qing expressionlessly, the old man said, "Those pills are fake. Consuming them won't do anything."

Xu Qing opened his eyes and looked at the old man, all while committing to memory the feeling of consuming the pills. "I've reached a bottleneck in my curse pill project. I need to make headway in another direction first. Therefore, even if these pills are fake, I can still learn something from their behavior that might be able to get me past this bottleneck."

The old man looked deeply at Xu Qing, then glanced at the collection of multicolored pills spread out in front of him.

Xu Qing took a deep breath, picked up one of the pills, then put it in his mouth and continued with the same work from before.

In that manner, half a month passed.

Xu Qing had already concocted about ninety percent of the poison medicines and poison pills he had locked in his memories. He even managed to create some new ones. As he consumed more pills, his pupils dilated until they eventually spread out to cover the whites of his eyes, leaving his eyes pitch black.

In the following days, the old man in white came out on a few occasions to watch.

At first, he didn't understand what Xu Qing was doing. After all, the pills were all fake. So what was the point of consuming so many of them? But then... he noticed what was happening with Xu Qing's eyes, and the old man came to realize.

The plants, vegetation, and pills are all fake. But the feelings they impart are real. This kid... is memorizing the sensation of consuming all of those plants and pills! He's using his memory to plunder the essence of this place!

The old man's facial expression was no longer apathetic. Instead, he seemed a bit excited, but at the same time, angry. "The trial ends in two hours! If you can't finish by then, you'll be punished by being sealed!"

Xu Qing's black eyes glittered. He was now very close to being finished. He just had one more thing to do. After a slight nod, he closed his eyes, performed a double-handed incantation gesture, and then summoned numerous poisonous plants.

In the blink of an eye, thousands appeared. Xu Qing didn't immediately begin concocting. Instead, he opened his mouth and sent the pills streaming inside. Some of them he crushed, creating a cloud that surrounded him. A howl escaped Xu Qing's lips as the power of taboo poison exploded.

The white-robed man was visibly surprised, and came to the conclusion that this trial-taker had clearly become unstable. With the wave of his hand, he sent frigid energy expanding from beneath him to surround Xu Qing.

As the frigid energy built up, the sealing power within it started to stretch toward Xu Qing. Cracking sounds rang out from the lake water as it froze. The frigid energy was just about to completely cover him.

But then the poisonous miasma around Xu Qing swept out in all directions. Xu Qing became like a black hole, instantly sucking in all of the miasma. As the miasma disappeared, Xu Qing became clear. And then he opened his eyes! His pitch black eyes were like bottomless pits. And anyone who looked into them would feel like those pits were looking back at them. They were incomparably deep, and seemed to contain the darkness of countless ancient nights. Anyone who looked at them would be shaken to the core. Most shocking of all was that his gaze... contained mutagen!

It was a unique mutagen that caused whoever he looked at to be instantly infected by taboo poison, including both their body and their soul. It was a taboo poison gaze!

The old man shivered as a black stain appeared on the surface of the mirror lake, which spread like ink.

"What incredible gall!" the old man roared. The water seethed, and frigid energy exploded everywhere.

But then Xu Qing retracted his gaze. Ignoring the surrounding frigid energy, he looked down at his right hand. A pill rested on his palm.

As his gaze came to be fixed on that pill, and he sent taboo poison power into it, the pill transformed. Its ability to reduce the curse skyrocketed. Xu Qing's taboo poison didn't just contain the curse of a god. It also contained all of the poisons he had ever consumed. And then that power had been gathered into his eyes before being sent into the cursequelling lozenge.

Granted, those poisons were illusory, but their effects could still be combined, balanced, and unleashed. The cursequelling lozenge's effectiveness rose sharply, passing the level of twenty percent, bursting past thirty percent, and continuing even past that.

In the end, the pill had a violet color. As the frigid energy closed in, Xu Qing looked up.

“The pill’s finished. It can reduce the curse... by fifty percent!”

Even as the words left his lips, the frigid energy surrounded him. There were magical laws at play that he couldn’t resist, and thus, he quickly turned into an unmoving ice sculpture.

The medicinal pill in his hand dropped down onto the surface of the mirror lake, where it glittered with violet light. It almost seemed illusory. The pill melted into the icy surface, then dropped down into the hand of the old man. He looked closely at the pill, and his expression flickered. It started with shock, then turned into confusion, blankness, and finally, suspicion.

During his entire life as a spirit automaton, he had never seen a medicinal pill like this one. After a long moment passed, he exhaled onto the pill. That breath caused the pill to transform from illusory into corporeal.

Then he waved his hand, causing an ice sculpture to appear. The ice instantly melted, revealing a burly, middle-aged man. His cultivation base erupted with Void Returning power as he looked around, stunned. He initially seemed inclined to flee, but instead, clasped hands respectfully to the old man in white.

“Well met, exalted one.”

“Eat this,” the old man said apathetically, sending the medicinal pill floating over.

The burly man hesitated briefly, then chose to comply. He took the pill, examined it, then put it in his mouth and closed his eyes. All of a sudden, he started shaking from head to toe. His eyes widened, and then he coughed up a huge mouthful of crimson blood. Astonishingly, that blood contained strong curse elements and also an aura of decay. It converged on itself in midair, turning into the shape of a red moon, bursting with curse power.

The old man snorted coldly, and rumbling echoed out as immense pressure weighed down. Instantly, the blood turned into ice and dropped onto the lake, where the fluctuations there sealed it. Having accomplished that, the white-robed old man looked at the burly man, eyes glittering, and his expression changing once again, this time to astonishment.

The burly man was equally astonished. Having sensed the changes to himself, he exclaimed, “My curse... it’s been permanently reduced by half!! Exalted one, what pill was that?”

The old man didn’t answer the question. The flick of his sleeve sent frigid energy to surround the burly man and turn him into an ice sculpture again. He sank down into the lake.

Having accomplished that, the old man stood there in a daze for a long moment. Then he also sank down into the lake.

Shockingly, he reappeared a moment later right in front of the ice sculpture of Xu Qing. After looking at the sculpture for a while, he silently reached out and touched Xu Qing’s forehead. The ice melted into water vapor, which rapidly dispersed.

Xu Qing shivered and opened his eyes. “Well met, Senior.”

Xu Qing wasn't very surprised. It didn't matter what the old man thought of his behavior during the trial, the important thing was that he had proven through action that everything he was doing was part of the cursequelling lozenge process.

That final glance at the medicinal pill was what had truly raised it to a higher level.

The old man looked at Xu Qing with a strange look in his eyes. Finally, he said, "From ancient times until now, there have only been seventy-nine people who passed the first phase of the trial. Not many have come through during this epoch. Only three. You are the fourth. Those who came before you stated ambitions that they were able to see to fruition. However, none of them became the archbishop. All of them received a lesser rank.

"The reason for that is that passing this phase doesn't qualify you to become the Archbishop of Moonrebel.... In a moment, you'll find out why. You have half a year. If you can't succeed in that amount of time, you'll have no choice but to agree to the lesser rank."

The white-robed old man kept his eyes on Xu Qing as he pointed at the lake. The water seethed as a profoundly ancient stone door rose up. It was fully 3,000 meters tall, and seemed to have witnessed the passage of countless years. There was no need to open the door, as it was already cracked open enough for a person to slip inside.

Through the crack, Xu Qing could just barely make out an interior palace hall.

Xu Qing hesitated briefly, thinking back to what the white-robed old man had said, and wondering about the Captain. He clasped his hands respectfully.

"Senior, I came here together with another trial-taker. Did he pass?"

"His ambitions were too lofty, and thus, he reaped what he sowed." He stamped his foot down, and a ripple spread out, which revealed the dozens of ice sculptures below.

Xu Qing looked down and quickly spotted his Eldest Brother. He looked like he was in the middle of laughing maniacally. Xu Qing frowned. This wasn't exactly how he'd predicted things would turn out. And then he thought about what the Captain had said before they entered the trial. Given what Xu Qing knew about his Eldest Brother, it seemed about ninety percent certain that the Captain had intentionally gotten himself frozen.

"If you pass the trial," the old man said, "then you'll become the Archbishop of Moonrebel, and you'll have the right to give amnesty to the sealed individuals. Now, enter."

With that, the old man sank down into the lake and vanished from sight.

Now, Xu Qing was left alone with the huge stone door. Standing in front of it, he took a deep breath, then walked forward and entered through the crack in the door. He walked and walked. The palace hall got closer and closer. Light reached his eyes, filling his world.

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The Moonrebel Congregation was in an uproar.

A few hours ago, the Moonrebel Congregation's Paramount Temple had started shining with light. That attracted the attention of quite a few cultivators. There were even two vice-bishops present.

A few hours had passed since then, and as word spread, more and more cultivators showed up. Discussions raged everywhere.

Statues were visible as far as the eye could see. They included Grandmaster Pill Nine's followers, who had no idea that the event was actually precipitated by their revered grandmaster. However, that didn't diminish their attitude, and they continued their promotion efforts.

The leader of that group of followers was Xu Qing's neighbor, the burly, bare-chested man. At his direction, hundreds of Pill Nine followers circulated through the crowd, singing the grandmaster's praises.

As the clamor of activity filled the Moonrebel Congregation, Paramount Temple suddenly flared with a 30,000-meter pillar of light. It emanated a holy sensation as it climbed high. Everyone in the crowd noticed it.

"A success?"

"Don't tell me... the Moonrebel Congregation is going to have an archbishop??"

"This is so sudden...."

Such talk could be heard everywhere, and all the cultivators in the congregation were looking up into the air with keen anticipation. The countless statues all looked closely at the door of Paramount Temple as they waited for it to open.

However, after enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, the door didn't open, although the temple continued to shine brightly.

The faces of the old-timers darkened.

"Don't tell me that old story about the Moonrebel Congregation is actually true...."

Chapter 652: A Little Totem Beneath a Big One

The light shining from Paramount Temple in the Moonrebel Congregation led to a huge uproar. However, as time passed, and the door of the temple didn't open, things started to calm down. Anticipation began to turn into disappointment. Eventually, the light coming from Paramount Temple dimmed, leaving behind only a faint flickering. At that point, everyone felt like sighing.

"There's another legend in the Moonrebel Congregation. Supposedly, years in the past, Crimson Mother left a curse on the Moonrebel Congregation. Shē cursed it... to never again have an archbishop to lead it. That's why, from ancient times until now, though Paramount Temple has lit up a few times, no one has ever walked out of the main doors."

The two vice-bishops in the audience were both sighing.



“It looks like this fellow daoist passed the first phase. However, just like the first vice-bishop, as well as Old Fourth and myself, he didn’t pass the second phase, and thus couldn’t open the door.”

“I guess it means we’ll have another vice-bishop joining us soon. That’s also good news for us!”

As the two vice-bishops conversed, the rest of the cultivators in the Moonrebel Congregation sighed.

Although the arrival of a new vice-bishop was an exciting thing, all of them had been very hopeful upon seeing Paramount Temple light up. That was especially true considering there was a war going on. Because of that, everyone in the congregation wished that there was someone to truly lead them. They needed an archbishop to take charge, to lead them to a brilliant end in these last moments of their lives. But now, hope was turning into disappointment, and the mood in the Moonrebel Congregation sank.

Meanwhile, inside of Paramount Temple, Xu Qing opened his eyes. Paramount Temple was far larger than any ordinary temple. The grounds were magnificent, and it featured ninety-nine huge pillars supporting the massive, domed ceiling. Looking up, that ceiling had illusory suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies slowly orbiting around a huge, dazzling mirror. Astonishingly, the mountain that made up the Moonrebel Congregation was visible in that mirror.

What was more, there were a number of mysterious totems carved into the walls. Some were magical symbols, others depicted animals or even people. Every single one pulsed with hair-raising fluctuations.

At the far end of the temple was an altar, atop which was a shrine. Shockingly, inside of the shrine was a divine likeness. It was a statue that was different from all the other statues in the Moonrebel Congregation, in that it was simple and lacked a lot of decorations.

Based on the statue's appearance, it was a depiction of Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua. Right now, the eyes of that statue were open and looking around. They were Xu Qing’s eyes. Xu Qing studied the area and thought back to what happened earlier. He remembered walking through the slightly-opened stone door. Light surrounded him, and then he opened his eyes and found himself here.

“Paramount Temple?”

Xu Qing looked up at the mirror in the ceiling, and even through the reflection, he could sense the regret and disappointment of the cultivators in the Moonrebel Congregation. He remembered back when he first arrived in the Moonrebel Congregation, and how he had looked up at the nine temples on the top of the mountain, with Paramount Temple above them. Finally he looked away from the mirror and at the distant... main door of the temple.

The Moonrebel Congregation’s spirit automaton said that there’s a second phase. Is it that door?

Xu Qing started walking. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the statue of Li Zihua, which he was in, walked off the altar and toward the door. Stopping in front of it, he looked at it, his eyes narrowed. Then he experimentally lifted his hand and pushed. The door didn’t move at all. It was apparently locked tight and couldn’t be moved. Not even sound could pass through it.

Xu Qing frowned and activated his cultivation base before pushing again. But not even that did anything. The door wouldn't budge. He thought for a moment, and then his eyes turned pitch black. The power of taboo poison poured through his gaze and onto the door. His violet moon raged, and his god trove rose. Blood sprayed out of him everywhere before turning into a blood vortex.

Finally, the door made a noise. And yet, it didn't move. Xu Qing's expression flickered slightly as he backed up. The moment he did, the door suddenly flared with red light as a totem appeared that was just as large as the door itself. The totem was a blood-drenched figure holding an eyeball in each of its hands. It looked vicious and evil, yet at the same time, it emanated a holy sensation. It was none other than Crimson Mother.

A tremor passed through Xu Qing. Based on the fluctuations of his violet moon, he could sense Crimson Mother's aura. It was as if this totem... had actually been created by Crimson Mother.

Why would the Moonrebel Congregation's Paramount Temple have a sealing mark from Crimson Mother in it? Is this the second phase?

Something seemed off about the whole thing. It didn't seem like the second phase of the assessment at all. Rather, it seemed like Crimson Mother had left her mark here.

Maybe there isn't a second phase at all. Perhaps an archbishop could have come along at any time. It's just that the trial-takers all got stopped here. Without removing Crimson Mother's seal, you can't open the door, and without doing that, you can't become the archbishop.

After coming to an understanding of what seemed to be going on, he walked up to the door again and examined it closely. He even carefully sent some violet moon power out. Unfortunately, the door seemed to be extremely sensitive to the violet moon power, and it resulted in instant fluctuations.

Eventually, Xu Qing retracted the violet moon power and focused on using his pitch black eyes and their power of poison invasion. A few days later, a constant outflow of taboo poison power enabled Xu Qing to get a general understanding of the totem on the door.

As that understanding came to him, his facial expression went from curious to very serious. That was because, thanks to his taboo poison, he was able to sense that all of the temples on the mountain were constantly emitting invisible streams of energy.

The streams of energy couldn't be detected by anyone, and they were all feeding into the totem. As for what exactly that meant, Xu Qing wasn't entirely sure for the time being.

What was even more curious was that he could sense that, beneath the very large totem, on the bottom right-hand side, there was a small totem, though it was difficult to see clearly. Unless Xu Qing used his taboo poison to cover the larger Crimson Mother totem, then used his violet moon power to agitate it, then he couldn't see the smaller one. The general appearance of that totem was what had caused a curious expression to appear on his face.

It looked exactly like the Captain.

The moment Xu Qing realized what he was looking at, he noticed that the Captain was secretly munching on the totem of Crimson Mother. Although he only took one nibble at a time, he was gobbling down those pieces like a mad dog. Stranger still was that every time he took a bite, the totem would repair itself....

After some thought, Xu Qing projected some words into the small totem. *“Eldest Brother?”*

When the fluctuations reached the small totem, it suddenly looked up with crazy eyes. *“Little Ah Qing! I finally found you. I knew you’d show up eventually!”*

The Captain was very excited to have sensed Xu Qing. With that, he struggled, causing blue light to flare before he finally appeared at the bottom right of the door. He looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked back at him. *“Eldest Brother, what... are you doing here?”*

Looking very pleased with himself, the Captain laughed. *“What do you think? Surprised? This is the plan I mentioned to you before. I prepared everything very thoroughly. After entering the trial, I intentionally provoked the spirit automaton so that he turned me into an ice sculpture and sank me down into the lake.*

*“There, I was able to get my hands on all the things I left behind here years ago. I bypassed the trial and came right here to this door. All I have to do is open the door, and I’ll receive power over the Moonrebel Congregation! I’ll be the Archbishop of Moonrebel!*

*“Once I succeed, I can use all the power of the Moonrebel Congregation to find all of my dismembered body parts from my past lives. And then, finally, I can take care of Crimson Mother!”*

After hearing that, Xu Qing looked at the Captain in the tiny totem, and then at the much larger Crimson Mother totem. He sighed.

*“How have things worked out?”*

The Captain suddenly looked both embarrassed and angry. *“Something very strange happened, little Ah Qing. How could I have guessed that Crimson Mother would be so crafty? I knew about hēr sealing this totem here. But after my past life perished, and I got reincarnated in another region, shē actually placed more seals here!*

*“What the hell? Do you have any idea what that means, little Junior Brother? I mean, there’s one specific seal designed to protect against chewing!!*

*“I have no alternatives. I just have to keep chewing, slowly but surely. Normally speaking, I would have been finished already, and would already be the Archbishop of Moonrebel. But now I have no choice but to take a bit longer. Thankfully, I came prepared: you’re here, which means we have a much better chance of succeeding. If the two of us bros work together, we can easily devour Crimson Mother’s seals! And then we can become the Archbishops of Moonrebel!”*

Upon hearing that, Xu Qing nodded. He wasn’t interested in being the leader of the Moonrebel Congregation, but considering how important it was to his Eldest Brother, he decided to give a helping hand.

*“Eldest Brother, based on what I can sense, Crimson Mother’s totem is absorbing power from outside. That must be the source of its power.”*

The Captain smiled. "It's all part of my plan. You see, that's the flame of faith created by hope. All cultivators who come to the Moonrebel Congregation have hope in them. Based on the research I did in my past life, I can say with certainty that Crimson Mother wants it.

"Years ago, I came to suspect that the reason why the Moonrebel Congregation has been allowed to stay in existence, and the reason why Crimson Mother gives them freedom, is because of that.

"However, Crimson Mother is asleep right now. Therefore, the flames will have to wait until shē wakes up. What's more, fire... has two sides. One is the side that can make you warm, the other is the side that can burn you up.

"That's the reason why I came here only after our performance was broadcast to the Moonrite Region. I wanted that hope to be burning a bit brighter. That way, when we add some fuel to the fire, it will explode and burn away Crimson Mother's seals. Then with a bit of chewing from me, we'll succeed!

"Right now we just need that oil! Little Ah Qing, if things work out as I've planned, then that oil... will show up within the month."

#### Chapter 653: The Voice of the Broken Face

People who had passed the first phase of the assessment had a lot of freedom. They could come and go as they pleased in their attempts to open the door of Paramount Temple. They had half a year to do so. Therefore, after settling things with the Captain, Xu Qing chose to go back. His plan was to wait for the 'oil' that the Captain mentioned, and also to get used to his taboo poison gaze.

As for the Captain, his true form was sealed in the mirror lake. He had appeared in Paramount Temple as a soul body, and thus couldn't leave. The Captain didn't seem to mind. He was more than happy to stick around endlessly gnawing on the Crimson Mother totem.

And that was how the days passed.

The war in Moonrite Region heated up. The Red Moon Cathedral violently cracked down on any uprising, but the resistance movement only grew.

Fifth Sister and Eighth Sib had not yet returned. The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom frequently went out, though it was hard to say what exactly they were busy doing.

The Green Spirit Pharmacy wasn't as busy as it had been before. However, Wu Jianwu was just as passionate with his poetry, Ning Yan constantly scrubbed the floor, and Li Youfei was now pulling double duty as he served as the guard. Nethersprite and Patriarch Inkrule were fully aware that the Heir Apparent was gone a lot, but neither of them dared to attempt escaping.

Xu Qing also took plenty of opportunities to leave the medicine shop and find places in the Bitter Life Mountains to test out his taboo poison gaze. He was currently speeding through the mountains, not slowed down at all by the sun hanging at his waist or the unusual hat. He had long since grown used to both of those things. Even bearing their weight, he was still capable of his normal speed. In fact, he was actually a bit faster than before.

Thus, he was a blur of afterimages as he moved through the mountains. Eventually, he reached a valley. The cliff walls of the valley were full of holes, making them look almost like a honeycomb. They also pulsed with a sensation of decay. The lingering aura of taboo poison filled the area, making it so that any living being who got close would feel a sensation of deadly crisis, and would immediately go in the opposite direction.

This was the spot where Xu Qing had been practicing with his taboo poison gaze. After arriving, he checked to make sure the area was safe, then sat down cross-legged, closed his eyes, and regulated his breathing.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, his eyes opened. They were pitch black. In fact, if anyone were present to look at them, they would feel like they were looking into a bottomless pit. Whatever he looked at would start to rot. The power of taboo poison would build rapidly, to the point where everything would ripple and distort.

It was very similar to what happened when the eyes of the broken face opened. Of course, the effect was vastly less formidable for Xu Qing.

During Xu Qing's time in the Moonrite Region, he had been improving and growing constantly. If he went back to Sea-Sealing County now, all of his old friends would be completely shocked. However, such growth came with a price. Mixed emotions could be seen on his face right now. This was not his first time unleashing taboo poison here. And every time he did, his heart filled with complexity.

During god-glimpsing, I looked at the world with the eyesight of a god. It seemed different.

Right now, this valley still looked like a valley. However, instead of being made of rocks, it was made of innumerable corpses, both human and nonhuman. In fact, the entire world seemed to be made of corpses. Death was the main theme of everything. The gray wind off in the distance also looked different. It was the breath of a massive snake that filled the sky. And every time the snake moved, scales would fall off of its body and become ash that drifted to the ground.

It was just possible to see that it was snowing in the lands outside of the desert. It was made of blood droplets that drifted to the ground like goose feathers. Sadly, ninety-nine percent of cultivators couldn't see any of that.

And then there's the broken face in the sky.

Xu Qing looked up through the gray wind and red snow at the face.

Hē... had opened his eyes. However, the spot being looked at was somewhere else.

Different gazes reveal different worlds. But which one is real?

Eventually, he looked away and took out a desert scorpion to experiment on. The scorpion was only about three meters long. It trembled, not daring to fight back or struggle. It was as if Xu Qing was a god to it. When Xu Qing looked at the scorpion, it didn't actually look like a scorpion. It was a mass of glowing light that wriggled constantly. Eventually, it went dark and disappeared. If anyone had been watching the scene, they would have seen the scorpion... transform into a pool of blood.

Xu Qing lifted his hand and looked at it. It was still a hand. However, there was a gauzy substance covering it that seemed to be trying to absorb his flesh. Some of it was even trying to burrow into him. It should have hurt, yet Xu Qing didn't feel anything. He knew what those wisps were.

“Mutagen...” he murmured. Xu Qing had dealt with mutagen since he was born, but it was only after starting to practice cultivation that he understood what it was.

Oftentimes, the higher one’s cultivation base, and the further away from the mortal world someone got, the less they paid attention to the pain of mutagen. Furthermore, the threat of mutation that came with cultivation grew increasingly irrelevant.

However, Xu Qing was well aware that, to mortals, mutagen was still a never-ending torment. The curse in Moonrite Region was part of that. Xu Qing knew that he couldn’t afford to discount mutagen just because his shadow could devour it. As of this moment, he was once again sensing mutagen. Mutagen was everywhere in this world.

Mutagen. It’s alive....

Xu Qing sent his senses out into the world.

The giant snake in the sky is made from the mutagen of the high god that the Captain made a deal with. That’s also the source of the wind. The red snow is Crimson Mother’s mutagen. The substance on my hand is local mutagen, of an unknown origin. There are other places where there’s even more mutagen, also of different varieties. Anywhere a god has passed through, or even looked at, will have mutagen.

There wasn’t just a single type of mutagen.

Fundamentally speaking, my taboo poison is also a type of mutagen. In the past, my taboo poison could harm any and all living beings. But now, anything I look at... is invaded.

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered, and the substance on his hand shivered and turned black, then fell off, revealing his skin. Now he could see a black ghost face on his skin where the gauzy substance had been.

Evil. Sinister. Deathly. Inauspicious. That was what the ghost face emanated. It was the taboo poison from a god’s gaze. It could be one ghost face, or it could be many. All were mutagen, and all came from Xu Qing’s gaze.

And to anything with a lower level of personhood, it... could be called a curse.

Xu Qing closed his eyes, then opened them and looked at his shadow. The shadow trembled and sent out fawning fluctuations. A strange expression could be seen on Xu Qing’s face. This wasn’t his first time using his taboo poison gaze to look at the shadow. And every time he did... it looked different.

A few days ago, when he did it the first time, the shadow looked like a tree. The second time he looked at it, it was a coffin. The third time, it was an eye.

This time, it had changed again. It looked like a person facing away from him. The person facing away from him was tall and muscular, mighty and emanating a sensation of violence and aggression. A moment later, it changed again. This time it looked like a pool of ink surrounding Xu Qing.

He looked away.

I wonder what the broken face’s mutagen looks like.

He was suddenly struck with the desire to find out the answer to that question. However, he also got the feeling it would be very dangerous. After some thought, he squashed his curiosity about that. There was plenty of mutagen in the world, and getting too curious about things like that could be extremely dangerous.

“You want to know about the broken face’s mutagen?” the Heir Apparent asked. He had appeared out of nowhere, and was hovering just overhead. Princess Brightblossom was with him.

“Well met, Seniors,” Xu Qing said, quickly clasping hands and bowing.

Princess Brightblossom nodded in response. “If you want to take a look, go ahead. That way you’ll know what you’ll have to deal with later on.”

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered. After some thought, he unhesitatingly flew out of the valley and up into the air. Higher and higher he went, until he passed the huge snake in the sky, and went beyond the red snow. Soon he was high enough that he could feel the mutagen of the broken face.

*“Hamabirah, dotadoya, gajarah, dodiya....”*

All of a sudden, the sound of a chant filled Xu Qing’s sea of consciousness. It couldn’t be heard, only seen, which seemed contradictory. And though he wasn’t sure how he knew, Xu Qing could tell that the sound wasn’t reaching him through his ears, but rather, his eyes. It was floating in his mind. At first, it sounded like a complicated enchantment. It started out faint, but eventually became an insane rumbling that boomed in his sea of consciousness. It kept repeating the same thing over and over again.

Xu Qing shivered. He felt like he was being superimposed over himself, as if his soul was about to leave his body, as if he were being ripped apart, as if he were fusing with the air around him. Everything blurred. A sense of deadly crisis rose within him, and he dropped down. Gruish mutations suddenly struck him. He felt like his organs were alive, and he could suddenly sense his own past around him. The memories of the past were like illusory images that were about to become real.

#### Chapter 654: A Kingdom of Gods

Perhaps using the word ‘like’ wasn’t appropriate.

That was because the memories of the past really were transforming from illusory into reality. And if those scenes became truly real, they would replace the present. As of this moment, time was elusive. It no longer flowed forward. Yet it didn’t flow backward either. It was like a spinning vortex.

Within that vortex existed Xu Qing’s past, present, and future. However, the scenes of the future were blurry and impossible to see clearly. And that was even truer now as everything was mixing together. Even the word ‘time’ seemed to be losing meaning. Perhaps ‘time’ was really just an invention of intelligent beings to give meaning to life. Maybe ‘time’ didn’t even need to be defined. After all, any such definitions couldn’t be truly comprehensive.

Xu Qing’s mind spun as this strange notion occurred to him. Everything was being turned upside down. To his eyes, the world was transforming again.

Everything seemed blurry at first, but then he saw a host of indescribable gods moving through the void, stirring up numerous vortexes that were defined as time. Thēy all looked different, and though Xu Qing could see them, thēy couldn't be described with words. It was almost as if it wasn't permitted to describe thēm.

Xu Qing saw innumerable stars, all of them in the process of collapsing. There were also suns and moons forming. However, all of them ended up being taken by the gods and placed onto thēir bodies as decorations, or turned into weapons or tools that boggled Xu Qing's mind. The colors and shapes of the times were beyond his ability to understand.

It was the same with the starry sky. Xu Qing saw one god using a star like a brush to paint it. In the areas being painted, the starry sky expanded and got larger. It was an outrageous scene, and it seemed completely unrealistic. A moment later, everything blurred away. It was almost as if everything from before had only existed in Xu Qing's mind.

It was unfathomable and impossible to understand. Xu Qing's sea of consciousness trembled. He felt like he couldn't trust what he had just seen. He had seen some sort of imperial figure wearing an emperor's robes, their face a mask of pain and struggle. However, in the presence of gods, resistance was meaningless. It was as if the chanting of the god, the enchantment, had opened up a grotesque and variegated world.

In that place... what he understood as time had a different meaning in the hearts of the gods. What he knew about space had another definition in the senses of the gods. What he grasped of consciousness wasn't actually real in the eyes of the gods. In fact, everything he could see was simply what the gods subconsciously allowed him to see. It was subconscious because thēy wouldn't do so on purpose.

All of it was causing Xu Qing's consciousness to crumble. Suddenly, a figure appeared in front of him, like a towering mountain. The figure blocked out everything, covering the chaos, and breaking his line of sight.

Finally, Xu Qing's senses began to recover. He slammed down onto the ground, his heart racing as waves of shock assailed his mind. Unable to stand in place, he staggered back, blood spraying out of his mouth. His expression flickered wildly as he looked up and saw Princess Brightblossom standing protectively in front of him.

"Did you sense it?" she asked, looking over her shoulder at him.

He took in a shaky breath. His mind and heart still felt like they were being struck by countless lightning bolts. Eyes flickering with shock and amazement, he took a moment to recover. He nodded. "What was hē saying? I feel like the things I saw... were things I didn't see. I can remember them, but it also seems like I've forgotten. All of the images. Everything. It was all turned upside down."

Xu Qing shivered as if from cold. As he thought about what he had just experienced, he felt a coldness that seeped into his bones and seemed to freeze his soul....

"Hē's counting down," Princess Brightblossom said softly. "After the broken face of the god arrived, cultivation became helplessly bitter. And also a dead-end path.



“In this world, mutagen is everywhere. In some cases you can sense it, but in other cases it’s impossible to discern. It invades all living things and transforms them inside and out. Sometimes it turns things into ashes. Sometimes it turns them into a font of evil.

“The mortals... have it just as bad. Their lives are changed, and they have no choice but to adapt. For cultivators the situation is even more serious. At low levels, once you reach the tipping point of mutation, you either die or turn into a mutant beast. In the middle levels, cultivators feel blessed because they think they can keep the mutagen under control. Ignore it. But the reality is that they only feel blessed because their perceptions are limited, and they don’t understand the truth.

“Eventually, when your cultivation reaches a high level... your perceptions are altered, and everything changes. Like us.... What you saw now for just a moment is what we deal with constantly.”

Princess Brightblossom seemed very tired as she spoke. Next to her, the Heir Apparent sighed. Looking at Xu Qing, he shook his head.

“It is what it is. And who knows, maybe it’s not real after all. Years ago my father said something interesting. ‘We believe thēy’re outsiders. But is that really the case? Maybe to thēm... we’re the outsiders. Perhaps this place has always been... a kingdom of gods.’ Not even I know for sure.” The Heir Apparent shook his head.

Xu Qing didn’t say anything.

“You don’t need to worry about such questions right now. It’s good enough that you just got a taste. That will help you understand the world more clearly.” The Heir Apparent clasped Xu Qing’s shoulder. “Remember, going forward, until you’ve made all the proper preparations, don’t use your taboo poison gaze on the broken face. Hē... is paramount above all, and should not be looked at directly. Now, let’s go home.”

Nodding silently, Xu Qing left the valley with the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom. Together, they returned to the Green Spirit Pharmacy.

For the next half a month, his experience in the valley continued to remain in his thoughts. He still couldn’t wrap his mind around what it all meant.

One day, the Captain told him that the ‘oil’ had arrived.

The red moon was getting closer and closer to rising, making it even more prominent in the sky above Moonrite Region. The redness of the sky was only growing more intense, and the light it cast down made the entire region a bright red color. The tideflow power exerted by the moon grew stronger. Mountains collapsed constantly, causing loud rumbling sounds to echo out.

The cathedral cultivators who exercised faith in Crimson Mother experienced blessings to their cultivation base, and their god magics grew more terrifying.

The five resistance armies led by the five vice-bishops of the Moonrebel Congregation were no longer able to maintain a deadlock with the Red Moon Cathedral. The resistance armies were starting to crumble. The situation was getting anxious.

And to *add hail to snow*, the closer the red moon got to rising, and the stronger the tideflow power grew, something very gruish happened to the Moonrite Region.

It got bigger. The lands cracked apart, and then new slabs of land rose up, while simultaneously, huge chasms opened up. It was the same with the mountains. Mountains crumbled, but new mountains rose up. Such new locations abounded with the aura of a god.

What was more, in the new mountains, new lands, and new chasms, a group of unique entities awoke. They were physically repulsive, resembling monsters like demons or devils. They lacked intelligence, and were instead governed by madness. They were like bugs or beasts, and they came out in great numbers. Every single one pulsed with the fluctuations of a god. Even the smallest of them was a few meters tall, with some being dozens of meters in height, and others, hundreds. They were absolutely ferocious, and also hungry. Wherever they went, they ate everything they could, even dirt or rocks. Of course, it went without saying that they preferred devouring living flesh and blood. They simply couldn't not eat. And they began to spread throughout the Moonrite Region. It seemed that, to them, they were attending a banquet. As all of these things happened, death was the order of the day.

The Moonrebel Congregation was even more bleak and desolate. Temples were going dark as their owners perished. Medicinal pills were now more important than ever before.

Although Xu Qing was in his little paradise in the Bitter Life Mountains, he continued to distribute pills. He wasn't charging anything for them now.

Unfortunately, there was no way to meet the demand. He was just considering a way to mass-produce more pills when something unexpected happened.

The Bitter Life Mountains trembled, causing huge rock slides as numerous mountain peaks collapsed. Vast chasms opened up. The epicenter was none other than the church temple of the Red Moon Cathedral. The locations that experienced such tumult throughout the region were always close to the church temples.

And though the desert wind stopped people from entering, it couldn't stop this. Then, countless vicious beings poured out like tidewaters. Insane howling filled the air.

The cultivators native to the desert who wanted to survive had no choice but to fight back. That was especially true of the Wind Guardians. Their entire species was on the move. Countless other organizations, both large and small, fought together against the insane monsters.

When the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom noticed that the mountains were trembling, they walked out of the medicine shop. Apparently, they had been waiting for this moment. Xu Qing followed.

"Xu Qing, do you see those monstrous entities? It's not a coincidence that they showed up. They're children of Crimson Mother who haven't developed intelligence

yet. They represent chaos. They're formed from superfluous aspects of Crimson Mother's physical form that were shed during godly ascension." As the Heir Apparent flew toward the chasms, he coolly said, "These are the real godchildren."

Xu Qing looked down into the mountains.

This was not his first time learning about this. Before leaving the Paramount Temple in the Moonrebel Congregation, the Captain had mentioned it. And this... was the oil he had talked about.

Chapter 655: Xu Qing's Forbidden Region, Howling Godchildren

They had magenta carapaces, were as stooped as a crescent moon, had triangular heads, and emanated a terrifying aura. They had six limbs with razor-sharp claws at the end, and long tails that made up about half their body and could smash through just about any obstacle. Running down each back, from head to the tips of the tail, was a row of crimson spikes that glowed with crimson light that matched the redness of the sky.

These were the godchildren. At the moment, they were pouring out of the chasms in the Bitter Life Mountains and were spreading through the mountain range. They were embodiments of chaos, insanity, and hunger. They ate anything in their path, and whenever they smelled flesh or blood, their eyes lit up with greed, and they would follow that scent wherever it led them, usually into the sects or cities that filled the Bitter Life Mountains.

From high in the air, they created red rivers snaking through the mountains. Horrifying howls filled heaven and earth.

When cultivators heard them, they shivered in dread. When mortals heard them, they wallowed in terror. And in the end, mortals and cultivators alike knew that there was no escape.

A huge battle was about to start in the Bitter Life Mountains. One organization after another activated their spell formations. Cultivators shouted rallying cries as they prepared to defend against the monsters.

The entire Wind Guardian species were ready to fight. The red tide swept toward them. Clearly, some of the godchildren had been thrown into a frenzy by the smell of flesh, and were rushing forward with claws and fangs bared.

However, even as the trembling cultivators in the Bitter Life Mountains prepared to put everything on the line, and just as the fighting was about to break out, a cold harrumph rang down from the dome of heaven. It was a sound filled with astonishing mightiness, and sounded almost like thunder to the people in the mountains. In fact, they were so dazed they couldn't do anything except stand there. And before they could recover their senses, the monstrous godchildren shivered, looked up into the sky, and howled shrilly.

Their howls didn't do them any good. It was as if an invisible hand had fallen from the sky, covering the Bitter Life Mountains and exerting immense pressure on the godchildren. A boom rang out as countless godchildren exploded. Agonized shrieks could be heard as they were crushed into bloody pastes. None survived.

As the Bitter Life Mountains shook violently, the cultivators from the local sects and organizations looked up with wide eyes and pounding hearts. High in the sky, they saw three figures. The one who had just taken action was in the middle, and he looked like an old grandpa.

“Inkrule,” the Heir Apparent said.

The air rippled as Patriarch Inkrule teleported into place. The moment he appeared, he clasped hands and bowed. “Your humble servant is here!”

The cultivators below noticed him. Most of them had seen Patriarch Inkrule before, and even those who had never seen him knew his name. In the Bitter Life Mountains, he was considered the best of the best.

“You lead people to take care of the rest of the beasts,” the Heir Apparent said.

“Your orders shall be followed!” Inkrule said loudly. He was feeling very excited and also very safe. He quickly dropped to the ground. Given his reputation, he experienced no resistance as he took charge of the local sects and led them to eliminate the godchildren.

The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom didn’t stick around. They continued on their way with Xu Qing. Before long, they arrived at the spot where the godchildren were coming from. It was a huge chasm that glowed with red light. Howling emerged from inside, as well as a sound like a thumping heartbeat.

The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom looked down into the chasm. Xu Qing did the same. They had seen a lot of godchildren along the way. Though the Heir Apparent had killed many, there were still plenty that he didn’t kill, and more were coming out.

“Xu Qing, you handle the ones on the periphery. Given your battle prowess, you should be able to hold your own for a while. Consider it another round of tempering.”

With that, the Heir Apparent looked at Princess Brightblossom. She nodded, and the two of them dropped into the chasm, quickly disappearing into its depths.

As soon as they were gone, Xu Qing turned his gaze onto the seething red tide below. The godchildren had already noticed him. To them, hunger was an instinct, and fear was rare. More than anything else, they were beings of chaos and madness.

Apparently, Xu Qing’s aura was delectable to them, driving them into deeper madness as they raced toward him, howling. Given their bloodline, they could slough off most magical techniques. And they were capable of shocking speed. What was more, the fluctuations of godliness on them could smash through just about any obstacle. They also had a very vigorous life force.

They were already closing in on Xu Qing from all directions. He faced the red tide expressionlessly. As it closed in, his eyes didn’t turn red, but rather, pitch black.

This is the perfect place to see how I’ve grown lately.

At the spot where he looked, the ground rippled and blurred. Mutagen flourished and the power of taboo poison erupted.

Within the affected area, dozens of godchildren howled in agony as their flesh rotted. The mutagen from the taboo poison had once enabled Xu Qing to plunder Crimson Mother’s essence, and from that it could be deduced that its personhood surpassed hēr. [1]

This was even better proof of that. These were Crimson Mother's children, and in addition to their chaos and madness, they possessed Crimson Mother's mutagen. But right now... they couldn't stand up to Xu Qing's taboo poison. Rumbling sounds mixed with screaming as the godchildren dissolved into pools of blood. The sight of it provoked the other surrounding godchildren, who flew up into the air toward Xu Qing.

His expression remained the same as before as he waved his hand. His golden crow tattoo sprang to life, forming in midair and releasing a roar along with black flames. Within the flames was a spear that pulsed with a taboo aura as well as terrifying fluctuations. Wherever it passed, the air shattered, and rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth. Any godchildren who got close were ripped to pieces and sucked into the spear.

The ground shook as godchildren for 3,000 meters in all directions screamed bitterly. They had extremely tough bodies, but right now, were very weak, and their amazing fluctuations of godliness were being crushed. None of their assets were useful, and were instead being crushed like dried weeds. When dealing with ordinary cultivators, they had incredible advantages. After all, ordinary cultivators would have to deal with mutagen invasions just from their presence. And their blood was poisonous.

But... with Xu Qing present, none of that mattered. They couldn't measure up to the poison. Nor could they match the personhood of the mutagen. The result was a foregone conclusion: this was going to be a massacre.

Xu Qing strode forward into the crowd of monsters, his gaze erupting with taboo poison, and the golden crow laying waste to everything around him. Daybreak light shone, wiping away any outside invasion and driving off any magical techniques. Occasionally, a projection of the Ghost Emperor mountain would send crushing pressure down from above. The heavenly dao bluegreen dragon swished through the air, madly devouring the godchildren.

Xu Qing was like the ambassador of death as he moved about, leaving behind nothing but mangled corpses. The only downside was that no one was present to witness it. Had there been, they would have been astonished to the ultimate degree.

Right now, Xu Qing hardly even resembled a cultivator. His pitch black eyes and completely expressionless face seemed more like that of a god.

After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, the entire area was so blurry that it was impossible to see things clearly. It seemed... that the place was transforming into a forbidden region. Of course, most forbidden regions were places of bitterness and suffering for intelligent species. In contrast, this forbidden region was full of screaming godchildren.

Gradually, the trembling godchildren shrank away, their fear so extreme that it suppressed their other instincts.

Xu Qing observed all of it calmly.

These godchildren can only be dealt with using god magic. Without the power of a god, a cultivator would have a very difficult time dealing with them. Each one is a source of mutagen. In that case, I wonder what my violet moon power will do.

Xu Qing closed his eyes, whereupon blood drops floated out from him. In the blink of an eye, Xu Qing himself disappeared, replaced by a giant blood-colored vortex. Red moon authority erupted

from within, along with a god trove. It became like a blood-colored canopy that spread out to cover all of the godchildren.

However, before anything else could happen... the godchildren started trembling. Ceasing their howling, they bowed their heads toward Xu Qing in the form of the blood canopy. They even whimpered. It sounded very strange when compared to their previous howling. The sound of it contained traces of intimacy and surrender.

Xu Qing's face appeared in the blood canopy as he looked down at the groveling godchildren. A moment later, Xu Qing's form appeared again. As he walked amongst the godchildren, they seemed incredibly meek, almost like pets. Some even offered their heads for him to walk along as a path.

The Heir Apparent said that these godchildren came to exist during Crimson Mother's godly ascension. That sounds like a bit of a generalization. In fact, I wonder if they actually aren't Crimson Mother's children, but rather, children of the red moon. What if they're actually random impurities that resulted when Crimson Mother seized the red moon?

Reaching out, he put his hand onto one of the godchildren's heads.

Chapter 656: Lord of Monsters

A gray wind swept sand through the dome of heaven. The entire world was dusky and cold. Down below on the ground, countless vicious and monstrous godchildren were no longer like agents of chaos. Their insanity had been suppressed, and they were prostrating low to the ground. It was a very impactful scene.

In front of them all stood Xu Qing, tall and straight, looking very calm in his black robe and black hair. As the wind stirred his hair, his pitch-black eyes glittered, and his robe swayed. Given the glistening pools of blood that lay around him, he looked like the lord of all monsters, coming to visit the world of mortals.

This lord of monsters looked at the godchild in front of him. His hand rested on its head, causing it to shiver in place, not daring to move. Face expressionless, he sent his divine sense into it.

The first thing he realized was that the submissive and respectful behavior of this godchild was something based on pure instinct. That was what was suppressing the chaos and madness in the thing.

Next, he sensed its hunger. It made him think of his god-glimpsing experience. Keeping his hand on the godchild's head, Xu Qing sent taboo poison out into it along with violet moon power. The godchild's flesh, which was normally so impervious, now just started to melt. Blood streamed down the godchild's face, splashing onto the ground, where it hissed as it melted into the dirt.

Then Xu Qing's right hand plunged into the godchild's flesh. The pain caused the godchild to shiver even more intensely, yet it still didn't dare to move. The red moon authority in Xu Qing was the most powerful suppressing force imaginable to this godchild.

They were manifestations of impurities, and thus, consuming him would benefit them. After a short time passed, Xu Qing shook his head and pulled his hand away. After looking around at the prostrating godchildren, Xu Qings eyes narrowed, and he took out a fragment. The moment it appeared, a majestic force swept out, causing bright colors to flash everywhere, and increasing the pressure weighing down in the area.

This was the gift the Heir Apparent had given Xu Qing back when they had just met. It was a fragment of a Smoldering Gods major world. The Captain had borrowed it when they captured Nethersprite, and had returned it when they brought her out to work in the Green Spirit Pharmacy. The fragment immediately unleashed a violent gravitational force that sucked in all of the tens of thousands of godchildren. It didnt miss a single one.

When the process was complete, Xu Qing put the fragment away and looked down into the chasm. There were no longer godchildren pouring out of it, and the howling was no more. The moment he looked inside, a stream of divine will emerged from within.

Xu Qing didnt immediately comply. He took a moment to confirm that the voice was authentic. Then he walked to the edge of the chasm and stepped off the edge.

He dropped down rapidly, taboo poison swirling in his eyes and blood surrounding him. As he descended, the mutagen levels rose. The walls of the chasm were covered with a rotting, viscous fluid, a mere whiff of which would spark the urge to vomit. Down below there was also a flickering red glow.

Eventually, Xu Qing reached a point where a barrier of flesh and blood blocked his path down. It wriggled, letting off a red glow that was strong with the aura of Crimson Mother. It seemed to be struggling to expand up, but there was an invisible force pushing against it that it couldnt resist. As a result, it had no choice but to slowly shrink down.

The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom hovered above it.

Turning to look at Xu Qing, the Heir Apparent said, This is the last line of defense before reaching the heart of this area. We plan to go in and retrieve something critical to rescuing our Ninth Sib. If we force open this barrier, Crimson Mother will sense it even though shes asleep, and conceal the item we seek. And so, Xu Qing, we need your authority to secretly create an opening.

Xu Qing nodded. He had guessed that something like this was coming. Now that he thought about it, he came to the conclusion that all the occasions recently in which the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom disappeared must have involved them coming here.

Dropping down to the barrier of flesh and blood, he reached down with his hand. As he did, the blood swirling around him converged on his fingertip, creating a dazzling convergence of red light. Then a drop of blood emerged from his fingertip and floated toward the barrier.

That drop of blood contained Xu Qings red moon authority, and it also pulsed with mutagen. In fact, it was even possible to see a very small red moon within it.

The barrier of flesh and blood shivered as Xu Qings blood sank into it. Then it split apart and stretched to the side, creating a very small opening. Without any hesitation, the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom turned into two streaks of shimmering light that shot inside.

Xu Qing didnt follow them. Instead, he backed up by about 300 meters. Before he could go any farther, a piercing shriek rang out from the barrier of flesh and blood. Then the barrier started withering.

The process lasted only about four or five breaths of time. At that point, the wall of flesh and blood collapsed into ashes. Revealed below was a huge, horrific cave. It was filled with a cistern of sticky blood, from which wafted a noxious stench of rot. Half-submerged in the middle of the blood was a large red crystal.

Countless eggs were visible in the blood cistern. Some were a few meters in size, others were dozens of meters. All were red. A portion of their number were intact, but some were broken open, leaving behind shell fragments floating on the surface of the liquid. If you looked closely, you could see through the outer shell of the intact eggs. Inside were vicious godchildren preparing to burst out into the open.

The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom were moving toward the blood-colored crystal. Upon nearing, they acted together to extract the crystal. With the crystal gone, the blood cistern started drying up. The struggling eggs rocked back and forth, and faint howls could be heard from within them.

Done. Lets get out of here. The Heir Apparent looked very pleased having taken the crystal. Next, he raised his hand as he prepared to crush the remaining eggs.

Seeing that, Xu Qing quickly said, Senior, I have a use for these godchildren.

The Heir Apparent looked at Xu Qing. Next to him, Princess Brightblossom nodded.

Xu Qing took out the world fragment, performed an incantation gesture and pointed out. A gravitational force sprang up and sucked all the eggs into the world fragment. That many godchildren would hopefully be enough oil for the Captain.

Lets go. The Heir Apparent flicked his sleeve to grab Xu Qing, and then the three of them returned to the outside. Once there, Princess Brightblossom pushed her hand down, causing intense rumbling sounds to drift out as the chasm collapsed. Innumerable boulders and soil crashed down, burying the place.

Just like that, the chaos in the Bitter Life Mountains was resolved rather simply. Xu Qing wasnt very surprised by how it turned out. After all, with a Smoldering God present, a cave of godchildren wasnt anything to get very worked up about.

To the cultivators of the Bitter Life Mountains, the event had a huge impact. They had been ready to fight to the death, only to have things end up very different than they expected.

Who could exterminate countless godchildren with the mere movement of a hand? Who could get Patriarch Inkrule to respectfully address himself as your humble servant? As for what cultivation base was involved, the answer was obvious.

*A Smoldering God....*



That was what all the cultivators were thinking, and the words smashed into their minds like lightning bolts, leaving them trembling. Then, after the last remaining godchildren were taken care of, they watched as Patriarch Inkrule went to the Green Spirit Pharmacy to act as host.

To the cultivators of the Bitter Life Mountains, that was astonishing to say the least.

The Green Spirit Pharmacy had always been a mysterious place, and was also fairly well-known in the area. After all, a lot of amazing things had happened there. Yet no one could have guessed that there would be a Smoldering God there. But today they understood. Now they knew that the Green Spirit Pharmacy... was the heart of the Bitter Life Mountains and the desert as a whole.

That understanding filled everyone with deep reverence. As a result, that ordinary mudbrick city became like a holy land to the people of the desert.

Of course, there were cultivators from the Moonrebel Congregation present, and therefore, everything that happened quickly started spreading. Before long, the resistance armies throughout the Moonrite Region had heard about it.

It caused quite a stir. Everyone had heard about the Bitter Life Mountains. But the gray wind that had appeared had isolated the desert, making it sort of like a mysterious paradise. Of course, some people had come to suspect that the God Decapitation Altar broadcast came from there. But for a Smoldering God to be located there was dumbfounding. Then people started connecting the dots with the God Decapitation Altar broadcast, and speculations began to spread about who that Smoldering God was.

Its the Heir Apparent!

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On a plain not so far away from the Greenhair Badlands, about a thousand flying ships were speeding through the air. Seated cross-legged on the lead ship was a middle-aged cultivator who was currently looking in the direction of the Greenhair Badlands. He looked weary and travel-worn, and was also injured. His expression was threatening without being angry, and he seemed old-fashioned and serious.

Fourth Vice-Bishop, were... going into the desert?

About a dozen subordinates flanked Fourth Vice-Bishop. All of them were in Void Returning, and all were injured to varying degrees.

The Fourth Vice-Bishop of the Moonrebel Congregation looked over his shoulder. All of the flying ships behind him were full of cultivators. They represented numerous species, and all were exhausted and injured. This was one of the resistance armies. When facing the aggression of the Red Moon Cathedral and the godchild calamity, they had suffered a big defeat and sustained heavy casualties.

The survivors had paid a heavy price just to escape with their lives. Unfortunately, they didnt have a safe place to retreat to, and were currently being pursued by the Red Moon Cathedral.

Fourth Vice-Bishop took a deep breath. Yes. Were going into the desert.

Chapter 657: Representing the Heir Apparent Publicly

Half a month flew by in the briefest of moments. Because of all of the various godchild nests erupting, the situation for the resistance in the Moonrite Region was bad.

Word spread quickly about the defeat of Fourth Vice-Bishops army, and it was a huge blow to morale. At the moment, there didnt seem to be much hope left. Sparks had flown, igniting a wildfire, but it seemed like that would just be a final blaze of glory for most people.

Right now, the desert was the center of attention. Because of the Heir Apparent, it had gone beyond the cultivators of the Bitter Life Mountains calling the little mudbrick city a holy land. Now, the resistance forces were calling the entire desert a holy land. Just about every day, people showed up trying to get into the desert and look for the real resistance.

The Red Moon Cathedral had the entire place blockaded. However, some unexpected situations arose in which powerful experts arrived and broke open pathways inside.

Patriarch Inkrule went to the border on orders from the Heir Apparent. He took with him a large number of desert cultivators, and together, they received the newcomers. The desert wind kept outsiders away. But that wind had come because of a deal made by the Captain. Therefore, given the Heir Apparents cultivation base and status, he counted as an ally of High God Moonfire. Therefore, with his divine will, he could exercise some authority over the wind, which let him ignore the resistance forces and specifically target cathedral cultivators. And thus, as more and more resistance cultivators showed up, the forces in the desert grew stronger.

After arriving, they were all very excited. However, they knew that none of them qualified to offer formal greetings to the Heir Apparent. Therefore, they didnt even bother going to the Green Spirit Pharmacy. They just clasped hands and bowed in the direction of the Bitter Life Mountains.

Things hadnt changed much in the Green Spirit Pharmacy. Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu were doing the same work as before. It was the same with Linger, Li Youfei, and Nethersprite.

Xu Qing spent most of his time dealing with the world fragment. After half a month of studying it, it reached the point where he knew things were getting too anxious. Whether it was the situation with the war or the rise of the red moon, they all pointed to one thing. Calamity was approaching.

Therefore, Xu Qing didnt waste any time during the half month that passed. He focused on refining and incubating the godchildren. The Captain wanted some oil, and these godchildren had blood full of chaos and insanity.

The glaciers inside the world fragment had melted, revealing dark soil that was now covered with broken eggshells and godchildren. A violet moon was visible in the sky, filling the world with red moon authority. That was the prerequisite for being able to control the godchildren. The godchildren prostrated on the ground, covered with wounds, out of which blood slowly flowed, filling the huge fingerprint. It was turning into a lake.[1]

The process was going well. Occasionally, one of the godchildren in the horde would go out of control. When that happened, Xu Qing would crush it with his authority. Some of the godchildren eventually lost so much blood that they withered up and died. Xu Qing would throw the corpses to the other godchildren to eat as food, which would then lead to more blood.

He went to the Moonrebel Congregation a few times to deliver godchild blood to Paramount Temples door. The blood had the desired effect. Upon sending it into the door, the Crimson Mother totem would tremble, and the flames of hope coming from the various temples would burn more

brightly. Crimson Mother, meanwhile, would then be forced to devour fire, which caused her body to burn.

Thanks to that burning, the totem was getting visibly fainter. And the Captain just continued madly chomping away as he said, That's not enough oil, little Ah Qing. Bring a bit more! The flames need to burn brighter! We have hope! As long as I can burn away Crimson Mother's seal, then the door can be opened. And then... well be the Archbishops of Moonrebel! The day that happens is the day that calamity strikes the Red Moon Cathedral!

Given how fast the red moon is moving, Xu Qing whispered, there are only nine or ten months to go before Crimson Mother arrives.

That'll do. I'm hurrying! The Captain took another vicious bite. Little Ah Qing, all of my other preparations are complete. We only have two more things to do. The first is here in the Moonrebel Congregation. Once we're in charge, I can use the Moonrebel Congregation to identify the location of all of my dismembered body parts. I'm already getting a very faint sense of where they are. When that happens, then by using everything else I got ready, well be strong enough to wipe out the Red Moon Cathedral.

With the cathedral gone, then we can go to the Penitence Steppes where the Imperial Sovereign's fleshly body is. That fleshly body is the last step before we deal with Crimson Mother. And it's the most important!

Xu Qing nodded. Here's the oil. I can squeeze out some more, but it will take me some time. Not too long, though.

The Captain looked excited to hear that. Hahaha! I'm really looking forward to this, little Ah Qing. This trip to the Moonrite Region is coming to an end. I've been planning for years on how to devour a god. Now, it's finally happening. Think about it. This is Crimson Mother we're talking about! When we devour her, rumors will spread all the way to Sea-Sealing County. They'll spread through all human regions. They'll fill the Revered Ancient mainland!

And then even the Nightshades will be viewed as trash! I bet even our human emperor will treat us with the utmost respect. And the old man is probably going to stare at us with his jaw hanging open!

Now this is a big job. It's going to make our names famous in Revered Ancient. In fact, from the moment the gods arrived until now, this is going to be the biggest thing ever!

In fact, after this, I think governor of Sea-Sealing County isn't going to be good enough for you. We need to set higher goals!

There was no doubt that the Captain had a knack for boosting morale.

As Xu Qing listened, he found himself thinking about Master Seventh, Plumdark, Seven Blood Eyes, and everyone else he knew in Sea-Sealing County. He suddenly felt a bit distracted.

*I haven't been in the Moonrite Region for very long. Only a few years. But it feels like it's been lifetimes....*

He knew that it felt like that because of everything he had experienced in the Moonrite Region, as well as his dramatic cultivation advancements.

Eldest Brother... I miss our Master, Xu Qing whispered.

Soon, the Captain said through a mouthful. Well be going home soon!

Xu Qing nodded and left the Moonrebel Congregation.

Another thing that happened during the half month that passed was that Xu Qings alter ego in the Moonrebel Congregation became even more famous thanks to the war.

It was because of the cursequelling lozenge. Although he lacked the proper ingredients to make the version of the pill that reduced the curse by fifty percent, the general concept behind the pill coupled with his taboo poison gaze allowed him to make lozenges that reduced the curse by thirty percent.

A permanent thirty percent reduction was a big deal. Even though the Moonrebel Congregation was not doing well in the war, that still caused an uproar. To many cultivators, that pill was literally a life-saver. In war, it was impossible to avoid being injured. And injuries could provoke curse flare-ups. That wasnt to mention that they were fighting cathedral cultivators, who could also instigate curse flare-ups.

On top of all that, the rise of the red moon made the curse more active. Given those circumstances, a medicinal pill that could reduce the curse by thirty percent was like a holy tonic to cultivators suffering from potential curse flare-ups.

His close followers were incredibly excited. Add in the fact that he was no longer asking for anything in return for the pills, and it ensured that Pill Nine was essentially the most famous name in the entire Moonrebel Congregation. In fact, it had long reached the point where his name wasnt just well known to the Moonrebel Congregations resistance armies. Even cultivators who werent associated with the Moonrebel Congregation had heard of him.

As expected, there was a lot of speculation about who Grandmaster Pill Nine really was. Some people claimed he was from another region, while others said he was some powerful expert who lived as a hermit. Yet others said he was some other Senior in the same generation as the Heir Apparent.

Theories ran wild. Eventually, the vice-bishops sent him messages in the Moonrebel Congregation, politely inviting him to join them, and even offering compensation. In fact, as long as Pill Nine accepted their offer, they would go to wherever he was to offer safe passage to them, as long as it wasnt in the Red Moon Cathedral itself. Most persistent of all was Fourth Vice-Bishop, who had been there to witness Xu Qing and Grandmaster Saintlowe release their pills together. He sent Xu Qing new messages every day or two, and was also very polite and sincere.

Xu Qing didnt respond to any of the messages.

Once people began talking about how the Bitter Life Mountains were a holy land, speculations about Pill Nine took on a new facet. People were now convinced that he was in the Bitter Life Mountains. After all, it was only in such a mysterious paradise that someone could peacefully concoct medicinal pills during a war. Of course, speculations were nothing but speculations.

No one knew the truth. And yet, it was because of the mystery that Pill Nine just kept getting more and more famous.

At the same time, his followers were becoming more organized. The leader was the burly neighbor. Not only did they work hard to uphold the grandmasters reputation, but also, they were searching for information about where he was, hoping that they could personally go to him to keep him safe.

Another seven days passed.

Upon emerging from the world fragment, Xu Qing got a voice message from the Heir Apparent.

*Xu Qing, one of the Moonrebel Congregations vice-bishops is about to arrive in the desert with his army. Hes being chased by cathedral forces. Take these two jade slips, which have power from me and my third sister, and go receive the guests. Since youre going out, take the chickens with you. Theyve been sitting around eating all the time and are getting a bit too fat.*

Three jade slips appeared in front of Xu Qing. Two of them pulsed with Smoldering God fluctuations, while the third could be used to control the chickens.

Xu Qing nodded, collected the jade slips, then went to the backyard to get the chickens.

There were quite a few powerful experts represented among the chickens. The weakest was in Nascent Soul, while there were a handful of Spirit Trove cultivators, as well as four Void Returning experts. Some of them were from the Yin-Yang Betwixt Flowers Sect, while others had been collected randomly by Fifth Sister.

Who wants to do some work to reduce your sentence? Xu Qing said quietly.

Chapter 658: A Chicken Soars; Countless Heroes Give Way

Upon hearing reduce your sentence, the dozens of chickens flapped their wings and started clucking loudly, their eyes shining with unbounded hope. In fact, they nearly went mad. They immediately started fighting each other in the hopes of being first in line to get this opportunity. Feathers flew everywhere.

Xu Qing frowned slightly.

The chickens quickly went quiet. It didnt matter what cultivation base they had before becoming chickens, they knew the situation they were in. They were dealing with four Smoldering Gods, and given that, they could guess how important Xu Qing was. As a result, they didnt dare to do anything out of line. Though they still felt deep grief and indignation, they also wanted to stay alive, so they had no choice but to be submissive.

After the chickens settled down, Xu Qing started pointing at individual chickens. Of the group of over a hundred, he selected thirty.

Which of you is fastest? he asked.

One of the chickens jumped up, clucking longingly.

Xu Qing nodded and took out the jade slip the Heir Apparent had given him that let him control the chickens. He quickly performed an incantation gesture and pointed out, causing a stream of white light to shoot from the jade slip to the chicken.

The chicken shivered and began to change shape. However, it didnt turn into a cultivator. Instead, it just grew larger until it was a 30-meter-tall chicken. Its cultivation base also recovered, and soon second-stage Void Returning fluctuations were rolling out. Also present was some of Crimson Mothers power. This person... was none other than a godherald from the Red Moon Cathedral.

Xu Qings eyes gleamed. But then he thought back to how Fifth Sister had been taking care of these chickens, and he realized it wasnt very surprising. He quickly hopped up onto the huge chickens back.

The rest of you follow, he said to the other chickens, waving a hand to unseal them. Lets go!

The second-stage Void Returning chicken didnt dare to resist. Fifth Sisters warding spells ensured that if he even fought back in the smallest way, he would be plagued with pain worse than death. With a nod, he flew into the air. The other chickens flew up and followed. And thus, a whole flock of chickens zipped along through the gray sandstorm toward the border of the desert.

A few hours later, they reached their destination. From a distance it was possible to see a host of crude huts built by cultivators on the border. There were close to ten thousand cultivators camped here, all under the command of Patriarch Inkrule.

The cultivators looked suspiciously at the chickens, but Patriarch Inkrule was the first to rush out. He recognized those chickens, and as soon as he caught sight of Xu Qing, his heart started pounding.

*Its the young lord!*

As a worker at the Green Spirit Pharmacy, he knew exactly who Xu Qing was. He had watched the Heir Apparent giving him advice, and knew that Xu Qing was actually the owner of the medicine shop. And he also knew that the Heir Apparent and Xu Qing had a Master/apprentice relationship.

Therefore, he didnt hesitate to call, Greetings, Young Lord!

As Patriarch Inkrule hovered in midair, he clasped hands and bowed.

Xu Qing nodded and returned the greeting. Well met, Senior.

Although Patriarch Inkrule had a menial job at the Green Spirit Pharmacy, Xu Qing knew that his respectful attitude was only because of the Heir Apparent. What was more, the fact that Patriarch Inkrule wasnt a chicken seemed to indicate the Heir Apparent had a good reason for sparing him.

Xu Qings respectful salute caused Patriarch Inkrule to sigh inwardly. In the Green Spirit Pharmacy, he didnt mind being heaped with shame. But out here in front of so many people, most of whom were his subordinates, he still expected to be treated with respect. As a result, he found himself liking this Xu Qing a bit more.

Young Lord, sir, might I ask why youve come?

The Heir Apparent sent me here to receive some cultivators from the Moonrebel Congregation. Xu Qing looked past the gray wind into the red world outside. Everything looked like it was stained with blood. Some distance away were some dark spots in the sky, moving in his direction at top speed.

Before long, those dark spots turned into flying ships. They were the forces of the fourth vice-bishop, still fleeing from the pursuit of the Red Moon Cathedral. There were about a thousand ships, and they were all in bad shape. The cultivators aboard them looked much weaker than they had half a month before. Their exhaustion exacerbated their wounds, and all of them were feeling spent in spirit and body. The sky behind them was bright red.

The leader of the group, the fourth vice-bishop, looked pale, and his wounds were particularly serious. His Void Returning subordinates all seemed to be struggling to cling to life.

Behind Fourth Vice-Bishop was a middle-aged man in first-stage Void Returning. Taking out a medicinal pill bottle, he said, Fourth Vice-Bishop, this is our last cursequelling lozenge. Although Grandmaster Pill Nine is giving his pills away for free, there's no way he can meet the demand. There just aren't enough pills to go around. In the end, I'm just not on the same level as Grandmaster Pill Nine. Even though he gave me the formula, I just can't successfully concoct the pill.

Hearing that, Fourth Vice-Bishop looked at the medicinal pill and said, You've done all you can, Saintlowe. Split the last pill up amongst yourselves. I'm fine for now.

That first-stage expert was none other than Grandmaster Saintlowe. Upon hearing Fourth Vice-Bishop's words, Saintlowe bowed his head.

Fourth Vice-Bishop clasped his shoulder, then looked off toward the desert and the obfuscating gray wind that covered it. Because of the sandstorm, he couldn't see Xu Qing and cultivators with him. He just saw a big blur. He sighed.

Grandmaster Pill Nine didn't respond to any of my messages. I guess it must not be convenient for him to reveal his true identity. I just hope he's safe....

Saintlowe nodded, his face a mask of mixed emotions. Some people are saying that Grandmaster Pill Nine is actually in the desert.... Fourth Vice-Bishop, according to the information from the Moonrebel Congregation, the desert holy land is open to us. And the entry point is just ahead. It's just that behind us....

Saintlowe looked over his shoulder. Behind them, heaven and earth seemed thick with fresh blood. As the effect spread, it was just barely possible to see a huge church temple atop a human organ, flying toward them. On their journey, they had been intercepted multiple times by cathedral forces. Each fight had been bitter, and had resulted in a lot of casualties.

They managed to shake their pursuers each time, but every single time, the cathedral forces eventually caught up. That was exactly what was happening right now.

There's nothing we can do, really, Fourth Vice-Bishop said wearily. To the Red Moon Cathedral, this crackdown actually isn't very important. After all, Crimson Mother will be here in less than ten months. The more of us that die, the more the cathedral and its adherents will have to make up for the loss.

The reality is that the Red Moon Cathedral is fractured right now. Many people there are scared, and their factions are definitely not united. Some want to toy with us, some want to leave us alone, some want to crush us. If you've been paying attention, you'd notice that this journey of ours has more been a case of them driving us to this spot.

To us, resisting is a matter of life or death. But to the leaders of the Red Moon Cathedral, its more like a game. However, now that the Heir Apparent has shown up, the cathedral factions are all on guard, and are really focusing on cracking down.

Saintlowe didnt say anything. He could see the reality of the situation as well. And it wasnt just him. All the Void Returning cultivators from the various species could come to similar conclusions. But Fourth Vice-Bishop was just saying the words outright.

Dont put too much thought into it. Whatever happens at the end of the ten months, at the very least... we get to live in freedom for a time. Fourth Vice-Bishop took a deep breath and waved his hand, causing all the flying ships to accelerate toward the sandstorm.

But then, the red light behind them glittered as a huge blood-colored hand stretched out, obscuring the sky as it reached toward them.

Fourth Vice-Bishops eyes glittered coldly, and his cultivation base surged. Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth as numerous illusory minor worlds appeared around him, which then coalesced into an illusory major world. That was the sight of fourth stage Void Returning! It was only illusory, but it was still shocking as it flew to block the blood-colored hand.

At the same time, the other cultivators aboard the flying ships unleashed countless magical techniques, which bolstered the major world and made it more true and real.

The ten Void Returning experts unleashed the power of their cultivation bases. Their number included first, second, and third-stage experts, and they made the major world even stronger. A massive boom rang out as the two slammed into each other, and then the blood-colored hand collapsed.

Unfortunately, Fourth Vice-Bishops illusory major world also collapsed. Blood sprayed out of the mouths of all the cultivators present, causing droplets of blood to rain down like heavenly maids scattering blossoms. However, the blast also propelled them toward the sandstorm.

All of a sudden, a gap opened up in the huge sandstorm that connected the sky to the land in the desert. It was like a massive curtain opening up, revealing a door. Inside that door were Patriarch Inkrule and Xu Qing, along with nearly ten thousand desert cultivators.

Considering that Fourth Vice-Bishops forces were just about to enter the sandstorm, the red light behind them flared again. This time, a dozen conglomerations of flesh and blood bearing church temples emerged. Instead of trying to close the distance, they emitted blood-colored light that took the form of a huge face. It was a nonhuman face that was covered in scales. It shot forward with cold eyes, almost as if it planned to enter the desert along with Fourth Vice-Bishops fleet.

That was when Xu Qing smacked the huge chicken.

The huge chicken shivered, then cautiously flew out with Xu Qing atop it. Xu Qing ignored Fourth Vice-Bishop and his flying ships, and instead lifted his hand up, palm pointing toward the incoming face.

He had a jade slip in his hand. He crushed it.

Smoldering God fluctuations erupted out, creating a massive vortex in front of him. Rumbling sounds echoed out as lightning bolts danced in the vortex. Then a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering finger stretched out from the vortex. It was surrounded by endless streams of lightning, and was



encircled by suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies as well as streams of fire. Pulsing with the aura of a Smoldering God, it thrust forward.

From a distance, it was possible to see it crushing forward like a wave smashing into the shore. Pulsing with a fury that could devour mountains and rivers, it closed in on the face.

#### Chapter 659: Chickens Dancing Like Crazy

This was an attack from the Heir Apparent, a Smoldering God! It contained natural laws, magical laws, and the blessing of an ancient heavenly dao, making it capable of crushing all things in heaven and earth, smashing all defenses, and demonstrating a boundless will. It also thrummed with authority that could alter the perceptions of all living beings and achieve objectives by any means necessary. Domineering in a way that couldnt be matched, it passed with heaven-rending, earth-crushing force, smashing all obstacles and eliciting astonishment from all onlookers.

In the blink of an eye, the finger passed the fleeing forces of Fourth Vice-Bishop and hit the blood-colored face in the forehead.

The face shivered, and its eyes went wide with fury. Howling, it tried to fight back. However, a black shockwave spread out from its forehead, covering the entire face. As it spread, the face shrank down, split apart, and then collapsed into pieces that scattered in every direction. It also kicked up a gale force wind that swept toward the cathedral forces further back. Deafening rumbling sounds rang out as the cathedral forces were sent spinning away. One attack from a Smoldering God had caused godly might to erupt.

Fourth Vice-Bishop and his forces saw that happen and were shaken deeply. Many gasps could be heard. After all, they knew that the pursuing cathedral forces were being led by a fourth stage Void Returning expert, in other words, someone as strong as Fourth Vice-Bishop.

Godheralds such as that were able to guide the tideflow power of the red moon, giving them a terrifying boost to their battle prowess. With that, plus the other assets they could tap into, they could release mightiness that was close to that of the quasi-Smoldering God level. That was exactly what that huge face had been. Yet that face crumbled under a single attack, as surely as if it had been made of wax paper.

Of course, the Red Moon Cathedral was the paramount expression of will in the Moonrite Region, so there was no way that one move like that would completely vanquish their forces. After the church temples were sent tumbling back, the blood-colored light flared again. Blood-colored figures shot out. Taking advantage of the fact that Xu Qings jade slip had crumbled, and the Heir Apparents attack was gone, they shot toward the desert.

There were fully a thousand cultivators on the move. Unexpectedly, none of them had physical bodies. They were more like blood souls that shot through the air toward the sandstorm. As they closed in, they released the power of Crimson Mother, including god magics designed to infect the desert and allow Crimson Mothers godly might to enter it.

Seeing that, Fourth Vice-Bishop issued orders that caused the flying ships to turn around. The cultivators aboard them shot out into the open, some of them to facilitate the escape of their fellow daoists, and others to block the blood-colored shadows.

Patriarch Inkrule also sent out orders. The encamped desert cultivators all sprang into action, including some of the Wind Guardians. They released various divine abilities from their species, causing the sandstorm to grow stronger.

Meanwhile, Xu Qings eyes glittered coldly. Your opportunity has come to reduce your sentence.

He performed an incantation gesture and pointed at the chickens. The chickens responded with ear-piercing cries as their cultivation base fluctuations rolled out and they started growing larger.

Just like the chicken Xu Qing was using as a mount, all of the small chickens transformed into huge chickens. They looked vicious, their eyes gleaming like they were ready to put everything on the line. They shot forward, determined to reduce their sentences, determined to avoid being eaten, and each one determined to outshine all of the other chickens.

In the blink of an eye, the flock of chickens closed in on the blood-colored shadows, and fierce fighting broke out. Intense booms and rumbling sounds echoed out with tempestuous intensity. The blood-colored shadows just kept coming and coming, and the red light spread deeper into the desert. But at the same time, the resistance forces fought back with equal intensity.

The big chickens were putting on an amazing show. All of them were roughly 30 meters tall, and they were putting their lives on the line. As a result, their battle prowess was outstandingly deadly. Wherever they went, they viciously devoured the blood shadows as if they were bugs. They were very skilled at devouring things, as if it was one of their most fundamental instincts. Of course, in deadly fighting like this, it wasnt possible for them to avoid being injured. But then something very unusual happened.

After the big chickens got hurt badly enough, white light would spread over them, and they would be restored to normal. That was the power of Fifth Sisters authority.

Xu Qing looked on thoughtfully. The cathedral cultivators were obviously being blessed because of their faith in Crimson Mother, and as a result, had some of Crimson Mothers godly might. However, the chickens had unwittingly begun to show faith in Princess Fifth, and were thus benefiting from her skills and abilities. That said, her powers werent absolute, and thus, some of the chickens lost their lives.

And yet, it seemed that Fourth Vice-Bishops previous speculations were correct. Whether it was out of fear of a Smoldering God or something else, the cathedral forces didnt seem interested in fighting to the death. After enough of the blood shadows collapsed, the rest chose to flee. As the red light disappeared into the distance, the newcomers escape into the desert was facilitated.

After it was over, Fourth Vice-Bishops resistance army felt waves of gratitude as they realized they really had escaped with their lives. They looked around at the desert cultivators, and then the vicious chickens with their incomparably mighty battle prowess.

Xu Qing stood atop the biggest chicken, ensuring that he stood out to everyone present.

The forces from the Red Moon Cathedral had also taken note of him. After all, he had just used a Smoldering God jade slip. Thankfully, after the God Decapitation Altar broadcast, the Heir Apparent and his siblings had helped Xu Qing disguise himself. After all, that event had been too momentous. Therefore, though he still looked handsome, he wasnt as eye-catchingly attractive as before, and thus no one thought to connect the two faces. It was the same with the forces under the leadership of Fourth Vice-Bishop.

Face expressionless, Xu Qing smacked the big chicken and sent it toward Fourth Vice-Bishop and his subordinates.

Fourth Vice-Bishop saw Xu Qing off in the distance. Turning to Patriarch Inkrule, he asked, Fellow Daoist Inkrule, whos that young man?

Grandmaster Saintlowe was next to him, also looking at Xu Qing.

Patriarch Inkrules heart was pounding. He was only in first stage Void Returning, but this person he was speaking to was in the fourth stage. He wasnt only a vice-bishop in the Moonrebel Congregation, he was also an important person in the Moonrite Region in general. Back before Patriarch Inkrule worked at the Green Spirit Pharmacy, he would have been extremely nervous in the presence of someone like this. After all, their statuses were just too far apart. But now, things were different. That much was obvious from the way Fourth Vice-Bishop had addressed him. He smiled.

Thats the young lord of our house.

Fourth Vice-Bishop nodded. Given the title young lord that was used, plus the fact that he had used a Smoldering God jade slip, made it obvious that this young man was deeply connected to the Heir Apparent.

Upon hearing the title young lord being used, Grandmaster Saintlowe looked more closely at Xu Qing. In his heart, he sighed, as if he had just thought of something. Claspng hands, he bowed to Patriarch Inkrule.

Fellow Daoist Inkrule, theres a small matter Id like to inquire about.

Pray tell, what is it, Grandmaster Saintlowe? Patriarch Inkrule wasnt a Moonrebel Congregation cultivator, but some of his subordinates were. From them he had learned a bit about this Grandmaster Saintlowe, and knew that he was a very prominent figure.

Are there any experts in the dao of alchemy here in this desert? Have you heard of the appellation... Grandmaster Pill Nine?

Xu Qing was now close enough that he heard the last bit of dialogue. Looking closely at the speaker, he saw a middle-aged man with an extraordinary cultivation base who smelled like medicinal pills. Obviously this person spent a lot of time working on alchemy.

Patriarch Inkrule shook his head. He said nothing about how Xu Qing often concocted pills. He had lived long enough that he could tell when people were prying. As he prepared to answer, he noticed Xu Qing approaching. After bowing politely, he answered Saintlowes question.

There are some alchemist cultivators here in the desert. But few of them are very skilled.... In terms of Grandmaster Pill Nine, Ive heard that name as well. Grandmaster Saintlowe, are you thinking that Grandmaster Pill Nine might be here in our desert?

When Xu Qing heard that, he looked at the alchemy cultivator and thought back to the statue of Grandmaster Saintlowe. He also thought about their alchemy battle in the Moonrebel Congregation.

Saintlowe sighed. Given Inkrules half-hearted answer, he knew that he had made a misstep. Turning, he nodded to Xu Qing. Meanwhile, Fourth Vice-Bishop had also turned his attention to Xu Qing.

Well met, Senior, Xu Qing said with clasped hands. Your humble servant is here on the orders of the Heir Apparent to receive you. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the Greenhair Badlands.

Xu Qings first impression of Fourth Vice-Bishop was that there was something familiar about him. Then he thought back to all the messages Fourth Vice-Bishop had sent in recent days. Apparently, Xu Qing had hid his identity well enough, as there seemed no clue that Fourth Vice-Bishop suspected him of being Pill Nine. He was right.

Fourth Vice-Bishop had a very high cultivation base, but he wasnt omniscient or omnipotent. Neither he nor Saintlowe had any clue that the person they sought, Grandmaster Pill Nine, was actually standing right in front of them. However, that didnt cause them to be any less polite. They might have Void Returning cultivation bases, but Xu Qing represented the Heir Apparent, and therefore, they acted very courteously.

And thus, after Xu Qing extended the formal invitation, they made their way toward the Bitter Life Mountains.

Xu Qing and Patriarch Inkrule boarded Fourth Vice-Bishops flying ship. As they sped through the wind and sand, Xu Qing didnt say much. Patriarch Inkrule was the one to introduce the desert. Naturally, he offered some brief explanations about the wind and the holy land that was the Green Spirit Pharmacy....

Of course, everyone had seen the God Decapitation Altar broadcast. And in the subsequent months, everyone had been talking about how the wind had kicked up in the desert because of that event. And many people had come to assume that the broadcast was somehow related to the Heir Apparent.

However, after hearing Patriarch Inkrules explanations, Fourth Vice-Bishop glanced at Xu Qing briefly and then said, Young man, was the person in the God Decapitation Altar broadcast you?

Grandmaster Saintlowe, on the other hand, hadnt been focused on the God Decapitation Altar. He was thinking about the Green Spirit Pharmacy. Looking at Xu Qing, he simultaneously blurted, Young friend, are you the owner of the Green Spirit Pharmacy? Can you concoct pills?

Chapter 660: Little Ah Qing, I'm Missing a Kidney!

The gray wind blew innumerable particles of sand onto the flying ships. Their ships had defensive shields, but it was still possible to hear the pitter-patter of the sand hitting the hulls of the ships. Meanwhile, Xu Qing heard the words spoken by Fourth Vice-Bishop and Grandmaster Saintlowe.

Fourth Vice-Bishops subordinates on the ship, who were mostly focused on healing and recovery, opened their eyes and looked at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked at Fourth Vice-Bishop. Earlier, when he had laid eyes on Fourth Vice-Bishop for the first time, something about the man had seemed familiar. It had nothing to do with meeting him before in statue form in the Moonrebel Congregation. Every person was represented by a different statue. In fact, the statue might not even be the same gender as the person using it. Only someone with the highest level of authority in the Moonrebel Congregation would be able to see through the disguises. Therefore, Xu Qing stood there for a moment trying to figure out the source of the familiar sensation. As of this moment, he realized why.

The most obvious characteristic of Fourth Vice-Bishop was that he was old-school and very serious. He was the kind of person who didn't smile a lot, and the wrinkles on his forehead that resembled the character only served to enhance that effect.

Xu Qing now realized that Fourth Vice-Bishop reminded him of someone from Sea-Sealing County: Palace Lord Kong Liangxiu.

Despite the years that had passed, when Xu Qing thought about Palace Lord Kong, his heart surged with emotions. He thought about the palace lord standing tall on the other side of the taboo treasure net, stopping the advance of the Holytide army. The image of him perishing amidst ice and fire was something Xu Qing would never forget.

The situation in the Land of God Decapitation was orchestrated by my Eldest Brother, Xu Qing said quietly. It was no lie. That entire episode had come about thanks to the Captains effort and planning, although things didn't end up going as expected. As for the truth of exactly what happened, Xu Qing didn't feel obligated to explain. And, yes, I did start the Green Spirit Pharmacy. I know a bit about how to concoct pills, but that's all.

Having said that, he glanced at Grandmaster Saintlowe, then closed his eyes and started meditating. Because of the feelings of familiarity that had just arisen in him, he found himself immersing himself in memories of Sea-Sealing County.

Fourth Vice-Bishop looked at him deeply but didn't ask any further questions. Grandmaster Saintlowe sighed inwardly. He had no reason to think that Xu Qing's skill in the dao of alchemy was very high, and thus it didn't occur to him that he might actually be connected to Pill Nine.

After their alchemy showdown, Saintlowe had come to believe that the person who had given voice to his own ambitions in alchemy, which were the same ideals shared by alchemists throughout the Moonrite Region, had to be the same type of person as himself, in other words, someone who had pursued the dao of alchemy for many, many years. There was no way Pill Nine could be a young person.

And thus, Xu Qing immersed himself in thought as the flying ships pierced through the wind and sand. A day later, they arrived at the Bitter Life Mountains.

Patriarch Inkrule made arrangements to give a dozen or so mountain peaks to Fourth Vice-Bishop to serve as the new home for him and his cultivators.

Xu Qing, having accomplished his task, returned to the Green Spirit Pharmacy. After taking the chickens into the backyard, he sat down in front of the Heir Apparent. Taking out the jade slip he hadn't used, he put it off to the side.

Princess Brightblossom hardly looked at it.

The Heir Apparent took a sip of tea, glanced at the jade slip, then coolly said, Keep it. Consider it a gift in the form of a life-saving item.

Hearing that caused Xu Qing's eyes to flicker. Are you going away, Senior?

Third Sister and I are taking a trip. Our plan is to free Ninth Sib. We don't need your help this time. We can definitely handle it ourselves; we just need to wait for exactly the right time.

Xu Qing nodded and put the jade slip away.

You can't afford to slack off with your cultivation base. And now I can answer that question you asked about D-132. The Heir Apparent looked deeply at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing felt a brief twinge of excitement as he focused completely on whatever the Heir Apparent was going to say.

The Heir Apparent was pleased with his attitude. He had spent a lot of time and effort mulling over D-132. Putting down his cup of tea, he said, Your D-132 is a prison, but also, is destiny aura. And it even contains the finger of a god. That finger isn't exactly very impressive, despite being the finger of a natural-born god, as far as I can tell.

However, that's also what muddles up your D-132. The finger actually has authority. Specifically, the power of misfortune! Unfortunately, that misfortune doesn't belong to you. What belongs to you is the mishmash of destiny aura and misfortune that turns into the prison's power of amnesia.

That combination of destiny aura and misfortune is marvelous to say the least. Within it, I can see elements of a human taboo treasure, combined with the work of the Swordsage Division. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, it was modeled after the Swordsage Division's original Corrections Division! Later generations took inspiration from the historical records, added some new innovations, and then created their own version.

The Heir Apparent's words caused Xu Qing to shiver slightly, and suddenly feel even more reverential than before.

He had never said very much about D-132 to the Heir Apparent, yet the man had seen the truth immediately. Xu Qing stood and bowed.

Thank you for your advice, Senior.

The Heir Apparent chuckled. I can sense the power of amnesia within it. It's a new type of authority... and is also a branch of research that the Swordsage Division focused on in the days of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. During that time, they had a specific name for that branch of study. The will domain.

Xu Qing suddenly thought back to the Supreme Arbiter Immortal Society in Sea-Sealing County. Li Zimei had explained to him that their techniques culminated in the will domain. What was more, the Seazombie king had also walked down that same path. And there was also that Supreme Arbiter Immortal Society cultivator he fought with at the Supreme Beginning Netherflight Pillar, Li Ziliang, who had also attacked with a type of will domain. Then there was Qing Qiu, whose trump card in battle was another type of will domain. After thinking about all of those things, Xu Qing realized it made sense that D-132 had a similar power. [1]

Seeing the expression on Xu Qing's face gave the Heir Apparent a new level of understanding. It seems you've met cultivators with will domains before. That's normal. After all, back in the days of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity, the Swordsage Division invited others to participate in their research in the hopes of getting better results.

That said, a will domain of amnesia isn't something commonly seen. After all, it comes from a convergence of destiny from countless living beings and a god's misfortune. That's definitely worth studying more closely. What's more, the Swordsage Division's goal in that research was to create a power that could force gods to bend the knee.

The Heir Apparent picked up his cup of tea. He had recently come up with an ingenious way of giving instruction to Xu Qing. And that was to go into extreme detail with everything he understood, and not give Xu Qing leeway to go off track with his powers of understanding. But when it came to things he wasn't very familiar with, he would be as vague and mysterious as possible, and ultimately just give a general direction to go in. That was the most suitable thing to do when dealing with Xu Qing's powers of understanding. As for whether that path would end up leading to results, that would be made clear later on.

Xu Qing took a deep breath. The Heir Apparent's explanation had made things a lot clearer regarding D-132, and had given him a new direction to pursue. Quickly clasping hands respectfully, he went to the back room, sat down cross-legged, and got to work.

At the same time, his D-132 nascent soul opened its eyes and looked at the god's finger. The finger tossed and turned as it slept, even shivering a bit. The other inmates behaved similarly. The head and the stone lion already felt profound respect and reverence for Xu Qing. After coming to the Moonrite Region, they had increasingly come to feel like Xu Qing wasn't even human any more. He was just that terrifying.

Sir Inkwell similarly trembled. Even if he was a hundred times as brave as he was, he still wouldn't dare to even speak out of turn to Xu Qing. [2]

Xu Qing wasn't concerned about the inmates. Looking through the divine will of the D-132 nascent soul, he examined them briefly.

Pursuing the concepts mentioned by the Heir Apparent, Xu Qing realized that the finger was the source of the misfortune, while his nascent soul was the convergence of destiny's aura. The mixture of the two created the power of amnesia, and that power was most fully manifest on the inmates.

After a time, his gaze came to rest on Sir Inkwell.

Sir Inkwell's face was ashen as a very bad feeling rose up within him. Exalted one, he said, I feel like our D-132 just isn't complete. We're missing someone... we're missing that water bucket and that scarecrow! [3]

Yeah, that's right! the head blurted. Exalted one, those two are definitely out in the world causing a lot of harm. Since we value justice so much, we can't just let them run amok!

Face completely expressionless, Xu Qing made a grasping gesture, causing Sir Inkwell to fly over to him. The old Paintedfolk looked up at him fawningly and opened his mouth to speak.

Shut up, Xu Qing said.

Sir Inkwell immediately produced a brush which he used to paint his mouth closed.

Xu Qing nodded. Placing his hand onto Sir Inkwell's forehead, he examined him with his senses. Then he did the same with the head and the stone lion. In order to make sure his research was as thorough as possible, he smashed all three of them into bloody pulps, then watched closely as they resurrected. After he did it a few times, the three inmates were begging loudly that he end his research. Off to the side, the god's finger was still trembling.

Xu Qing opened his eyes in the back room of the medicine shop.

*Many of the old D-132 guards died because of the misfortune. Even I suffered from a lot of amnesia.... The inmates are fundamentally a part of the misfortune, which makes them eternally indestructible.*

*The reason for me forgetting is that I was infected with the misfortune but also connected with destiny. That combined into the power of amnesia. Forgetting severed the karma, or put another way, was the core of D-132. In that case, the amnesia... requires a convergence and eruption of misfortune and destiny aura.*

Inside D-132, his nascent soul flew over to the gods finger, reached out, and touched t. The finger didnt want to cooperate, yet didnt dare to fight back. The moment the D-132 nascent soul touched the finger, Xu Qings eyes went blank. The blankness lasted for a while until Xu Qing sensed some message fluctuations coming from the Moonrebel Congregation. Taking out the Heir Apparents mirror shard, he returned to Paramount Temple.

The moment he stepped in, he heard a howl of grief coming from the Captains little totem.

Little Ah Qing! Somethings wrong here. Somethings very wrong. Ive been using the Moonrebel Congregation to track down traces of my flesh and blood, and though I cant get very specific, Im only missing one piece! M-m-my... my past-life body is missing a kidney! How come I cant sense it?

Ive tried over and over again, but cant find it. This is impossible! Even if someone ate it, there would still be traces around that I could track. But now... its completely gone! My kidney! What happened....?