

Timescape 661

Chapter 661: Xu Qing's Amnesia Domain

In the Moonrebel Congregations Paramount Temple, the Captain sounded puzzled, and more than that, anxious.

How could this be happening? My past life body is incomplete! Little Ah Qing, do you know how important kidneys are to a man? My kidney! Without it, I cant be considered a complete man! Whats even more important is that the missing kidney was one I focused a lot of attention on improving in my past life. Its incredibly important! Incredibly valuable!

The Captain in the totem seemed furious, and was gnashing his teeth as if he had lost the dearest of friends.

It was definitely some narrow-minded degenerate who was jealous of my precious kidney and used it to power up! Dammmity damn damnation! If I cant fix this situation, then on a personal level, Im fine with it. But its going to affect our big job! My past life body is missing a part of itself....

The Captain was clearly very anxious.

Meanwhile, a strange expression had appeared on Xu Qings face as he thought back to that time he was in a valley in the west of Moonrite, and ran into a clay fox. That clay fox had offered to give him a kidney.... [1]

With that thought in mind, Xu Qing hesitated for a moment, then said, Eldest Brother, how many kidneys did your past life body have?

Two, of course! Im human, and my past life body is human. Dont all humans have two kidneys? What, do you have three or something? The Captain looked more closely at Xu Qing.

Ignoring the look in the Captains eyes, Xu Qing asked another question. Can you sense the other one?

Yeah! The other kidney is in the east in a godchild chasm. It got turned into fertilizer, but I can still sense it. The Captain suddenly realized something was going on. Eyes glittering brightly, he looked at Xu Qing with anticipation in his eyes. Whyd you ask me that, little Ah Qing? Dont tell me youve actually seen my missing kidney!

Xu Qing didnt respond at first. He took time to think back to the kidney the clay fox had shown him. Finally, he looked at the Captain, who was stewing in his anxiety and getting more and more nervous.

Eldest Brother, is the kidney you lost the color gold, crescent-shaped, and covered with magical symbols? Xu Qing looked at the Captain.

The Captain got so excited the totem started vibrating. Yeah, thats the one! Its golden! You saw it, little Ah Qing?

After some more thought, Xu Qing explained what happened with the clay fox.

The Captain was surprised by the story, to the point where he inhaled sharply. Youre telling me that some clay fox wanted you to eat my kidney to replenish yourself?

I didnt eat it, Xu Qing said calmly.

Why not? If you'd eaten it, then I could extract it. But now.... The Captain clearly had some very mixed feelings. Eventually, he sighed. Besides, little Ah Qing, that clay fox is nothing to take lightly. She has my kidney, yet I can't sense it at all. That indicates she's extremely extraordinary. I don't have any memory of someone like that in my past life. Based on what you're describing, she was sitting in a shrine. That's how gods operate! [2]

Xu Qing's gaze hardened. He had been able to tell from the beginning that there was something very mysterious about that clay fox.

She pulled out a lot of valuable things, and also mentioned that someone gave her that kidney, the Captain continued. If that's true, it just goes to show that she's definitely not an ordinary person. Is it really possible that clay fox is a god? As the words came out of the Captain's mouth, he shivered and seemed to get even more angry than before. If she's a god, then where did she come from? And why take my kidney, huh? Ai.... I suppose it's really my fault. I guess I refined my kidney into something that was just too amazing. It even caught the attention of a god!

The Captain was feeling a mix of emotions that ranged from helplessness to anger to pride. Finally, he looked at Xu Qing with wide eyes. Xu Qing, what if you

Eldest Brother, Xu Qing interrupted, if you're missing something, then you're missing something. You still have one left, right? It seems to me that you're just as complete as you've always been.

Xu Qing turned to leave. He knew exactly what the Captain had been about to ask him.

Wait, little Junior Brother! the Captain blurted anxiously. Little Junior Brother, this relates directly to our big job! Can't you make a bit of a sacrifice? If that clay fox is really a god, you'll probably benefit a lot by doing this!

Xu Qing ignored him and kept walking away.

Little Ah Qing, this relates to all the living beings in the Moonrite Region! Of even greater significance, it relates to my future! Leaving my kidney in the hands of someone who doesn't understand its history is a potential calamity waiting to happen! What's more, if I'm missing a kidney, I'm not complete, and it means I can't summon my body back into one place!

It was very unusual to see the Captain acting so openly anxious.

Xu Qing could tell that the Captain really was getting flustered. He stopped walking. Thinking back to what happened with the clay fox, he got the impression that the clay fox had brought that kidney out with the express purpose of making sure he saw it.

Little Ah Qing, that clay fox probably showed you that kidney on purpose. And the fact that the fox wasn't hostile at all makes it seem like she wants you to go find her.... You know what? Forget it. If you don't want to help, then your Eldest Brother will just deal with the pain and suffering. Except this way, I might not be able to live up to my promise to travel the world with you.... The Captain let loose a long sigh, and his expression was one of deep loneliness.

Xu Qing nodded. Good. Thanks, Eldest Brother.

He started walking again.

The Captain was initially stunned, then quickly gave a sarcastic laugh.

Xu Qing stopped walking and looked back at the Captain. I'll see what I can do.

Now that's my little Junior Brother! the Captain said excitedly. Now that Xu Qing had agreed to help, he felt a lot better. In fact, he believed that as long as Xu Qing was willing to help, it was a guarantee that he would get his kidney back.

Xu Qing sighed and left. When he reappeared in the back room of the Green Spirit Pharmacy, he was already mulling over ways to deal with the situation with the clay fox. Eventually, a blank expression appeared in his eyes. Frowning, he rubbed the bridge of his nose.

So, how am I supposed to trigger a will domain of amnesia?

He closed his eyes and thought about it for a time, then sent himself back into D-132. His nascent soul was no longer touching the god's finger; instead, there was some distance between them. Eventually, he did some more tests by having his nascent soul go and touch the finger. Soon, his expression went blank again.

Time passed as Xu Qing continued to study amnesia and memories. Every time his nascent soul touched the finger, the combination of destiny aura and misfortune would cause him to go blank. Only after the two separated would he eventually go back to normal.

As for everyone else in the medicine shop, things seemed completely ordinary.

The only difference was the Heir Apparent, whose facial expression seemed to become more and more odd as the days went by. At the moment, he was just sitting there holding his cup of tea and looking at Nethersprite.

Ning Yan was scrubbing the floor, while Linger worked on the accounts and Wu Jianwu spouted poetry. Li Youfei gripped a sword as he kept an eye on everyone coming and going. Nethersprite tended the boiling water.

However, while Ning Yan usually scrubbed the floor seven or eight times, today he had already mopped more than fifty times, yet didn't seem to realize it. Linger seemed to be calculating the same part of the accounting book over and over again.... Wu Jianwu was repeating the same lines of poetry. Li Youfei just stood there in place, apparently completely unaware that anything unusual was going on. Nethersprite had a blank look on her face. She had just realized that the water was already boiling. Meanwhile, the Heir Apparent's tea cup was full, leaving nothing for her to do.

Unlike everyone else, she could sense something unusual. Struggle appeared in her eyes, and then she started breathing heavily as she looked around the medicine shop at everyone else.

What's going on? she murmured, looking suspiciously at the Heir Apparent, and then the back room, where Xu Qing was working on his cultivation. There's a strange power coming from where that little punk is working on cultivation. Is it making me lose my memories? Nethersprite felt shaken to the core.

This is the ninety-fifth time you've woken up in the past few days, the Heir Apparent said coolly. But the time between wake ups is increasing. No one else has woken up at all, other than Linger. That girl is unique. She's woken up fifteen times so far.

Nethersprite inhaled sharply. The grisly situation was shocking to say the least. And when everyone else heard what the Heir Apparent just said, they all looked around, stunned.

Ning Yan's eyes went wide as he looked at the floor, and then his rag. How... how many times have I scrubbed the floor today?

Wu Jianwu was bewildered, and could hardly believe that he had been repeating the same poetry. Linger was shaken, and Li Youfei seemed taken aback.

Senior, Nethersprite said, unable to hold back from asking, is this happening because of Xu Qings cultivation?

Yes, the Heir Apparent said, taking a sip of tea. Its the first sign of a will domain of amnesia. Hes on his way down the path, and as he furthers his study, the surroundings are affected. Just like him, everyone loses their memory. In short order, Xu Qings session of cultivation will end, and hell forget everything hes learned. At the same time, you will all forget everything thats happening right now.

Everyone gasped.

Knees trembling, Li Youfei said, Senior, I-I... I often feel like Im missing parts of myself. Has the young lord been doing any pill concocting lately?

The Heir Apparent looked at Li Youfei and nodded. He keeps forgetting and thinking its his first time. But the reality is... hes already concocted pills with you about a hundred times.

When Li Youfei heard that, he sagged in place, his heart filling with terror. At the same time, the Heir Apparent looked at the front door.

We have guests.

At the door, Wu Jianwu cleared his head and looked down the street.

An old man was quietly approaching. He had a very serious facial expression, and seemed both old-fashioned and solemn. He approached the Green Spirit Pharmacy, stopped outside, and clasped hands and bowed as if he had reached the end of pilgrimage.

Sir Skysouth from the Moonrebel Congregation, here to seek an audience with His Majesty the Heir Apparent!

Sir Skysouth was none other than Fourth Vice-Bishop! This was his first formal visit after arriving in the Bitter Life Mountains. He had planned to come pay respects to the Heir Apparent even earlier, but for the past week had been wrapped up in preparing his camp, plus another unexpected situation.

Specifically, that situation related to Grandmaster Pill Nine. Seven days ago, Fourth Vice-Bishop had taken a trip to the Moonrebel Congregation, and had waited outside Grandmaster Pill Nines temple hoping to get an audience. In the end, he did run into Pill Nine in his statue. Fourth Vice-Bishop had made a polite request to be able to purchase more cursequelling lozenges. He even gave Pill Nine his personal contact information within the Moonrebel Congregation. Grandmaster Pill Nine had agreed to his request.

For the following days, Grandmaster Pill Nine would frequently send messages asking for specific medicinal ingredients. On slow days, he would only send seven or eight messages like that. But sometimes, he would send dozens....

Although Fourth Vice-Bishop wasnt sure what that meant, he was very happy every time he got a new cursequelling lozenge. His subordinates were all dealing with the curse, and were in great danger because of it. But thanks to him personally taking action, most of them had been stabilized.

Because of all that, it took him a few extra days before he finally arranged to come see the Heir Apparent.

Chapter 662: Don't Tell Ling'er this Secret

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, Fourth Vice-Bishop left the Green Spirit Pharmacy. Back out on the street, he turned to look at the medicine shop, his eyes shining. Moments ago after meeting the Heir Apparent, he had exchanged some words, and had maintained an extremely formal and respectful attitude. In the end, he'd expressed his interest in being a follower of the Heir Apparent.

The result was promising. However, the Green Spirit Pharmacy was a very unique place that left the vice-bishop with a very deep impression.

That young man scrubbing the floor has a bloodline in which the strength of humankind runs very strong.... It's extraordinary! And then there's the fellow reciting the poetry. I can sense some sort of blessing on him! Plus there's that Ancient Spirit girl. She has destiny aura on her!

The maidservant tending to the water seems like a Smoldering God, except with incomplete souls. I bet that she was formed from some Smoldering God expert who died, and was then tampered with by someone with very high personhood.

All of that got Fourth Vice-Bishop quite excited. But what was most extraordinary was the back room....

That entire medicine shop is full of a very strange type of authority. It's related to amnesia. If your cultivation base is too low, then you'll be affected by it without even realizing it. And that effect... is only in the beginning stages, but still can affect the soul. If it reaches fruition... then it could affect all the living beings in a very wide range, substitute for them in cultivation, alter consciousness, and make it difficult for them to tell each other apart.

It's all coming from that back room, which is occupied by that young man who met us on the border. He must have a very close relationship with the Heir Apparent. That seems especially true considering that they call him 'young lord'....

Fourth Vice-Bishop contemplated all of that as he walked away.

In the back room, Xu Qing opened his eyes. In D-132, his nascent soul had just pulled its hand away from the god's finger. Xu Qing's eyes went blank.

At the same time, everyone else in the shop also looked dazed as all of them lost their memories of what just happened. The affected memories started from when Xu Qing's nascent soul touched the god's finger, and ended when the connection ended. It was a very smooth and natural process.

Frowning, Xu Qing looked at the recording jade slip in his hand.

Back in the old Corrections Division, he had used methods like this to try to unravel the mystery of what was happening. Unfortunately, looking through it didn't reveal any relevant information. It just showed him seated there in meditation.

Why do I get the feeling I'm forgetting something?

After some thought, he summoned Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior, and also communicated with his shadow. They provided no helpful information.

Nothing out of the ordinary?

The shadow and the patriarch were the backup methods he used in addition to the recording jade slip. Next, he looked through his bag of holding hoping to find some clues. Upon finding none, he thought some more, then went out to the main floor of the shop.

Everyone there was going about business as usual. When Ling'er noticed him, she smiled sweetly and hurried over.

“Big Bro Xu Qing, how's your cultivation going? Over the past few days I've got the feeling you're about to break through.”

Xu Qing smiled and tousled Ling'er's hair. Then he walked over to the counter and picked up a recording jade slip he'd secretly placed on the eaves the day before.

Although nothing unusual seemed to be happening lately, Xu Qing got the distinct sense that something gruish was happening. Therefore, he was hoping to see if anything unusual was going on outside the back room during his cultivation sessions.

After checking the jade slip, he didn't notice anything unusual. The recording in the jade slip didn't reveal any clues. Yet that only made him feel more suspicious.

Whether in the back or out here, nothing has happened while I've been doing my study? In that case... what exactly have I been studying?

A thoughtful expression appeared on his face.

A short distance away, the Heir Apparent picked up his cup of tea and looked at Xu Qing. Inside, he was feeling very pleased. That jade slip... had been wiped clean by his very hand.

Even this little punk has days when he can't figure things out. Hahaha! I'm happy just being able to witness this. That said, the brat's powers of understanding really are shocking. When he forgets, everyone else forgets. This will domain of amnesia is really domineering.

With such thoughts on his mind, the Heir Apparent decided that he would keep observing for a few more days. After that, he would give Xu Qing some advice. In that way, he could ensure that his awe-inspiring reputation remained the same.

Frowning, Xu Qing put the jade slip away and turned to look at the Heir Apparent.

The Heir Apparent looked calmly back at him.

After a moment of thought, Xu Qing clasped hands politely, then returned to the back room and sat down cross-legged to review his memories. No matter how he went over things, everything seemed normal. Yet he still felt like he'd forgotten something. Therefore, he decided to draw on a trump card.

Have I really forgotten some things recently? Or has there been some other unusual reaction?

He sent some divine will into the god's finger in D-132. The god's finger was pretending to be asleep, and didn't react. And yet, that behavior in itself clued Xu Qing in to what was happening.

“So, you’re admitting it?” Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed. He had another trump card. Tapping his bag of holding, he produced a bottle, which he shook back and forth a few times. Inside came a loud noise followed by a host of vague whisperings.

Whatever was inside the bottle was obviously alive. Therefore, Xu Qing opened the bottle. Light emerged, which started growing larger and larger until Xu Qing stopped it at a bit less than two meters.

It was an enormous brain that looked like a tree. Before leaving Sea-Sealing County, Xu Qing had gone to the Supreme Void World and captured a few brain trees in order to purify his heavenfiend clones. At the moment, he had one of them out in the open. He looked at it coldly.

The brain tree shivered. Clearly it remembered Xu Qing, and was absolutely terrified of him. Shaking its head vigorously, it said, “You’re not hungry. Not going to eat.... don’t want to eat... I’m a brain! Don’t eat good brains!”

Xu Qing ignored the chatter. Extending his right hand in the direction of the brain tree, he said, “I want you to devour my memories of sitting in meditation for the past two days.”

The brain tree shivered. Not daring to do anything disobedient, it carefully approached. When it touched him, bits of electricity cracked across the brain’s surface.

As it happened, Xu Qing did not experience any sensation akin to memory loss. However, the brain ended up shivering and then emanating a sensation of blankness. It currently was not sending out fluctuations of terror.

Xu Qing paid very close attention until he noticed a change in the brain tree. It backed up, the sensation of blankness disappearing, to be replaced with dread. It started shaking its head.

“You’re not hungry. Not going to eat.... don’t want to eat... I’m a brain! Don’t eat good brains!”

Xu Qing frowned. Something seemed very odd about the brain tree. It was repeating itself, yet didn’t seem to realize it. It was almost as if it had forgotten what just happened.

After some thought, Xu Qing lifted his hand with the intention of doing some more experiments. Before he could, the brain tree started shaking violently, and then, after a few breaths of time passed, it collapsed into ashes that drifted onto the ground.

Eyes glittering, Xu Qing took out another brain tree and did some more experiments. After the fifth brain tree died he took a deep breath. He’d come to an outrageous conclusion.

After they devour the memories of me researching the amnesia will domain, they then forget about it. It’s as if they don’t realize they devoured anything. In other words, after they devour my memories, they lose some of their memories, and don’t remember devouring anything.

Eventually, they can’t sustain it, and they die.... Does that mean my memories really can’t be preserved?

He rubbed the bridge of his nose as he thought back to the sensation of forgetfulness he’d been experiencing.

Could it be that I’m actually being affected by the very will domain I’m seeking enlightenment of?

As he tried to figure out how to confirm that theory, he noticed a message had come in from Paramount Temple in the Moonrebel Congregation. The Captain was calling for him. Realizing that he hadn't delivered any new oil to the Captain lately, he took out the mirror shard and went into Paramount Temple.

The moment he arrived, he heard the Captain's excited voice coming from the door.

"What's going on, little Ah Qing? It's been days! Have you rescued my kidney yet? Have you brought it back?"

Xu Qing was very taken aback. "What kidney?"

The Captain looked at him from the totem, stunned. "Quit messing around, little Junior Brother. My kidney shouldn't be the subject of jokes. It's really important to me."

Xu Qing frowned and looked at the Captain. "It seems I've forgotten some things, Eldest Brother."

The Captain's eyes went wide and he looked at Xu Qing. From his facial expression he could see that he was serious about forgetting things. He inhaled sharply. "Have you been seeking enlightenment of some weird thingy nowadays?"

Xu Qing nodded. "The Heir Apparent has me seeking enlightenment of a will domain of amnesia."

Hearing that, Erniu sighed. "Little Junior Brother, how could you be going around randomly seeking enlightenment at a time like this.... You forgot about what you promised to do for me? You really don't remember how you solemnly agreed to give me 100,000,000 spirit stones?"

Xu Qing looked expressionlessly at the Captain.

Xu Qing closed his eyes. He didn't believe for a second what the Captain said about the 100,000,000 spirit stones. Given what he knew about the Captain, that part was a complete fabrication. But when it came to the clay fox, he didn't remember telling the Captain that story. That seemed to indicate that he really was forgetting some things. And it confirmed why he was forgetting things back at the Green Spirit Pharmacy.

Nodding, he said, "What's the deal with your kidney?"

The Captain sighed. As far as he was concerned, this amnesia will domain of Xu Qing's was very shameless and unreasonable. Back when he originally convinced Xu Qing to help him, it had taken a lot of carefully crafted words. If he tried to just explain things with a few words right now, it was entirely possible Xu Qing might refuse to help. Therefore, he had no choice but to revert to his previous state of sorrow and anxiety. He even said the same things and reused the same facial expressions. A little bit of this, and a little bit of that....

After Xu Qing heard the whole sales pitch again, he was about to refuse when the Captain sighed loudly.

Afterward, he felt very tired as he looked nervously at Xu Qing. Xu Qing hesitated briefly, but finally nodded, then turned to leave.

Seeing that Xu Qing was going back, the Captain got a bit nervous.

“Help me get that kidney right away!” he called. “Don’t start by seeking enlightenment. I really don’t want to have to repeat myself again like this time... it’s really exhausting....”

Xu Qing left. Back in the Green Spirit Pharmacy he stood there thinking for a short time before he finally let loose a sigh.

“I guess I should go take a look,” he murmured. With that, he vanished from the Green Spirit Pharmacy.

This time, he didn’t tell Ling’er where he was going.

Deathblade's Thoughts

Hey all, if you're into ttrpgs and the cyberpunk genre, I have a recommendation for you. A channel I follow on YouTube just launched a Kickstarter for an original cyberpunk game. I do my best to support content creators I like, and this channel is great. If that sounds like your cup of tea, check out the Kickstarter here. I do not know this creator personally, so this is not an official endorsement, advertisement or anything like that. I just hope to see a person as nice as this creator make their game happen.

Chapter 663: Another Encounter with the Slutty Fox

The desert wind blew down from the sky. It was almost as if there was a big hole in the dome of heaven, out of which would pour endless wind and sand to fill every nook and cranny of the desert. It was omnipresent, and reduced visibility to nothing but a blur. The wind sounded like the wail of countless mourners, piling together to create a howl of anguish. The souls of mortals wouldn’t be able to endure that sound for very long, and even cultivators would have a hard time, unless they were natives who were born and raised in the desert.

Xu Qing walked calmly through the desert, the hat on his head and the ancient artificial sun at his waist. The sand beneath his feet was soft, yet he walked atop it as if it were hard ground, without even leaving footprints behind him. He now had perfect control over every aspect of his strength. Normally, the wind would make it hard for anyone to walk around steadily, but it didn’t affect him at all.

A few days later, Xu Qing reached the border. Standing there, he looked over his shoulder at the desert behind him.

It’s been a year, but I hardly noticed the time passing....

The only person he’d informed of his departure was the Heir Apparent. He didn’t tell anyone else. As for Ling’er... he decided that, in order to make sure she wasn’t worrying about him constantly, it was better not to say anything.

Clay fox....

Thinking back to the previous encounter, he frowned slightly, then started walking, quickly moving across the border. His destination was that strange valley he'd passed through on his way to the Yin Sacrifice River.

Three days passed in a flash.

Late in the night of the third day, as Xu Qing sped through the canopy of heaven, he caught sight of a valley in the distance.

From above, it was a line running from east to west. As it reached the west, the terrain grew rough, and the lone valley became a host of smaller hills and valleys.

The truth was that no one really knew exactly how long the valley was. It stretched east into some dark mountains, going so far into their depths that it wasn't possible to see where it ended. The valley didn't really have a name, considering that the population in the area was so sparse. Not even the maps Xu Qing had dug up of the area listed any name for it.

The sky was currently as red as blood, making the valley seem like a ghastly trough of gore.

Staying on guard, Xu Qing dropped to the ground and walked into the valley. This was indeed the same place where they had rested back on that journey. Standing there, he looked around and then waited quietly. It was still and quiet except for the wind, which rustled the weeds on the ground and stirred Xu Qing's hair. Coldness spread through him, creating an unhealthy yin sensation.

Xu Qing just stood there waiting quietly. Based on what he and the Captain knew, that clay fox had to be extraordinary. Therefore, there was no way Xu Qing could show up here without the clay fox noticing. And she had previously mentioned for him to come back and visit.

As it turned out, he was right. Before even waiting for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he heard the sound of drums and gongs off in the distance, as well as the music of a suona piercing through the night wind. The sound grew louder.

Xu Qing looked up and saw the mist swirling at the end of the valley as a group of figures approached. There were well over a hundred, and all of them were clay people. They carried a shrine made of stone, and as they played their music, the mist rolled across the ground with them. The entire area got colder, and the plants and leaves stood on end and writhed.

The moment Xu Qing's gaze landed on the procession, the clay people cut through the air almost as if by teleportation to appear right in front of him. They stopped there. The moment they stopped moving, the drums, gongs, and suona music all stopped as well.

As the sinister wind blew, the clay people turned to look at Xu Qing. As for the dozen or so that carried the shrine, they squatted down and tilted the shrine in Xu Qing's direction, as if to invite him inside.

Face completely expressionless, Xu Qing looked at the clay people and then the shrine. There was no fox inside, only a stone prayer mat.

Xu Qing got the message. The clay fox wanted him to get in the shrine. After a short moment of thought, he looked up into the sky briefly, then stepped into the shrine.

Everything inside the shrine was crafted from clay. However, it was beautifully decorated. There were also a host of designs on the sides. The designs were strange and unique. They depicted people from numerous species bowing in worship to a six-pointed star totem. There was something profoundly ancient about the totem, and also holy, as if it were a god.

Xu Qing examined the designs closely, eventually coming to focus on the one right in front of him. It was the six-pointed star itself, and he had just noticed that there was an image of a fox inside.

The moment he sat, the shrine lurched downward. The dozens of clay people beneath it shivered. However, the shrine had unique properties; it flared with pink light, allowing the clay people to easily shoulder the shrine and stand up straight.

Xu Qing noted that thoughtfully. The music struck up again, and the clay people shifted directions and then raced into the depths of the valley with Xu Qing.

They pierced through the mist and fog, surrounded by jarring, metallic music. As Xu Qing looked outside, he could see the surroundings changing as they blurred by. Unfortunately, the shrine was moving so quickly he couldn't really make out any details. Eventually, he saw suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies outside spinning wildly. He saw mountains and rivers rising and falling. He saw what seemed to be worlds interconnecting.

I'm definitely not in a valley!

Shortly after, he experienced a different sensation as the area outside the shrine turned pitch black. The wind vanished. All sound went away. He only felt pressure coming from outside.

Where am I?

Xu Qing looked more closely to confirm that he was right. As he looked out, a massive cave appeared. The place was huge, and scattered boulders and other rubble filled the place like ancient ruins. There was also an inescapable ancient feeling to the place.

Hovering in the air in the middle of the cave was a palace building. Strangely, the palace was hanging upside down. It was constructed from gruish materials, specifically, a mixture of bloody flesh and clay. There were also countless tentacles of the same material that stretched out from its surface and swayed back and forth. From a distance, it almost looked like a ball cactus.

The clay people stopped once they were inside the cave. They lowered the shrine onto the ground, and then prostrated in the direction of the hanging palace. After that, they didn't move.

Xu Qing quietly walked out and took in his surroundings. As he did, the main gate of the palace slowly opened as if to welcome him.

Looking through the main gate, he could see that the interior of the palace had a starry sky as a ceiling, suns and moons as pillars, and a host of clay people standing in formation. The architectural configuration surpassed anything Xu Qing had ever seen in his entire life.

There was nothing enshrined in the palace other than a huge painting.

Of course, the painting was upside down because of the way that the palace was hanging, but Xu Qing could still see the painting clearly. It depicted a huge sea. Strangely, there was a whole host of fish of varying sizes flying in the sky. Meanwhile, in the water beneath the sky were innumerable birds flying through the water. It seemed like it was the reverse of what should be. The birds that should have been in the sky were now fish in the sea, while the fish had been transformed into birds. Of course, it was hard to say if it was a case of those two roles being reversed or whether it was the configuration of the painting itself that had changed their world.

Between the sea and the sky in the painting was a cross-legged statue. The statue was of a huge clay fox in a red robe, with makeup on her face. Opening her eyes in the painting, she looked out flirtatiously at Xu Qing.

Rising, she swayed forward, looking completely enchanting and seductive as she walked out of the painting.

The moment she stepped out, her appearance changed as she became a bewitchingly charming young woman. Her red robe became gauzy, partially revealing her soft, supple skin. The garment was so fine it seemed like the faintest breeze might cause it to slip down her shoulder. She had a very ample chest, and long legs as beautiful as jade. As she swayed forward, a tail flicked back and forth behind her, making her seem even more flirtatious. Her slender waist was barely visible through the red gauze, making her seem incredibly enticing. Her curvaceous form made her seem consummately beautiful, infinitely enchanting, and charming down to her core.

It only took a few steps for her to emerge into the palace hall, where she walked toward Xu Qing through the rubble.

There was something inherently stunning about the image. The surroundings included rubble, ruins, darkness, and a host of clay people prostrating on the ground.

And then a beautiful young woman walked through all that, becoming the only spot of brilliance therein. Step by step, she approached Xu Qing. Her fragrance swept over him, stirring his insides and becoming a wave of warmth that filled him like a stampede of wild animals.

Xu Qing felt himself breathing heavily. He had experienced this same thing before, except it was slightly different this time. Either way, he knew that it was because of the effects of personhood.

Definitely personhood!

Taking a deep breath, he backed up a few paces then clasped hands and said, "Well met, Senior."

The clay fox stopped walking. Her hair and gauzy red robe danced in the breeze as she stood in front of him. Her limpid, phoenix-like eyes did not flicker with emotion. Instead, they raged like a volcano, making her seem like she burned from the inside as she looked at Xu Qing and licked her lips. When she spoke, her enticing voice echoed out in all directions.

"Long time no see, young sir."

She stepped forward, her supple waist shifting in a way that would cause just about anyone to palpitate with eagerness. Seemingly drunk with infatuation, she stopped behind him and breathed, "Your smell makes me quiver with delight. I can hardly wait!"

Chapter 664: Too Ugly to Stomach!

“In the days since I last saw you, I dreamed about your aroma several times. It was absolutely captivating.... For someone to have a cultivation base like that but still have primal yang is really rare in the world. What a pity you couldn’t see how amazing I am. Instead you treasured a little snake, and thus broke my heart.”

The woman’s ample chest heaved as she spoke, and her sweet voice couldn’t have been more coquettish, like a yellow oriole or a bubbling brook, or the sounds of nature echoing eternally in an immortal mansion.

The words struck Xu Qing to the core. Breathing heavily, he turned and put some more distance between them before looking over his shoulder at her.

“Don’t run, my child. I forgive you! Who went and made you so damn attractive, you naughty little boy? Just looking at you makes me happy.” As the clay fox looked at him with glistening eyes, it felt as if she could see every inch of him inside and out. A wild, unrestrained smile spread out on her face as she walked toward Xu Qing. “Did you resign yourself to reality? Or did you really come around? After all, you did sneak over here all alone.”

Xu Qing backed up a step. The clay fox walked forward a step, and it looked like her gauzy red robe was about to slip completely off her.

She almost seemed like a vicious bully stripping off his clothes as he stalked closer and closer to a young woman waiting in the boudoir to be betrothed.

In the end, Xu Qing couldn’t back up any more. Inhaling, he smoothed out his face and calmly said, “Senior, I came here today in the hopes of negotiating with you about that kidney you showed me.”

The clay fox licked her lips and then laughed merrily. “That’s nothing at all! Just a silly little kidney! Let’s not waste any time. Come inside my house for a bit. Afterward, I’ll personally go to the kitchen and make you a nice kidney stew to replenish yourself.” It looked like she was about to grab Xu Qing and fly him up to the palace. “Don’t worry, boy, I’m very warm and soft.”

Xu Qing’s scalp tingled as he fully rotated his cultivation base. “Senior, that’s not what I meant. I want—”

The clay fox laughed softly and waved her hand gracefully. A golden, crescent-shaped kidney appeared, floating just above her hand and sending golden light shining everywhere. Spectacular fluctuations rolled off the kidney, along with a desolate, ancient aura.

Previously, Xu Qing’s cultivation base had been much lower than it was right now. And now, he saw the world differently. And thus, his eyes glittered when he confirmed that the kidney had the Captain’s aura.

“Is this the one?” the clay fox asked, her eyes twinkling.

Xu Qing nodded. “That’s the kidney I was hoping to make a deal for.”

The clay fox’s glistening eyes suddenly seemed even more flirtatious. It was almost as if her eyes had exuded a mysterious pink mist that filled the area. “Don’t be so blunt, you naughty boy. That makes things less interesting. Come with me, and I can give you a lot more than just a kidney. From

the very beginning, I promised to offer you replenishment. However... what are you going to give me in exchange? Your primal yang?"

When the words 'primal yang' left her mouth, the clay fox's eyes burned even more brightly, and she bit her lip as she looked at Xu Qing. Her voice seemed even sweeter than before, as if it dripped with honey.

Although Xu Qing had prepared himself before coming here, the look on her face left him feeling very unsettled.

Looking very sincerely at the clay fox, he said, "Senior, my six Masters all warned me about the same thing.... I'm afraid I can't help you. That said, I do have an Eldest Brother who I'm sure you would really like. I joined my Master later in life. My Eldest Brother, however, joined him years earlier. He cultivates the same technique as me, and he also has some great primal yang that you can easily pluck away."

The clay fox's eyes lit up. "What does he look like? Let me see."

Xu Qing immediately took out a jade slip that had an image of the Captain in it. He quickly made some adjustments to make sure his Eldest Brother looked as handsome as possible.

The clay fox glanced at it, and then her lips twisted disdainfully. "Too ugly! In fact, he's so ugly that I don't care how much primal yang he has, I just couldn't stomach it!"

Xu Qing was about to add something when the clay fox waved her hand, sending the golden kidney flying toward him.

Stunned, Xu Qing caught it.

The clay fox looked up at the seemingly empty darkness. Smiling nonchalantly, she looked back at Xu Qing. "Don't bother racking your brains trying to figure out what to pay me. All you know how to do is refuse my offers, you naughty little boy. Think about it. If you were my gigolo, then who would dare to cause problems for you? You could just spend your time serving me without a care in the world. That said, I'm not the kind of person who takes advantage of others. Trading your primal yang for that kidney wouldn't be a fair deal, so I'm not surprised you refused the offer.

"Ah, whatever. Who made you this tempting, huh? Consider that kidney as a down payment. I'll just wait until you have something *really*

nice that you can give me in exchange. For now, you just need to do me a favor. I want you to come and use your primal yang body to open a pathway for me."

With that, the clay fox waved her hand, whereupon ripples spread out, tearing open a rift that led to a passageway. The opening was unstable, pulsing randomly between being open wide and nearly shut. It almost seemed as if two types of power were struggling with each other inside. The interior was pitch black. Faint but intimidating roars echoed out along with a terrifying, sinister aura that would be profoundly damaging to an ordinary cultivator. However, the cave itself suppressed all of that, ensuring that it didn't spread very far.

"Let's go." The clay fox smiled, turned, and swayed into the rift, her body undulating beneath her gauzy robe. Once inside, she turned and looked at Xu Qing with a broad smile.

Xu Qing looked down at the kidney in his hand, then the clay fox inside the rift. After a moment of thought he made his decision. Eyes gleaming, he walked into the rift. Wind stirred his garments as he walked through the dark pathway toward the clay fox.

After Xu Qing was inside, the rift closed up and disappeared.

The pressure in the cave faded away into nothing.

After all the fluctuations were gone, two figures appeared.

They were none other than the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom. Of course, they had no intention of interfering with Xu Qing's affairs. However, Xu Qing had informed the Heir Apparent that he was going on this trip, and thus, both the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom had been secretly keeping an eye on him. Both of them were currently looking at the spot where the rift had disappeared.

"The little punk has good judgment," the Heir Apparent said. "That really was a god. Shē noticed us, but didn't seem to care, and actually let us eavesdrop.

"That said, I can sense that shē has no malicious intentions regarding Xu Qing.... What's more, shē's not here as hēr true self. That was just a stream of divine will. As for hēr true origin, I can't make a determination right now. Nor can I determine what hēr goals are. I was about to step in just now. Why did you stop me, Third Sister?"

The Heir Apparent looked at Princess Brightblossom.

She simply stood there for a long moment before answering, "The Firemoon Darkheaven people have three High Gods of sun, moon, and star. The sun god is asleep, the moon god is alive and kicking, and the star god is very mysterious.... And given the setup here, my guess is that this clay fox has something to do with that mysterious star god. That's why I stopped you. As for what hēr goal is, I think I have a general idea, and it's going to be a destined opportunity for Xu Qing."

The Heir Apparent took in that information thoughtfully.

Xu Qing and the clay fox were proceeding through the pathway.

The clay fox held a lantern in her hands, which cast soft light out to illuminate the surroundings. If you looked closely, you would see that the light in the lantern actually came from Xu Qing. He exuded innumerable tiny motes that the clay fox directed into the lantern, turning them into a light source.

Beyond that light, everything was as dark as the Nine Serenities underworld. No path was visible, and there was only an unending sinister wind that carried with it howls and moans. However, the light from the lantern had a certain power that kept the howling at bay. And thus, the two of them proceeded through the darkness and gloom. Before them, the darkness parted like ink, making the way for them to pass.

Xu Qing kept his guard up as he followed. He had no idea where they were going, but he could sense a strong mutagen beyond the borders of the light. In fact, it wasn't just one type of mutagen. It was a mixture.

Eyes flickering thoughtfully, Xu Qing kept close to the clay fox and the lantern. He had already come to realize that the pressure radiating from the lantern might seem like it came from the light, but actually... came from the lantern itself. The light was more of a guide.

As they continued, it seemed like the light from the lantern was actually being attracted to a certain location up ahead.

"This primal yang is indeed very pure," the clay fox said lightly. Her voice was beautiful, and in the murky surroundings, sounded very carefree and relaxed.

Looking away from the lantern light, Xu Qing said, "Senior, my so-called primal yang... isn't really a requirement to come here, is it? You're so strong that I imagine you can come and go as you please anywhere, Senior."

The clay fox turned and looked at Xu Qing with praise in her eyes. "You're very perceptive, naughty boy. That's right. Your primal yang is more like a guide. And that's because the place we're going to is somewhere that you've been before."

When Xu Qing heard that, his gaze hardened.

Around then, the lantern light grew brighter, driving away the darkness and revealing an opening ahead.

"Finally here." The clay fox's face was full of anticipation, and her eyes glittered flirtatiously. Her chest heaved with excitement, and part of her garment slipped down her shoulder. "I've finally found it."

Hurrying forward, she stood in front of the opening and looked inside.

Expression grave, Xu Qing did the same.

Ash drifted aimlessly on a gritty wind. Deep inside was an ancient wooden door that was apparently hidden within the wind. The door had some faint, horrendous marks on it.... It was completely grisly, astonishing, and sinister.

And when Xu Qing saw it, his heart started pounding. He *had* been here before.

Chapter 665: High God Starfire

He had seen this door before, at the God Decapitation Altar, when the Captain converged hope power to open a path to a High God. It was the same door! Even the scratch marks on it were exactly the same.[1]

This was Xu Qing's second time seeing it. The atmosphere and energy inside of this rift also seemed familiar to Xu Qing. It was very obvious... that this was the same place the Captain went to that day.

I can't believe the clay fox wanted to come here!

Xu Qing very clearly remembered what the Heir Apparent had said that day. Behind this door was a High God of the Firemoon Darkheaven people.

The appellation 'High God' referred to paramount and terrifying entities.

Crimson Mother was a High God, as was Flawless Hell, Lord of the Nine Serenities.[2]

Of course, even High Gods could be weak or strong. Yet the weakest of High Gods still possessed astonishing levels of might that surpassed anything mortals could imagine. That was why Xu Qing was feeling very taken aback. He clearly remembered how the Captain had stood in front of that door and made an agreement with whatever was on the other side. She had even offered a gift in the form of a gray strand of hair. The gray wind in the desert had come about because of that hair.

Reading into the situation, it seems that the High God behind this door made a deal with Eldest Brother in a past life.... With hēr help, Eldest Brother was able to use his sacrificial dance techniques to hide the pieces of his body. And the Greenhair Badlands was part of that deal. It's a trump card that Eldest Brother prepared years ago to target Crimson Mother!

As those thoughts entered his mind, he reeled as various puzzle pieces clicked together.

When I was in the clay fox's shrine, I saw countless species bowing to a six-pointed star.... The Firemoon Darkheavens have three High Gods of the sun, moon, and star....

Xu Qing turned to look at the clay fox. He was now starting to come up with an idea of who this clay fox might be. The clay fox smiled sweetly at Xu Qing, hēr eyes flirtatious. Then shē swayed into the rift, walked through the void, and right up to the door.

"Big sister," shē said, "I've finally found where you're sealed."

Hēr voice would enter the ears and stir the mind, becoming like a vortex that would suck in all thoughts and leave behind nothing but blankness.

The door didn't react. It wasn't like when the Captain came and all the banging started. However, the sinister atmosphere grew more intense. The mutagen also proliferated, making everything turn as blurry as if a fog had sprang up.

Those things would have posed a major obstacle to ordinary cultivators. But it didn't do anything to the clay fox. Smiling, shē walked right up to the door.

"So, sister, it seems you were planning to come back sometime in the future, so you left behind this soul door. Interesting. I could tell something was off about you back in the day. You were very shifty, like you were planning to stuff yourself alone. Am I right? All these years I've been wondering what it was that my big sister wanted to eat."

The clay fox licked her lips, and her eyes glowed with pink light as she stood in front of the door.

The moment she stopped moving, blood started oozing out of the cracks on the sides and bottom of the door.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, stood at the very edge of the rift. He didn't go inside.

The clay fox ignored the blood and spoke just as tenderly as before.

“Big sister, things have been rough for me these years. I finally found a kidney that smelled like you. Although the smell was faint, there was no way I could miss it. That was when I started to get an idea of what you were up to. However, you really went all-out in your effort to stay hidden and stuff yourself alone, sister. You even hid from me! It’s been so hard! That said, there are a lot of amusing things in the world.”

The clay fox laughed and turned to look at Xu Qing. As her laughter shook her shoulders, her gauzy garment slipped further down, making her look even more seductive.

“And then, completely unexpectedly, I felt karma on this naughty little boy, and my godliness told me that it wouldn’t be long before I found you, sister. He was to be my guide, to lead me to you. See? That’s how all of this happened. I haven’t deceived you in the least bit, big sister. And now, I know exactly what you wanted to eat.”

At that point, something banged against the door, as if someone had furiously punched it. Everything trembled.

The blood on the ground rose into the air, transforming into the shape of a moon, the light of which shone down with godly might to illuminate everything.

Even being on the edge of the rift, not inside, Xu Qing’s heart pounded, and his flesh quivered.

“*You useless piece of trash!*” Xu Qing snapped inwardly at the god’s finger. It was only a clone, but it was made from a god, and therefore, was a god, yet it wasn’t helping him at all.

The god’s finger was furious, yet didn’t dare to react, and just pretended to continue sleeping.

Xu Qing ignored it and fought back against the aura with everything he had, including the power of the violet moon. He also released some authority to help sustain himself. Despite all of that, he wasn’t sure how much longer he could endure.

“Such a temper, sister!” the clay fox said with a soft chuckle. The air behind her rippled and distorted as suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies appeared. They became a starry sky, the light of which converged into a totem of a six-pointed star. The moment the totem appeared, everything in the area began to tremble as though two powerful forces were clashing.

At the same time, much of the pressure weighing down on Xu Qing disappeared. The clash didn’t last for long. A moment later, both sides backed down and everything went calm. At the same time, a voice spoke for the first time from the other side of the door. It was the voice of a woman, and it dripped with loathing.

“Watch your tongue, you slutty fox!”

The clay fox didn’t seem to mind the use of the word ‘slutty.’ In fact, it almost seemed like the word was a confirmation of hēr alluring powers, and it caused hēr to smile even more broadly.

“That’s fine, big sister. However, it’s not okay to go around eating alone. It’s Crimson Mother we’re talking about...” When the clay fox mentioned Crimson Mother, a flicker of dread could be seen in hēr eyes. “As you yourself said, if you’re not careful, you might miss out on eating and even worse, pay a horrific price. Therefore, big sister... why not do it together?”

A cold snort echoed out from behind the door, and then the scratch marks on the door flowed together into the shape of a closed eye. The eye opened. Mutagen erupted out, causing everything to ripple and distort, and filling the area with a sound like chanting. That was the eye of a god. It was golden colored, with double pupils, full of apathy as it first looked at the clay fox and then Xu Qing.

When the eye looked at him, Xu Qing shivered. The authority within him exploded out, yet not even that was enough to negate the effects he was feeling. Black energy abounded within him, which was the evidence of a mutagen invasion.

A deadly sense of crisis arose within him. Every inch of his flesh screamed and trembled as a profound level of decay and rot spread through him.

Xu Qing ignored all of that and focused on keeping his soul independent. At long last, the god’s finger could no longer pretend to be asleep. Spitting out the most foul-mouthed curses, it started restoring its body.... Seeing that, Xu Qing felt a bit more calm. Looking at the door, he clasped hands and bowed.

“Well met, Senior!”

The eye of the god glittered brightly. “I remember you. You were here last time with that damned traitor. And now you’ve come again with the slutty fox.”

Before Xu Qing could respond, the clay fox stepped forward daintily to stand between Xu Qing and the door, blocking the eye’s line of sight. The pressure on Xu Qing faded.

The clay fox looked over hēr shoulder at him sympathetically. “Don’t fear, little boy. I’m here for you.” Shē turned back to look at the door, chuckling softly. “Big sister, you’re talking to your little sister’s husband! Don’t even think about coveting his primal yang. It’s mine.”

The god’s eye on the door focused on the clay fox for a long moment. Then another cold snort echoed out. No more words were spoken. Instead, the eye closed and transformed back into a host of scratch marks. Clearly, High God Moonfire had chosen to tacitly agree to the clay fox’s suggestion.

“Thank you, big sister,” the clay fox said, smiling dazzlingly. Truth be told, even if the clay fox didn’t try at all to be enticing, shē would still be incomparably alluring. Shē was certainly a rarity among beautiful women. As shē smiled, the clay fox waved hēr hand, causing the surrounding void to contract. Cracking sounds echoed out as a clay door rose up right next to the wooden door. “I’ll leave for now, big sister.”

The clay fox walked over to the door, then looked back at Xu Qing and blinked seductively a few times. “Want to come to my place for a visit, naughty boy?”

Maintaining a very sincere facial expression, Xu Qing politely refused.

Laughter rang out as the clay fox beckoned at him with hēr finger. “In that case, take care of your primal yang for me. I’ll say farewell for now. Remember to call for me when the food is ready to serve.”

She waved hēr hand in his direction, and a patch of mist carried a silver bone over to him. Before he could do anything, the mist spread out and covered him. Next, everything around him rippled, as though space and time were being manipulated. Everything blurred as he left the place of a god and shot back through the void.

A moment later, the mist disappeared, and Xu Qing found himself back in the valley. The sky was still red. A sinister wind still blew. Weeds choked the valley, stirring slightly. No one was around.

He was standing on the exact spot where he had stepped into the shrine. It was almost as if everything that he’d just experienced was a dream. It was hard not to feel dazed. After a moment passed, he opened his hand.

Resting on his palm was a silver bone. Back when he met the clay fox for the first time, she had shown that silver bone to him and mentioned that it was an Ancient Spirit bone pill that could be a huge help to the cultivation of any Ancient Spirit. Taking a deep breath, he turned to the depths of the valley, clasped hands, and bowed.

“Many thanks, Senior.”

Chapter 666: An Old Friend from Sea-Sealing

The powers of a god could be described as extraordinary and unfathomable. The clay fox’s actions made that more clear than ever to Xu Qing. And it also gave him a deeper understanding of gods in general.

Gods are neither evil nor good. It all comes down to what makes them happy.

In Xu Qing’s memories, all the gods he had encountered were like that. There were no exceptions.

Whatever problems I might be thinking about right now would be of bug-like significance to the gods. Thēir thinking and actions aren’t even worth attempting to analyze. Only when godly nature disperses both animal nature and human nature will I be able to think in the same way as thēm.

Xu Qing looked out at the desert as he thought about everything he’d experienced. Then he looked back at the valley.

The Firemoon Darkheaven species....

With that, he flew off at top speed. Days passed. The wind and sand blew against his face as he flew along. The gray wind was what prevented any outsiders from entering the desert, yet didn’t affect the local cultivators hardly at all.

Xu Qing couldn’t be completely sure, but it seemed to him that on his return trip, the wind was different from before.

This sandstorm was created by one of High God Moonfire’s hairs. And I just met that very same High God....

After some thought, Xu Qing stopped in place in the wind and experimentally waved his hand out in front of him.

“Disperse.”

The wind didn't change in any way. Xu Qing retracted his hand and continued traveling.

However, not long after that, the wind suddenly vibrated, then collapsed in front of him, creating a narrow passage like a canyon. Wind blew on both sides, connecting heaven and earth. Only that small, 300-meter gap was empty. Xu Qing's eyes shone brightly as he clasped hands, bowed to the wind, and then sped onward.

Before long, he saw the Bitter Life Mountains up ahead. The familiar sight of the mountains and the mudbrick city calmed him. A moment later, he vanished, to reappear in the back room of the Green Spirit Pharmacy. Upon stepping out onto the main floor of the shop, Ling'er, who had been absent-mindedly doing the accounts, looked up at him.

“Big Bro Xu Qing!” She threw aside her treasured accounting book and raced over to him, her face alive with joy. Wrapping her arms around him and burying her face in his chest, she said, “Where'd you go off to, Big Bro Xu Qing? And why didn't you tell me before you left! I got so worried....”

Before she could say anything else, however, her nose twitched as she smelled something. She sniffed again, more deeply.

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu looked over at the developing scene.

Nethersprite, meanwhile, checked the boiling water and then gave a sarcastic chuckle. “Men,” she muttered.

Xu Qing looked at the Heir Apparent, who was sipping his tea. The Heir Apparent looked back nonchalantly.

Xu Qing could tell that the Heir Apparent must have told Ling'er about him going to see the clay fox. That said, he didn't mind. Taking out a bag of holding, he held it out to Ling'er.

“I went back to see those clay people,” he said quietly. “I needed to handle something for Eldest Brother. And I also got something for you.”

Ling'er took the bag of holding. Looking suspicious, she opened it. Her eyes lit up. “An Ancient Spirit bone pill!”

Xu Qing smiled and tousled her hair. “Go work on your cultivation. That pill will help you a lot.”

“Thanks, Big Bro Xu Qing! You're so awesome!” Ling'er was bursting with happiness. As far as she was concerned, her Big Bro Xu Qing treated her the best. As it turned out, the entire purpose of his recent trip had been to get something for her. Realizing that, Ling'er decided that acting suspicious wasn't a good thing. Feeling a bit guilty, she said, “Big Bro Xu Qing, it's been a while since I used my cooking skills. I'm going to make you some amazing dishes to eat tonight!”

Xu Qing wanted to object, but then he looked at the Heir Apparent, who smiled back and nodded.

Ling'er looked even happier than before. Clutching the bone pill, she ran back into the kitchen to start preparing the food.

Xu Qing sat down in front of the Heir Apparent. “Senior, shē was the Firemoon Darkheaven’s High God Starfire.”

The Heir Apparent nodded and put down his cup. “What did shē want?”

“The same as High God Moonfire,” Xu Qing replied calmly. “And now there’s also a clay door at the God Decapitation Altar.”

The Heir Apparent’s eyes narrowed slightly. After giving the matter some thought, he smiled. “Interesting. Countless threads here in the Moonrite Region are all connected into a giant network of fuses, and one by one, they’re being lit.... Boy, your Eldest Brother is no simpleton. That said, you’re even more complicated than he is.”

Xu Qing shook his head. “It’s all according to our Master’s arrangements.”

The Heir Apparent hesitated briefly. Given what he knew, he no longer believed what Xu Qing said about his Master’s arrangements. For one thing, he now felt he could sympathize with Xu Qing’s Master after having personally dealt with Xu Qing’s powers of understanding. Now he was just interested in seeing what these two fellow apprentices would ultimately accomplish. Because of that, the Heir Apparent had formed some theories about Xu Qing’s Master, although he couldn’t make any final determinations now.

Meanwhile, the sounds and smells of cooking wafted out of the kitchen, causing Ning Yan’s nose to twitch and his eyes to light up.

At the door, Wu Jianwu took a deep breath. “*She snips and slices with a great attitude; who went and asked for some gourmet food?*”

Even the Heir Apparent turned to the kitchen and gave a slight nod. “Who would have thought that the girl was actually this good at cooking? Oh, by the way, I’m going on a trip in the next few days. You got back just in time. Let me see that jade slip I gave you earlier.”

Nodding earnestly, Xu Qing took out the jade slip used to control the chickens.

The Heir Apparent took it, fiddling with it briefly, then handed it back. “The jade slip still contains the warding spells to control the chickens. But now, you also have the warding spells for Inkrule and Nethersprite.”

When Nethersprite heard that, her expression darkened.

Xu Qing put the jade slip away safely. He could tell that the Heir Apparent was worried about staying away from the Green Spirit Pharmacy, and had acted accordingly. With that jade slip, he could definitely keep the Green Spirit Pharmacy safe for a time.

After a moment of thought, Xu Qing asked, “Senior, does your trip relate to Grandpa Ninth?”

The Heir Apparent nodded. “I’m just about ready to unseal him. This time, we won’t need your help. We can handle it on our own.”

Around that time, Ling’er bustled excitedly out of the kitchen with two dishes which she placed on the table. Then she hurried back to the kitchen and came out a moment later with more dishes. That continued until there were a total of eight dishes on the table.

With that accomplished, Ling'er stood to the side and called for everyone to eat. "Grandpa Heir Apparent. Big Bro Xu Qing. Big Sis Nethersprite. Please, have a taste!"

Ning Yan and Wu Jianwu didn't need an invitation to sit down. Nethersprite stopped what she was doing, looked at the dishes, and gave a friendly nod.

The Heir Apparent was curious. Picking up some food with his chopsticks, he put it in his mouth. He smiled, looked deeply at Xu Qing, and nodded.

"Excellent."

Everyone hurried to try the food. Wu Jianwu's eyes went wide, Ning Yan blushed, and Nethersprite looked contemplatively at Xu Qing.

Ling'er was obviously very nervous as she watched Xu Qing calmly eating a few bites. Finally she said, "If it tastes good, make sure to eat as much as you want!"

Ling'er's culinary skills had clearly improved. The eight dishes smelled, looked, and tasted great. Xu Qing was actually surprised.

Ning Yan swallowed, smiled, and exclaimed, "It's delicious!"

Wu Jianwu had originally been planning to take a bite and then say he wasn't hungry. But seeing the reactions of Xu Qing and the Heir Apparent, he cautiously picked up some more food with his chopsticks. Nethersprite continued eating. By the time dinner ended, all of the food was gone. Ling'er was incredibly satisfied, and was now convinced that her amazing culinary skills and cooking talents actually surpassed her cultivation ability.

I should open a restaurant! she thought.

Three days passed and the Heir Apparent left.

The day after that, Sir Skysouth from the Moonrebel Congregation came to say farewell. The war on the outside had reached a fever pitch. The forces of the Moonrebel Congregation had experienced numerous defeats; Second Vice-Bishop's army had suffered severe casualties, and was in a very precarious situation. Given that Sir Skysouth was also Fourth Vice-Bishop, he had to take people out to provide reinforcements for Second Vice-Bishop. The Bitter Life Mountains were relatively safe, but Sir Skysouth couldn't just sit around watching people suffer.

"I'm Fourth Vice-Bishop from the Moonrebel Congregation. I'm duty-bound to resist the red moon and protect my home, and I'm not going to shirk that responsibility. We need people to stand up.... I might be old and weak, but now's not the time to start worrying about my own life. If I don't come back, my shattered soul will remain one with the Moonrebel Congregation!"

As Sir Skysouth spoke the words, he looked incredibly determined and unafraid of death.

After he said farewell, Xu Qing watched him leave, and suddenly found himself thinking about Palace Lord Kong from the Swordsage Palace.

They're the same type of person.

The red moon rose higher. The color in the sky grew deeper, until all of the Moonrite Region was as red as blood.

That was especially true the closer you got to the Yin Sacrifice River. The river itself was already the color of blood, and the smell of blood and gore was strong around it. Now, it was more intense than ever.

Nowadays, it was rare to see travelers from outside the region. After all, the merchants and businessmen all knew that a god was coming to harvest the Spirit Garden. And yet, a dilapidated boat could still be seen floating across the waves of the river, heading from the direction of Holytide territory.

Before long, the boat became clearer. It had been patched together so many times it looked like it was on the verge of falling apart. Yet it cut through the water until it reached the shore. A figure flew out just as the boat finally collapsed and sank into the water. The figure looked around, sighed, and then stamped his foot on the ground.

I can't believe that villain took my Ling'er away for such a long time and hasn't brought her back! I should have known he took her to this cesspit of a region!

My Ling'er has definitely been eating and sleeping poorly. She's probably starving and freezing at the same time. She's almost certainly shivering from fear at having to follow that fellow around all the time, and she's definitely in constant danger. Who knows how many enemies might be chasing them, and she has nobody to keep her safe! It's completely inappropriate.

I should have known all along that effeminate little bastard isn't reliable! You just wait, you little rogue. I'm going to find you!

The red light of the sky shone down on an ancient and exhausted individual that was none other than the innkeeper from Plankspring way. After cursing up a storm, he finally sighed and looked off into the distance.

This region is so big, though. Where am I supposed to look?

Chapter 667: Big Changes to Moonrebel

The old innkeeper had made the perilous journey of tens upon tens of thousands of kilometers from Sea-Sealing County to the shores of the Yin Sacrifice River, braving a host of dangers, all to find Ling'er, who he was convinced was starving, exhausted, and freezing to death....

That very same Ling'er was currently seated cross-legged in her room in the Green Spirit Pharmacy. Life had been carefree and without worry recently. She had a bunch of grandpas and grandmas around, always encouraging her cute behavior. Plus she had a great relationship with Xu Qing. Because of all that, she felt like a little princess.

Her tender little cheeks were incredibly charming as she looked down at the bone pill Xu Qing had given her. The fact that the clay fox had taken that pill indicated how extraordinary it was. It was definitely from some almighty member of the Ancient Spirit species. To members of any other species, it wouldn't be very useful. But to an Ancient Spirit, it was nothing short of a precious treasure.

That was especially true of Ling'er, who had already been blessed by the destiny aura of the Ancient Spirits. Given the short length of time she had been in the Moonrite Region, she didn't

need to worry about the curse affecting her blood. She absorbed the power of the bone pill without facing any obstacles. She was only limited by how much her body was able to absorb.

Given that Xu Qing was standing by as dharma protector, there was no way anything could go wrong.

As she circulated her cultivation base, the bone pill slowly melted, turning into silver streams of energy that she inhaled. Then they spread through her body and caused her cultivation base to surge.

Back when Xu Qing first arrived in the Moonrite Region, Ling'er's cultivation base was still in Foundation Establishment, and wasn't very stable. After everything she had experienced, it was now very stable.

Ancient Spirits practiced cultivation in a different way from most other species. They didn't have to bother with the process of opening dharma apertures and igniting life flames. As Ling'er absorbed the bone pill, her aura started getting closer and closer to the Gold Core level.

Xu Qing was surprised by what he was seeing.

Very similar to the taboo poison pill.... It's an ancient cultivation method, very different from what people do nowadays.

It reminded him very much of how he'd absorbed that taboo poison pill into himself. The biggest difference was that Xu Qing and the taboo poison pill had different origins, and therefore, him putting it into his heavenly palace was an indirect method to gain an initial measure of control.

Things were very different with Ling'er. As the silver energy poured into her, the bone pill disappeared from her hand. When it reappeared inside of her, it had become an internal core.

All of a sudden, Ling'er's bloodline power surged, and behind her appeared a female warrior god clad in a suit of armor. The woman was tall and flawlessly beautiful, but at the same time emanated a sense of killing and death. She had a long spear in her hand, and had a dragon and a snake coiled around her. That was the true form of an Ancient Spirit. Ancient Spirits started out as snakes when they were young. After reaching adulthood, they could take human form, and when their bloodline completely matured, they would gain a dragon and a snake to watch over them. Their battle prowess would also become shocking.

Like a demon!

Xu Qing's eyes shone as he realized that Ling'er's cultivation method was very similar to the cultivation of various wild animals. It involved cultivating a personal internal core and drawing out one's bloodline.

This breakthrough was going to be very important to Ling'er, and couldn't be completed in one short session. It would require a sustained buildup of power. And thus, as Ling'er slowly proceeded with her cultivation, she became a streak of light that shot over to Xu Qing's arm and became a sealing mark there.

By means of the sealing mark, Xu Qing could sense how Ling'er was doing. After making sure everything was going smoothly, he checked on his nascent souls.

I need to get all of my other nascent souls besides the violet moon one into the position of being able to summon the fifth tribulation. After that fifth tribulation, I'll be in the great circle of Nascent Soul. Oh, right. I need to go give this kidney to Eldest Brother.

With that, Xu Qing took out the mirror shard and went back to Paramount Temple in the Moonrebel Congregation. As soon as he opened his eyes, he heard the Captain shouting at him.

"I can sense my kidney, little Ah Qing! You have it, don't you? You must have paid a grievous price for my sake, little Junior Brother. I'll never forget that!"

The Captain was now visible in the totem on the door, and he looked very excited.

Looking at him, Xu Qing waved his hand to produce the golden kidney, which he sent flying toward the totem. It merged inside, whereupon a very contented sigh drifted out from the Captain.

"I can finally be a complete man again! Little Junior Brother, all of the preparations are in place now. All we have to do is open this door. Don't worry! We can work together from both outside and inside. By adding in the blood of those god bastards, we'll definitely be able to bust this thing open!" The Captain was obviously emboldened and excited at having his kidney returned to him. "By the way, little Junior Brother, did you get any clues about who that clay fox is?"

Xu Qing nodded. "It's High God Starfire."

The Captain's eyes narrowed.

Xu Qing then went on to explain the story to the Captain, taking his time but not going too slow, and finishing with an explanation about the clay door.

The Captain listened carefully. "So that's who we're dealing with. I never laid eyes on that clay fox in person, little Junior Brother, but based on your description, this extremely amorous High God is almost certainly up to no good." The Captain licked his lips and continued, "You've done too much for me, little Junior Brother. I just can't bear to ask you to do any more. Therefore... do you mind introducing me to that slutty— er, ahem, I mean to that High God? I can handle her!"

From the Captain's tone, it seemed he would be willing to do anything for his Junior Brother.

"You said High God Starfire likes primal yang, right? I can give it to her! As the Eldest Brother, it doesn't matter if we're talking about friendship or just morality, I have to do my part. Therefore, I'll do it! I'll give my primal yang to this High God!" The Captain actually looked a bit angry.

"Thanks, Eldest Brother. I actually did offer to introduce you, but shē said you're too ugly."

After all, that had been Xu Qing's plan from the beginning.

Meanwhile, the Captain's jaw nearly dropped and he looked hesitantly at Xu Qing, unsure of whether Xu Qing had said that simply as a comeback, or if his story was true. Either way, adding another High God would make the job more complicated, but would also increase the chances of success. Eventually, the Captain cleared his throat and held back from asking further questions.

In the following days, Xu Qing worked on his cultivation and also spent time sending fresh godchild blood into Paramount Temple for the Captain to use. The banging on the door there grew more intense.

The Crimson Mother totem was starting to smoke and turn blurry. If things kept developing as they were, it seemed it wouldn't be long before the totem was unraveled.

The cultivators in the Moonrebel Congregation had already grown used to the constant noise coming from Paramount Temple. Few people paid much attention to it. As the red moon grew more oppressive, Crimson Mother's return neared, and the Red Moon Cathedral tightened their net, the resistance forces of the Moonrebel Congregation were in increasing peril.

And then, about ten days later, something momentous occurred.

Second Vice-Bishop perished in battle!

His death was a huge blow to the Moonrebel Congregation. That battle was a blood-soaked affair with innumerable casualties. It led to endless cries of grief, and shook the hearts of everyone. Sir Skysouth, who was also Fourth Vice-Bishop, went to provide backup, yet he was also seriously hurt. In the end, he couldn't turn the situation around, and had to flee with the scattered survivors.

Before the members of the Moonrebel Congregation could recover from that loss, something even more momentous happened. In fact, it struck the Moonrebel Congregation as a whole like a bolt of lightning.

First Vice-Bishop and Fifth Vice-Bishop betrayed the Moonrebel Congregation and defected to the Red Moon Cathedral! What was more, as part of their betrayal, they used their authority to eject all members from the Moonrebel Congregation, then seal all the entrances so no one could return. It caused a massive uproar. After all, the Moonrebel Congregation itself was the final place that cultivators could run to in an emergency. If they couldn't seek refuge there, then there was no chance that the Moonrebel Congregation could survive.

Third Vice-Bishop and Fourth Vice-Bishop were still around. One of them was holed up while the other was on the run. But regardless, First Vice-Bishop had the highest level of authority, and thus, there was no way for either of the loyal vice-bishops to unseal the Moonrebel Congregation.

The most relevant factor was that the development created a crisis of faith amongst all the Moonrebel Congregation cultivators. It went without saying that the betrayal of two vice-bishops put the Moonrebel Congregation on very shaky ground. It didn't matter whether the vice-bishops did it out of expediency or if they had been traitors all along. In the end, the ultimate reason for all of it was that for years, the Moonrebel Congregation's Paramount Temple had never been opened, and thus there had never been an archbishop. Without a true leader, any organization will be *as disunited as anything and everything*.

It was the ultimate moment of despair and chaos for the Moonrite Region. And off in the distance, the red moon was already halfway risen. There was no hope anymore, nor any indication that hope was on the way. The countdown had truly begun for everyone.

Meanwhile, the Greenhair Badlands was the only paradise in the region, and was like a bright light shining during a dark night.

Just outside of that light, the seriously injured Fourth Vice-Bishop led his subordinates, as well as the surviving forces of Second Vice-Bishop, toward the desert. There was nowhere else for them to go.

The hundreds of thousands of cultivators that made up the group were all numb and dispirited. Most of them didn't even care if they died. Exhaustion had become a burden that they simply couldn't get rid of.

And yet, there were some members of the group who looked in higher spirits than the others. They didn't seem numb or depressed, but rather, extremely excited. It was as if they weren't burdened by exhaustion, but instead, were fueled by a brightly burning hope in their hearts. That group was a few thousand strong, and almost seemed like a standalone organization. Their members had both strong and weak cultivation bases, but they all were united.

What was especially noteworthy was that they wore clothing of a different color and cut than everyone else, almost like a uniform. The front of those garments were embroidered with the character Nine. The backs were embroidered with the character Pill.

This group was made up of followers of the legendary and mysterious Grandmaster Pill Nine from the Moonrebel Congregation.

Their leader was a woman with a Spirit Trove cultivation base. Her flowing robe wasn't enough to hide her attractive figure, and her facial features were so spectacular that she was clearly a peerless beauty. She didn't have the strongest cultivation base of that group. Yet the Grandmaster Pill Nine followers viewed her as their leader. Obviously she had a high status among the followers.

When she spoke, her voice thrummed with exuberance and heroism. "Just hang on a bit longer, everyone. We're almost at the Greenhair Badlands! When I listened to the grandmaster's dao reverberation for two months, I could sense how profound and mysterious he was. The grandmaster uses the green sand as the furnace, the sun and moon as the fire, and the natural laws of heaven and earth as the medicinal ingredients. Then, by tapping into the white wind, he made his new pill.

"The only place you can find that white wind is the Greenhair Badlands. And thus... I'm absolutely certain the grandmaster is in the desert!"

Chapter 668: A Lord Young but Very Experienced

That valiant and formidable woman was actually Xu Qing's neighbor from the Moonrebel Congregation. The statues there didn't just conceal one's facial features, they could also keep one's gender a secret. Before the resistance movement kicked off, nobody knew the true identity of that 'bare-chested burly man'. As it turned out, 'he' was actually a woman. That said, this woman actually had a very manly personality, which was obvious given the words she had just spoken.

She was the very first and most original follower of Grandmaster Pill Nine. She had listened to his two months of dao reverberations, and had also been the one to organize his followers. Given all of that, this neighbor of Xu Qing's was actually quite well-known. She was skilled at organizing large groups, which was indisputable considering that there were now thousands of Pill Nine followers. And those were only the core members. There were even more followers who had spread out into Moonrite. As a result, more and more cultivators were coming to hear the name Pill Nine. The core members were now attached to Fourth Vice-Bishop's forces, and were getting closer and closer to the Greenhair Badlands.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was being paid a formal visit by Patriarch Inkrule.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings were gone, which meant that Xu Qing was in charge. And since Patriarch Inkrule was an employee of the Green Spirit Pharmacy, he didn't dare to be rash when dealing with whatever issues popped up.

That said, deep in his heart, he was still a bit resentful at having to take orders from Xu Qing. It wasn't necessarily because of Xu Qing's status, but rather, his age. As far as Patriarch Inkrule was concerned, it just didn't make sense for a child to have such important responsibilities.

"Young Lord, this is a bit different compared to last time," Patriarch Inkrule said to Xu Qing, his expression somber. "Last time, the Heir Apparent and his siblings were here, which is why we could open the defenses and let Fourth Vice-Bishop and his forces inside. But now... Fourth Vice-Bishop is being chased by a cathedral army. That's why I highly suggest that we do not open the gray wind defenses."

Because of the discussion, the atmosphere inside the medicine shop was tense. Ning Yan wasn't scrubbing the floor. Wu Jianwu wasn't reciting any poetry. Li Youfei and Nethersprite were both looking at Xu Qing.

Li Youfei was the only one who looked outright nervous. Ning Yan had a serious expression on his face. He had been one of Xu Qing's subordinates from the very beginning, and had been present to witness all of the amazing things he'd done, and the way he won the hearts of countless species. Because of that, he knew that Xu Qing had ample experience in dealing with this kind of situation.

Although Wu Jianwu didn't know as much about Xu Qing as Ning Yan did, he had heard plenty of stories. Nethersprite had seen Xu Qing in action on the field of battle, and later on, had heard stories about the Lieutenant Governor's Coup. Therefore, she knew there was a lot more to him than met the eye.

His expression was very solemn. The situation had reached a critical point outside the desert. If they did open the defenses, it would make the desert very vulnerable to danger.

As everyone looked on, Xu Qing sat in the same spot where the Heir Apparent usually sat. His eyes were closed in thought.

Ling'er knew that it was a delicate situation, so she just stood quietly behind Xu Qing.

Time ticked by. Xu Qing didn't speak. Gradually, an imposing and dignified air seemed to build up around him. He was currently thinking back to Sea-Sealing County, and how he'd stood in for Palace Lord Kong to lead the Swordsage Palace. Back then, he had far fewer trump cards than he had now, yet still managed to turn the entire situation on its head.

"What's the current state of our armed forces?" he asked calmly, opening his eyes.

Patriarch Inkrule seemed about to continue speaking when he suddenly took out a jade slip and checked it. A look of surprise appeared on his face.

“Young Lord, I just got some news. Fourth Vice-Bishop’s army is changing directions. They’re not coming toward us anymore. They’re going in a different direction on the periphery of the desert. It looks like they’re trying to find a spot to make a last stand. They don’t want to cause trouble for us...”

Inkrule eventually trailed off, his facial expression complex and somewhat helpless.

Xu Qing nodded and picked up a cup of tea. He didn’t drink. Instead, he just looked at the tea inside. Within the tiny ripples, he felt like he could see a person from his memories. Years ago, that person stood on the border of Sea-Sealing County, burning to death as he single-handedly blocked an army. At that time, Xu Qing’s heart had filled with pain, and yet he had been powerless to save that person. Today... there was a similar person that needed help. A moment passed.

Xu Qing stood. “First, have all of our cultivators come into the Bitter Life Mountains. This is going to be our main gathering point. Without orders from me, no one is to leave the mountains. Second. Notify Fourth Vice-Bishop that he’s not to change directions. Tell him to come right into the desert.”

Patriarch Inkrule heard his orders but hesitated.

Xu Qing looked up at him, his expression placid. “The red moon has already taken over half the sky. True calamity is only months away. If we just sit idly by and watch Fourth Vice-Bishop fight with the Red Moon Cathedral, then what exactly would be the point of calling ourselves Moonrebels?”

. And therefore... we will fight! There won’t be any more debate about it! Ning Yan!”

“Here, sir!” Ning Yan said, shivering as he stepped forward and stood with his back straight. He suddenly felt like he was back in Sea-Sealing County.

“As a member of my Secretariat Division, you will work with Senior Inkrule to relay my orders.”

“Yes, sir!” Ning Yan replied loudly.

“Wu Jianwu!”

“Here!” Wu Jianwu was already getting swept up in the moment.

“I want you to send all your children out into the desert, especially the parrot. They’re in charge of reconnaissance!”

Wu Jianwu didn’t dare to act disobediently, and immediately nodded his head.

“Nethersprite!”

Nethersprite didn’t say anything, but she looked up at Xu Qing.

“You keep Ling’er safe, and stand guard over the Green Spirit Pharmacy. Li Youfei, same for you.”

“Great!” Nethersprite agreed, and Li Youfei nodded vigorously. The latter could already sense that Xu Qing was different from before.

Having given his orders, Xu Qing took out a jade slip and gave it to Ling’er. “When the God Decapitation Altar appears in the sky outside, crush this jade slip!”

With that, Xu Qing strode out of the Green Spirit Pharmacy. He waved his hand, and a host of clucking sounds could be heard as the chickens flew out from the backyard. Light glittered around them as they all transformed into huge chickens. Those who had performed well previously now had dazzling feathers, making it obvious they had been promoted. In fact, beneath their feathers you could see their actual bodies. Clearly, they had been rewarded with some freedom. After a brief bit of squabbling over position, they clustered around Xu Qing as he flew up into the sky.

Patriarch Inkrule looked on, moved. He could tell that Xu Qing was planning to take the flock of chickens and go personally receive Fourth Vice-Bishop.

“This....” Although Inkrule actually agreed with Xu Qing’s decisions, he still hesitated. Then he glanced at Ning Yan and the others. Considering how low their cultivation bases were, he disdained them. And yet, he had no one else to get information from.

“Does the young lord—”

“Ultimately, during the Lieutenant Governor’s Coup, he brought peace to the entire county. Our human emperor issued a proclamation of approval, and even named him as the governor-elect. As a result, our exalted leader is probably the most famous person in Sea-Sealing County, and has long since won the hearts of the people.”

When Inkrule heard all of that, his pupils constricted. He could tell that Ning Yan wasn't lying, yet the things he'd just said left the patriarch feeling shaken to the core. "Quelled unrest in two forbidden grounds? Levied millions upon millions of troops? The governor-elect?"

As he reeled in shock, Xu Qing stood atop the head of a huge bird as it shot through the dome of heaven over the desert.

As he moved along, his eyes turned pitch black, and his gaze filled with taboo poison power. As that power spread out and was carried by the wind, the gray wind around him turned black and ghastly. The roiling poison within it caused all of the chickens to tremble fearfully.

However, Xu Qing's face remained expressionless. As the taboo poison power grew stronger around him, he reached the border of the desert. There, he waved his hand, causing the wind ahead of him to split apart and create an opening. Deafening rumbling sounds spread out everywhere.

From a distance, the gap in the sand and wind looked like a valley with a road in the middle of it. Off in the distance, it was already possible to see Fourth Vice-Bishop's army being pursued by the cathedral cultivators. Intense fighting was already playing out, and people were dying.

However, the rumbling sound caught the attention of both parties to the conflict, and countless eyes shifted to focus on Xu Qing.

That included all of the Grandmaster Pill Nine followers.

As Xu Qing stood in the gap in the sand and wind, he raised his right hand and pointed straight out. "Poison!" he said. The poison wind around him erupted, sweeping forward, its poison and mutagen causing everything around it to blur. Few people qualified to avoid that poison as it rolled over the army from the Red Moon Cathedral.

From a distance, it looked like a huge sea of poison spreading out, to the astonishment of all onlookers. The ground rotted, turning black. The red light from the sky couldn't pierce through the poison cloud. This basically counted as the first time Xu Qing had actually used the taboo poison in his gaze.

Within the taboo poison was Xu Qing, his face expressionless, his eyes cold, godliness rising within him.

"God cultivator!"

It was hard to say who said it first, but soon countless people in the crowd were echoing the same words.

Chapter 669: Not Recognizing the Gentleman in Front Of the Peach Flowers

In the past, the taboo poison couldn't distinguish between friend and foe. It affected everything within its range. But now that it was part of Xu Qing's gaze, he had much more control over it. He could set specific targets, and in the current situation, that meant the Moonrebel Congregation cultivators weren't affected.

The slaughter was focused on the cathedral cultivators. Within moments, cries of alarm began rising up, and numerous cathedral cultivators fell back in terror. Some of the weaker ones screamed as their flesh melted and they turned into pools of blood on the ground. The majority, however, just

had to deal with rotting flesh as well as the pain it brought. The mere threat of death was enough to completely unsettle them and force them to unleash whatever red moon power they could. Only the toughest cultivators were temporarily unharmed.

In the final analysis, the Moonrebel cultivators had a bit less pressure, and thus Fourth Vice-Bishop issued the orders to immediately flee into the desert.

Earlier, he had used various methods at his disposal to confirm that the Heir Apparent wasn't in the desert. In order to avoid causing unnecessary complications, Fourth Vice-Bishop had been prepared to fight a battle to the death with cathedral cultivators. After all the years that had passed, Fourth Vice-Bishop was weary to the core. They were fighting a hopeless resistance fight, and though he didn't want to just give up, the reality of the situation was bitterly painful.

When Fourth Vice-Bishop saw Xu Qing step out and open the desert, he gritted his teeth and raced toward safety.

At the same time, he personally launched attacks to buy time for his people. Booms rang out, and the fluctuations of magical techniques spread everywhere.

The cathedral cultivators were blocked by the taboo poison, yet there were experts in their number who weren't ready to just give up. Scattering, they raced to intercept.

The chickens surrounding Xu Qing shot forth to meet them. At the same time, Xu Qing's closed his eyes, lifted his right hand, and pointed out to the desert.

"Let the Ghost Emperor mountain become the altar. Let D-132's destiny be the trough!"

The moment the words left Xu Qing's mouth, colors shifted in the sky, rumbling sounds echoed out, and both the Ghost Emperor mountain and D-132 manifested outside of him. A 3,000-meter projected image of the God Decapitation Altar's blade and trough appeared.

As the Ghost Emperor held the prison cell in both hands, the power of destiny aura created a huge blade. The 3,000-meter altar was shocking and ghastly. It caused lands and mountains to shake, and as it settled down, it blocked the path of the advancing cathedral cultivators.

Of course, the scene playing out was both familiar and shocking to the cultivators present.

"What's this...?"

"It's so familiar!!"

As exclamations of shock rang out, Xu Qing's eyes began to shine brightly.

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

The dome of heaven rumbled as the bluegreen dragon turned into the blade itself. Taboo poison converged on the edge of that blade, as did a dao-severing resonance. This was a heavenly saber, and it shone with scintillating daybreak light. It could shatter countless magics and melt innumerable techniques.

The moment the heavenly saber appeared, both Moonrebel and cathedral cultivators thought back to why this seemed so familiar. And it didn't take long for them to put the pieces together.

“That's what everyone saw projected into their minds. It's... the God Decapitation Altar!”

“It looks exactly the same!”

“Don't tell me he's the guy who did all that stuff at the God Decapitation Altar??”

Xu Qing no longer bothered hiding who he was, and allowed everyone to see his true features, which everyone had seen on the day of that momentous event.

When the truth was revealed, everyone was flabbergasted, and felt like they were being struck by lightning from heaven. All of the Moonrebel Congregation cultivators were incredibly excited. Back when they had felt numb, it was the image of the things playing out at the God Decapitation Altar that sparked their desire to fight back, and turned it into a raging fire. Now, in a moment of hopeless despair, they again glimpsed that God Decapitation Altar, as well as the person they had previously only seen in the broadcast! That person seemed to overlap with the image of the Imperial Sovereign.

A voice echoed out.

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

The golden crow danced in the air. The violet moon sent out rippling fluctuations. The god trove combined everything into one.

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

Five sundials formed behind Xu Qing. The flames of the life lamps stirred the night. And the gnomons began to move, causing the power of time to surge. They all stopped at noon!

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

Xu Qing's eyes shone brightly as the blade fell! The heavenly saber descended from above, like a massive waterfall or a mountain, filling the sky and shaking the lands below.

It wasn't slashing into a cultivator, but rather, heaven and earth. The saber contained boundless godly might. As the blade and the trough met, the air was cut, and the void was shredded. Rumbling sounds swept out as the cathedral cultivators' path was completely severed. A huge gorge appeared in the lands, and a strong wind blew a baleful aura out on either side. Shocked, the cathedral cultivators had no choice but to stop moving.

As of this moment, Xu Qing was like the Imperial Sovereign awakened. As of right now, the God Decapitation Altar that all of them had seen in their minds was now a reality, visible to all of the cathedral cultivators, as well as the hundreds of thousands of Moonrebel cultivators.

As they all reeled in shock, a boundlessly destructive tempest rose up outside the desert.

As Fourth Vice-Bishop looked deeply at Xu Qing, his hundreds of thousands of subordinates took advantage of the threat created by the God Decapitation Altar to speed into the desert.

The Red Moon Cathedral's Void Returning experts were shaken. However, though Xu Qing's God Decapitation Altar was well-known at this point, it wasn't mighty enough to force them into retreat. In fact, they had just been preparing to strike back. But then, a towering might erupted from the depths of the desert, specifically, the direction of the Bitter Life Mountains.

Suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies appeared mysteriously in the dome of heaven. At the same time, a majestic river of time also appeared, and wherever it flowed, the aura of a great dao grew stronger.

These were the fluctuations of a Smoldering God! It was just barely possible to see a pair of eyes within that river of ancient time.

They were the eyes of Princess Brightblossom!

Those eyes caused all cathedral cultivators outside the desert to fall back in horror and amazement. After all, the main reason they had dared to come here was that they had been informed the Heir Apparent and his siblings were gone from the area.

Yet here they could sense a Smoldering God aura, leading to no small amount of amazement. Although it was possible it was a trick, the reality was that these cathedral cultivators weren't interested in taking any dangerous risks. And what was happening right now indicated that a Smoldering God attack was incoming.

Therefore, even the top experts from the Red Moon Cathedral chose to be safe rather than sorry. As they fell back, the Moonrebel Congregation cultivators finally made it into the desert. Looking excitedly in Xu Qing's direction, they clasped hands and bowed.

Taking it all in, Xu Qing waved his hand, causing the desert wind to close up and once again seal the interior away from the prying eyes of the Red Moon Cathedral. With that accomplished, Xu Qing turned to the travel-weary Fourth Vice-Bishop. He clasped hands in greeting.

"Well met, Senior." Despite the serious expression on his face, Fourth Vice-Bishop didn't use his cultivation base disparity as an excuse. He bowed deeply to Xu Qing. "Many thanks for your assistance, young friend!"

Xu Qing nodded and was about to say something further when a group of a few thousand cultivators caught his attention thanks to their cheering and other behavior.

Before, he had been paying attention mostly to the enemy forces, and thus hadn't looked closely at the Moonrebel army. But now that he could see what that group of several thousand cultivators was wearing, it caused him to hesitate slightly. They were led by a woman who was so excited that she had dropped to her knees to kiss the ground. Many of the thousands behind her did the same.

Xu Qing blinked a few times as a strange feeling welled up in his heart.

"Young friend," Fourth Vice-Bishop said quietly, "those people are followers of Grandmaster Pill Nine. Their leader calls herself the Apostle, and she's the one who heard the grandmaster's dao reverberation for two months. They came from all over, but they're very united and always help each other out. They weren't always following us around, but at a certain point we crossed paths and found that they were heading

here to the desert just like we were. They believe that Grandmaster Pill Nine is actually hiding out here.”

Hearing all of that, Xu Qing looked at the group. They were so excited that not even the wind could suppress their chatter.

“This is our holy land!”

“That’s right! The grandmaster’s medicinal pills contain the power of the white wind, and that just goes to show how important that wind is! This is the only place in the Moonrite Region where you can find it.”

“The Apostle was right! The grandmaster is definitely hiding out here.”

“In this chaotic world, we need to find the grandmaster, to follow him and also keep him safe!”

Xu Qing was surprised at the fanatical looks on their faces, especially when it came to the leader. After looking at her closely, and hearing her speak, he came to the realization that she was probably his bare-chested neighbor.

As the wind blew in the desert, the group went back to the Bitter Life Mountains.

Fourth Vice-Bishop returned to the very same garrison where they had been camped before. As he set about getting things in order, the followers of Grandmaster Pill Nine went their own way.

In the following days, their people scattered throughout the Bitter Life Mountains, hoping to find clues leading to Grandmaster Pill Nine. Though they didn’t meet with any success, they were persistent.

One thing they did was create their own camp a short distance away from the mudbrick city. In the middle of that camp was a statue that looked just like Xu Qing’s statue from back in the Moonrebel Congregation.

There was no way Xu Qing couldn’t keep an eye on them. He had never experienced anything like this. In fact, on the day they erected their special statue, he couldn’t help but go over to take a look. As he entered the Pill Nine camp, he saw that the thousands of cultivators there were all in very high spirits. They also had a map prominently displayed that showed the entire desert. The map had been divided up into sections, some of which had been crossed out.

His arrival attracted some notice, and many people bowed in his direction. Meanwhile, the woman called the Apostle dropped what she was doing to go receive him.

“Well met, Fellow Daoist,” she said as she stood next to the statue of Pill Nine. She wore an outfit that made her seem quite capable and experienced. Her expression was serious as she clasped hands and bowed to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing examined the statue and noticed how lifelike it was. All the details were correct. Turning, he looked at the valiant and formidable young woman. He thought back to that burly neighbor of his, and that image superimposed with that of the young woman.

Glancing at the statue again, he said, "It's entirely possible that the cathedral could get into the desert eventually, especially as the red moon continues to rise. Leaving these mountains is inherently dangerous. There's no need for you to do any searching out there."

The young woman shook her head. Eyes flashing with determination, she said, "That's exactly why we have to find him as soon as possible. The grandmaster could be in a lot of danger!"

Xu Qing hesitated briefly, then said, "Or he could be very safe.... Besides, if you found him, would you even be able to recognize him?"

The woman laughed proudly, as did the other followers in the area. "Fellow Daoist, you simply don't understand. After all, you've never seen the grandmaster. But I heard his dao reverberation for two months! What's more, I've been by his side on many occasions. I know how mighty and compassionate he is, and I'm also familiar with his unique aura. All it will take is one glance for me to know if someone is the grandmaster or not!"

With that, she looked more closely at Xu Qing.

Chapter 670: A God Comes to the Desert

In the end, Xu Qing left. He didn't reveal that he was actually Pill Nine. However, in his heart, he knew that he had to do his best to take care of these followers of his. After all, they had traveled great distances in their zeal to support Grandmaster Pill Nine. And one reason why the name of Pill Nine was so widespread in the Moonrebel Congregation was because of their tireless efforts.

Before leaving, Xu Qing had his shadow put a shadow eye on the woman known as the Apostle. That way, he would know if she ran into any danger, and would hopefully be able to provide assistance.

That was especially true after Fourth Vice-Bishop made his escape there.

Xu Qing even got some intelligence reports from Wu Jianwu's children, who were scouting on the outside. According to them, there were cathedral cultivators constantly attempting to break into the desert. Although the sandstorm generally stopped them, they were having some limited success. According to the parrot, there were large numbers of cathedral cultivators gathering outside the desert. That said, they weren't taking any specific actions. They were just waiting. Everyone was on guard.

The cathedral cultivators only had to wait about a week. They had been waiting for a specific person to show up.

It was an old man with a long, crimson robe and an imperial crown. He was none other than the Red Moon Cathedral's Smoldering God pontiff. He held a scepter in his hand, and when he arrived, wild

colors flashed in heaven and earth, and winds screamed. Unexpectedly, a second red moon appeared in the sky above him.

It was only a projection, but when it appeared in the canopy of heaven, it caused a tideflow reaction to appear in the desert. The sandstorm was interfered with. Mountains collapsed. Sand was sent blowing everywhere. And intense rumbling sounds filled the desert.

To the shock of everyone in the Bitter Life Mountains, the red moon sent innumerable red lightning bolts shooting down into the desert. The desert trembled, and the sand storm seemed like it might collapse at any time. The red moon power was mounting a full invasion of the desert. It was a superlatively domineering invasion, causing the sand everywhere to collapse into red mud.

At the same time, the cathedral cultivators all received further blessings, causing them to shine with blood-colored light. The blessings of Crimson Mother became so intense that the cultivators could stand up to the power of the wind and actually step into the desert. And then they began to close in on the Bitter Life Mountains. Wherever they went, the sky and land alike turned as red as blood.

Meanwhile, the godly might on display caused the sandstorm to slowly start shrinking. Thankfully, the storm had been instigated by a god, and therefore, disregarding it wasn't exactly simple.

Therefore, the cathedral cultivators who entered it couldn't simply pass through it in one shot.

Getting all the way to the Bitter Life Mountains was going to take time. However, the pressure that they created was immense. It was like entire mountains weighing down on the hearts of the locals, making it difficult for them to even breathe.

In the shortest of moments, everyone felt immense apprehension and danger covering them. That grim feeling spread through the Bitter Life Mountains and eventually affected the Green Spirit Pharmacy.

Ning Yan, Wu Jianwu, and even Li Youfei all seemed mentally agitated. Nethersprite was no exception, and even the chickens in the backyard.

Only Xu Qing didn't seem affected. He knew that things were now down to the wire, and he was already mentally planning out what to do.

The key to dealing with all this rests largely on the return of the Heir Apparent and his siblings. And also... opening the main door of Paramount Temple in the Moonrebel Congregation, to become the Archbishop of Moonrebel!

Xu Qing's eyes shone brightly as he thought back to that lake governed by the Moonrebel Congregation's spirit automaton. There were dozens of ice sculptures that had been building up there since the last coming of the red moon. They were all cultivators who had participated in the archbishop trial. Each of those individuals was a complicated person, and many of them were similar to Fourth Vice-Bishop, being in the fourth stage of Void Returning.

Put people like that anywhere, and they would be incomparably powerful. And if they showed up in the desert now, they would be a huge help in resolving the current crisis.

The key to freeing them was to become the Archbishop of Moonrebel. The Archbishop of Moonrebel's power wouldn't be limited to that. Based on what Xu Qing had learned recently from the Captain, he was fairly certain that the Archbishop of Moonrebel could take the Moonrebel Congregation from its illusory state and make it true and real. At that point, the Moonrebel

Congregation... would no longer be the Moonrebel Congregation. It would be the precious treasure of an Imperial Sovereign! That level of mightiness could shake the lands of an entire region.

Xu Qing's eyes flickered thoughtfully as he sat in the seat usually occupied by the Heir Apparent and analyzed the situation.

It's a domain treasure! Furthermore, the Archbishop of Moonrebel has the ultimate level of privilege, and can remove the seals put in place by the traitorous vice-bishops. Then the Moonrebel cultivators will once again be able to enter the Moonrebel Congregation to recover from injuries and evade pursuit.

In the end, I can't control when the Heir Apparent returns. But becoming the Archbishop of Moonrebel... will be the key to solving everything!

After everything he had gone through with the Captain recently, he had come to a much clearer understanding of the plans the Captain had laid out.

Becoming the Archbishop of Moonrebel, plus receiving help from the Heir Apparent and his brothers and sisters, combined with the power of all living beings in this region, plus all the cultivators, can be used to crush the Red Moon Cathedral before the red moon arrives. That's the first major step in dealing with Crimson Mother.

Xu Qing looked up. His calm demeanor had spread to the others in the medicine shop. Ning Yan and everyone else seemed calmer.

Xu Qing harvested some more godchild blood from the world fragment and then went to Paramount Temple to deliver it to the Captain. In the past, the Moonrebel Congregation had always been a bustling place. But not now. Thanks to the sealing marks placed by the traitorous vice-bishops, no one could get inside.

At the moment, there was no one on the Moonrebel Congregation's mountain. The temples were all closed, and no lamps burned within them. There was no incense either. The only signs of life came from Paramount Temple, where the constant booming echoed out like thunder. The door shook constantly, and looked like it might open at any time. In fact, light had started seeping out through the cracks on the side of the door, creating a very holy atmosphere. Occasionally, the entire mountain would be affected, and it would vibrate, sending out shockwaves into the surrounding void.

Although there had been other occasions during this epoch in which someone banged on the door, it had never occurred with this intensity. Unfortunately, no one was present to witness it, otherwise it would have been a big subject of discussion.

Inside Paramount Temple, the Crimson Mother totem on the door was now mostly blurry. Some of that was because of the godchild blood, as it was effective in erasing the totem. Another factor was the hard work the Captain was putting into it. Both he and Xu Qing knew that they were in a race for time, and both were doing everything possible.

When Xu Qing entered Paramount Temple, the Captain cried out excitedly from the door. "In no more than five days, little Ah Qing, I'll be able to completely erase the totem. When that happens, we'll be the Archbishops of Moonrebel!"

Xu Qing nodded and prepared to go all out to help the Captain open the door. Though the time situation was urgent, they should have enough time, as long as something completely unexpected didn't happen.

As it turned out, something unexpected did happen.

On the third day of intensive efforts to open the door, the cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral in the desert managed to create a unified front that mostly surrounded the desert. Wherever the cathedral cultivators went, everything turned as red as blood, both overhead and underfoot.

It was at that exact same moment that the leader of the cathedral's desert extermination campaign, the pontiff himself, waved his scepter into the air to release a torrent of energy. All of the cathedral cultivators present dropped to their knees to prostrate, all while chanting in a monotone. The red color grew so strong it became liquid that swirled around and around. After ninety-nine rotations of the energy, the red-robed pontiff raised his scepter overhead.

A heaven-rending, earth-crushing sound erupted from above, as if a huge pair of hands were ripping open the sky.

Shockingly, a massive 5,000-kilometer rift opened up. Then, in an even more appalling development, blood began to spill out of the rift, becoming a blood rain that fell onto the desert.

The storm that protected the Bitter Life Mountains began to disappear because of the blood rain. But most shocking of all was the aura that emerged from the rift. It was so terrifying that, as it spread, it didn't just affect the desert, but also the entire Moonrite Region. In the blink of an eye, all souls in the region were trembling in terror.

That was because the source of the aura was a patch of skin that was slowly coming out of the rift. It grew larger and larger, until it seemed to fill the sky. There were mountains on its surface, and it was decorated with suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies. It had innumerable warding spells and spell formations, and also contained souls from myriad species, all howling in grief and pain.

The skin was pure red, like a red hell, full of absolute evil. At the same time, it imparted a holy sensation. It was as if it was a gruish combination of righteousness and evil, of goodness and wickedness, of life and death.

Gradually, the sky grew so blurry that only the rift was visible. Below, the land twisted and distorted. Godly might abounded. Cathedral cultivators all dropped fanatically to their knees to kowtow.

Then, after the skin was fully stretched out, it shrank in on itself to form the shape of a person. An arm appeared. Then a torso... Eventually, a headless body was visible, slowly descending. As it dropped, the lands quaked and sank down. The storm collapsed, and the sand all became the color of blood.

The blood rain fell everywhere, forming rivers that made the mortal world seem like hell itself. And anguished howls drifted out from the body, causing the souls of everyone present to shiver.

This body was the Red Moon Cathedral's greatest asset. It could suppress Smoldering Gods, and was a reserve power that could be used to punish all living beings in the region. It was Crimson Mother's mortal husk!