

# Beyond the Timescape

## Chapter 1021: That's a Good Boy

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As the dao lineament in Xu Qing's right eye glittered, he looked off into the distance and coolly said, "If we want to know what treasures or other secrets Feng Lintao has, we can just ask him. And if he doesn't provide the answer, we can ask Lan Yao and Yue Dong."

Erniu chuckled darkly, and his eyes gleamed with anticipation. He and Xu Qing accelerated, maintaining the concealment of invisibility as they raced through the canopy of heaven.

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A few more days went by.

During that time, the middle-aged cultivator who had captured Feng Lintao proceeded with utmost caution. He constantly shifted directions as he traveled, and he kept a close eye on his surroundings. Eventually, in a small random city somewhere, he handed Feng Lintao over to an unremarkable-looking old man. Then he flew away, and the fate threads that had formed the face of Yue Dong disappeared. His fate went back to normal, and he permanently forgot everything that had just happened.

As for the old man, he left the small city and continued the journey that had been started by the other cultivator. The same thing happened about five times over the following two weeks.

Every time Feng Lintao was handed over, a different person would take over and continue on the journey. There were different species involved. Sometimes it was a human, sometimes it was a Firemoon Darkheaven.

In that manner, all traces of passage were wiped out, and the karma with any pursuers was severed.

However, Erniu's Grand Five Ox Essence-Tracing Grand Merciless Dao had been created by a god during one of Erniu's past lives. It could even lock down onto the personhood of an Imperial Sovereign. Therefore, it didn't matter how many times Yue Dong switched agents, in the end, Erniu was always able to keep track of Feng Lintao. Yue Dong never interfered, and they were able to track the target the entire time.

Eventually, Xu Qing and Erniu caught up with Feng Lintao and personally witnessed the strange handover procedure. At that point, Erniu's pupils constricted, and Xu Qing's eyes narrowed.

“Little Ah Qing, these people... are very unusual. There’s no way they’re Devilbird spies, right?”

Erniu had no authority to tap into. Although his essence-tracing ability was able to lock onto Feng Lintao’s fate threads, he wasn’t able to see how Yue Dong meddled with the emotions of the agents she was using, and he had no way to see their fate.

But Xu Qing could see such things clearly. The dao lineament in his right eye flickered as he looked at what was happening. After a moment, he came to a realization.

“Eldest Brother, the fate threads attached to those people are actually clumped together to form the face of Yue Dong....”

Upon hearing that, Erniu’s eyes shone. “Fate threads that form a face.... We’re obviously dealing with some sort of puppetry magic. Wait, could it be that Yue Dong is actually controlling Lan Yao?”

Xu Qing thought back to everything that happened with Yue Dong and Lan Yao when dealing with that golden rat. Although that alone wasn’t enough to prove anything, he definitely remembered how much Yue Dong had hated Feng Lintao.

“Let’s wait until the fish is fully hooked,” Xu Qing said. “Then we can see if Lan Yao has a similar face in her fate threads. Then we’ll know what’s really going on.”

And thus, the two of them continued to follow the various cultivators that were traveling with Feng Lintao.

Eventually, snowflakes appeared in the sky. Looking down from above, it was possible to see the dark soil slowly being covered with white. The further one went north, the more ice and snow there was.

The person currently transporting Feng Lintao was a beautiful, middle-aged woman. She was obviously an important person in the area, as she was able to travel freely and without any obstructions.

Although this area was technically controlled by the Firemoon Darkheavens, it was very close to the border with the north of Revered Ancient. The territory controlled by the Firemoons was like a long, thin strip, with the top part bordering the north, and the bottom part connecting to Fardark County. Therefore, from the current position, it wasn’t necessary to rely on teleportation to reach the north of Revered Ancient.

As the beautiful woman moved onward, she eventually accelerated a bit. Apparently, she was very close to her destination. And that meant that the fishing expedition would soon conclude.

Three days later, the beautiful woman landed on top of a snow-covered mountain. There, she dropped to her knees and touched her head to the ground. She didn’t speak a word.

Feng Lintao’s eyes were shut tight, making him look like a corpse. In fact, the woman had set him down to the side, and he wasn’t moving at all. Silence prevailed for a time, with the only sound being the wind. Snowflakes drifted along.

Eventually... a person appeared within the snow and the wind. It was a woman.

She was graceful, with a skirt decorated with the image of a starry sky. Her facial features were as lovely as a hibiscus flower, and she had long, black hair that flowed down her back like a waterfall, drifting back and forth as she walked, and slowly interweaving with the falling snow. Her slender waist was particularly eye-catching. It was as lithe as a willow branchlet. Her long legs were barely visible through the flowing skirt, but that only made her more tempting to look at.

She was none other than Lan Yao! She had both the daintiness of a youth and the charm of a mature woman. Those elements mixed together to make her alluring in a way that could shake the soul. She also had a pair of snow-white wings behind her that added something holy to her.

Emerging from the snow and wind, she alighted on the mountain in front of the middle-aged woman.

“Well met, Fellow Daoist Lan,” the woman said respectfully. “I have accomplished the task you and Miss Yue Dong assigned to me, and have brought the heaven-damned Feng Lintao here with me.”

Lan Yao nodded. She looked at the unconscious Feng Lintao, and her beautiful eyes gleamed with hatred. She waved a jade-like finger.

Feng Lintao shivered and opened his eyes. He looked confused. It almost seemed as if he couldn’t believe what he was seeing. However, the reality was that his mind was already spinning as he analyzed the situation and tried to come up with plans to escape. The blank look in his eyes was a facade.

Unfortunately for him, Lan Yao knew him all too well. Before he could say a word, she waved her hand, and Feng Lintao’s face distorted. A scream escaped his lips. Blue veins bulged out on his face and neck. He even started trembling, as if... his soul were being ripped out of him!

“Lan Yao, wake up!” Feng Lintao howled. “Haven’t you noticed that your personality has changed since you and I first met? During this time in which the two of you were chasing me, I thought long and hard about the past, and I came to realize... that something is off about Yue Dong! Lan Yao... you....”

Lan Yao wasn’t moved by his words. She just kept her right hand extended as she extracted his soul. Feng Lintao’s eyes shone with despair as afterimages of himself popped up around him. It seemed that his soul really was about to be pulled out of him.

Right in that moment of crisis, just when Feng Lintao was about to run out of strength, he shouted into the sky in a bitter voice.

“Help, Your Majesty! Your Majesty, I know that you approved of the assassination attempt in human territory. You probably wanted to use me as bait.... Your Majesty, Lan Yao and Yue Dong hate my guts! Please, help!”

Lan Yao looked around. Everything remained the same. The wind blew and the snow fell. Nothing changed.

The despair in Feng Lintao’s heart grew stronger. In reality, he had no idea if the human empress was around. However, during his travels... his ruminations had left him with the increasingly strong suspicion that the humans were using him as bait.

Feng Lintao felt like his soul was about to be ripped to shreds. As the anxiety within him increased to a fever pitch, he decided to throw caution to the wind.

“I have the legacy of the Fardark holy ancestor!! That’s the legacy of a Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor! Back in the day, the Fardark holy ancestor was just on the verge of becoming a Summer Immortal! Your Majesty, my legacy is what Lan Yao and Yue Dong are after. I’m willing to give it to humankind! It could be very useful to your species!!”

There was no response. The wind and snow grew stronger.

Slowly, Feng Lintao’s soul was being extracted by Lan Yao. When it was in her hand, his fleshly body crumbled into ashes, which were carried away by the wind.

Feng Lintao in soul form trembled as Lan Yao’s hand clenched down onto him. In his despair, he shrieked, “Wake up, Lan Yao! You’re being controlled by Yue Dong! Lan Yao!!!”

However, there was more to the shriek than met the eye. Ignoring the risk of damaging his soul, he used that shriek to unleash a secret magic that formed a soul spike. The spike shot with incredible speed into Lan Yao’s forehead.

That soul spike attack had a name. It was the Fardark Soulstirring Technique! When used, the person who was struck would find their soul devolving into chaos, to the point where they couldn’t control it. All of a sudden, Lan Yao shivered from head to toe. Her eyes became blank, and the hand with which she held Feng Lintao loosened.

In the blink of an eye, Feng Lintao’s soul shot backward. The reality was that Feng Lintao would have loved for the humans to show up and interfere. But even if they didn’t, calling out to them was a tactic to escape from this deadly situation. And he had been hiding that soul spike move the entire time, to use at just the right moment to catch his enemy off guard.

Yet even as Feng Lintao’s soul began to speed away, Lan Yao’s eyes turned bloodshot. Looking up, she glared at him and spoke for the first time since she showed up on the mountain.

“Looking to die!?”

The moment the words left her mouth, her heart instantly filled with deep regret. Before coming here, Yue Dong had issued strict orders that she not speak. She wasn’t supposed to say even one thing. At first, she had obeyed completely. However, Feng Lintao’s soul spike had proved very effective, and the disturbance to her soul caused her fate threads to blur. In her moment of laxness, she had spoken those three words.

However, now wasn’t the time to ruminate on what she had done. Reaching out, she prepared to grab Feng Lintao.

Unfortunately, that was when a cool voice echoed out from the horizon.

“You finally spoke.”

The words became like an explosive sound wave, a tempest that converged on Lan Yao. Her face fell as a familiar figure walked out of the tempest.

He had a long robe, flowing hair, and beautiful facial features that formed the perfect contrast to the wind and the snow. He was none other than Xu Qing.

The moment Lan Yao saw Xu Qing, she took decisive action. She closed her eyes, whereupon her fleshly body withered up. In the shortest of moments, she collapsed into ashes! As it turned out, she was nothing but a clone! The moment the clone self-destructed, a storm wind blew through the area.

Xu Qing's facial expression didn't change. He had taken note of how Lan Yao didn't speak, and that tipped him off that something strange was going on. It seemed obvious that the enemy had intelligence reports about him, and were aware that they should avoid making sound around him. That was why he hadn't shown himself earlier. It was only when Lan Yao spoke that he stepped out into the open.

Although the enemy was only a clone, and her words had already dissipated, Xu Qing had heard enough of her voice... that her true form wouldn't be able to escape him now. He looked up, sent out his god perception, and then unleashed his godly authority of sound. He used her words, the wind, the surrounding living beings, and all sound in the area... to track her down!

Feng Lintao had already fled over the horizon. But now, his face fell before he quickly flashed a fawning expression. Turning to the side, he said, "Is that you, Fellow Daoist Erniu? I guessed early on that you were using me for a fishing expedition. That's why I was so cooperative. That's why I held nothing back, even going so far as to die multiple times, all for the purpose of making sure you people were able to hook your fish...."

The air rippled and distorted as Erniu stepped out into the open in front of Feng Lintao. Smiling enigmatically, he said, "That's a good boy!"

## Chapter 1022: Immortal Skill - Six Thieves Deceive Life

Xu Qing's expression remained placid as he stood in the wind and the snow. Lifting his hand in the direction Lan Yao had disappeared, he gently closed his fingers into a fist. In that manner, he grabbed the air, pulling the dao lineaments there to him, and causing all of the sound that had once existed there to converge from all sides.

It was a process that required a much higher level of control of the godly authority of sound. Though Xu Qing's godly authority of sound had absorbed the authority of Golden Crow's musician, and had also taken the authority of Lord Spiritsound, it wasn't at the point where it could snatch sound out of time itself.

However, he also had his sundials! Heaven and earth rumbled loudly as an illusory sundial appeared in the spot where Lan Yao had vanished. The gnomon spun, and the time in that small area reversed.

Soon, Lan Yao appeared again, and out of her mouth came the same words she had spoken moments before.

“Looking to die!?” she snapped.

The moment the words rang out, Xu Qing snatched them. The sundial blurred, and everything went back to normal. And yet, by that point, those three words had been imprinted like a mark in Xu Qing’s god perception. They became part of his godly authority....

In addition, Feng Lintao’s voice drifted with the wind into Xu Qing’s ears. He also heard his Eldest Brother’s outlandish words as well as the sound of the falling snow.... In addition, there were the sounds created by the countless living beings in the surrounding ice plains, including mutant beasts, cultivators, and other natural sounds. All such things appeared within Xu Qing’s god perception. Next, by relying on the mark of that sound, and the qualifications that came along with it, he made an inquiry.

He inquired of the wind: did you hear that sound?

He inquired of the living things: does that sound exist?

He inquired of heaven: do you remember that sound?

He inquired of earth: where are the traces of that sound?

The wind, blowing far and wide, explained where the sound was heard. The endless living things explained where the sound was located. The canopy of heaven sensed where the sound existed in memory. And finally, the wind and snow blowing over the earth explained... that it was in the north!

Countless images. Countless sounds. Heaven, earth, mountains, rivers. Living things. Wind and snow. All of them flashed through Xu Qing’s god perception, providing him with a very precise location in a mountain of ice!

Surrounding the ice mountain was a thick haze. Inside of it was an ice cave where Lan Yao and Yue Dong sat cross-legged across from each other. At almost the exact same moment that Xu Qing’s god perception locked onto their position, Lan Yao shivered. Then Yue Dong’s eyes snapped open, her expression flickered, and she quickly performed an incantation gesture and pointed out.

All of a sudden, a wave of emotion erupted in Xu Qing, clouding his thoughts, interfering with his sound authority, and shaking him mentally. An instant later, the positioning lock was severed.

It was an instant too long. The reason was that in the image Xu Qing had locked onto, he had detected... Lan Yao’s heartbeat. That sound linked with the mark from earlier. That was enough.

“Found you,” Xu Qing said coolly. Lifting his hand in Erniu’s direction, he closed his fingers.

Erniu chuckled darkly as Xu Qing’s grip locked onto both him and the trembling soul of Feng Lintao. Two people and one soul vanished from sight. They had been swept up within Xu Qing’s godly authority, sucked into the void, and made part of the surrounding sound. Wherever something existed that could make sound, he could move through it.

An instant passed... and then Xu Qing, Erniu, and Feng Lintao's soul crossed a seemingly endless distance to appear on the border between Firemoon Darkheaven territory and the north of Revered Ancient.

The wind was stronger, and there was more snow. What was more, there were no more snow-covered mountains towering over the icy plains. Instead, there were numerous towering, frozen peaks. The cold was more intense than ever, so much so that it seemed capable of sealing all signs of life.

All of a sudden, one of the ice peaks exploded, and two figures shot out from within, their expressions very serious. They didn't hesitate at all to flee off into the distance. They were none other than Yue Dong and Lan Yao.

Behind them, Xu Qing stepped out of the collapsing rubble of the peak and chased after them. He had come through Lan Yao's heartbeat to arrive right in the middle of the ice peak. He saw Lan Yao, and he saw Yue Dong.

Lan Yao looked the same as she had earlier, except that she was now visibly flustered.

As for Yue Dong, the wind and snow made her seem unusually elegant, and her silver wings shone in the cold. Her skin was as fair as the purest white jade. At the same time, her black robe with its gold embroidery made her seem like an immortal from a painting. She had eyebrows as elegant as distant mountains, and eyes that shone brightly. Yet the pupils within those eyes did not glow radiantly. Instead, there was something dark and mysterious within them.

There was no doubt that these two women were the pinnacle of beauty. In fact, any lustful person who saw them would struggle to control their desire.

However... it didn't matter to Xu Qing whether they were beautiful or ugly. When he looked at people, he saw them as either friends or enemies. And these two were enemies.

Therefore, the moment Xu Qing showed up, he didn't hesitate for an instant. He began to shine with bright light. In fact, a sun rose within his sea of consciousness, causing him to become like the incarnation of a sun, radiating boundless light and heat. He also pulsed with terrifying pressure as he closed in on the two women.

As crisis loomed, Lan Yao's face turned pale. As for Yue Dong, that mysterious light in her eyes grew more intense, and at the same time, her hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture. Then she waved her finger in Xu Qing's direction. That motion caused Yue Dong's power to finally become fully manifest to Xu Qing. It was an art that used emotions to cause fluctuations in fate! To some extent, it was actually a type of authority, and it was very unique. R&NÕßEs

Xu Qing barreled right into the effects of her attack. Emotional fluctuations were like a hand reaching into his heart and mind, drawing out surprise, terror, sorrow, and despair, all at the same time. It was like a massive wave sweeping over anything and everything.

Even more astounding was there was also fury within those emotions! That fury had a specific origin. It was an emotion shared with Yue Dong!

That gap was what she was targeting to attack Xu Qing's mind and sea of consciousness! If the dam burst, then the world of Xu Qing's mind would be marked by Yue Dong. And his threads of fate would converge to create an image of her face. It would lead to something like a possession.

If this event was taking place before Xu Qing had fought Floating Fiend, then Yue Dong's power would have been very difficult for him to deal with. In fact, he would have been required to try a host of different strategies. Yue Dong's magic was truly difficult to counter.

But... Xu Qing's authority of erasure was the perfect counter to Yue Dong's ability! It glittered brightly, causing a formless hand to come into existence. It was a hand that surpassed the power of natural and magical laws. And it could erase all things! It instantly erased all of the emotional fluctuations!

The moment he recovered, a pair of ancient shears appeared over his head. They appeared to be made from bronze, and they pulsed with a primeval aura. The rust that covered them seemed to hint at them having been baptized by the passage of immense amounts of time.

The tips of the shears... pointed at Yue Dong! Then they snapped viciously in her direction.

A crunching sound echoed out across the ice plains. Emotions were severed. Fate was severed. Threads were severed. Something like a wind swept out, causing the ice peaks to tremble.

Yue Dong's art was shattered, and she shivered from head to toe as her eyes became completely bloodshot. She also suffered a backlash that caused her five yin organs and six yang organs to vibrate violently. Blood sprayed out of her mouth.

Expression turning grim, she grabbed Lan Yao by the arm and sped away at top speed. As she fled, the glow of teleportation began to build up on her. Apparently, that was how she planned to make her getaway.

But then... Erniu suddenly appeared out of nowhere behind her, licking his lips. He erupted with power, causing wind and snow to scream as he took control of all the frigid coldness in the area. All of a sudden, creaking and cracking noises filled the sky as everything froze over. In an instant, everything became solid.

Meanwhile, Erniu shimmered with blue light, all while a host of vicious faces appeared within his eyes. Then his chest split open, and a skeletal blue hand stretched out toward Yue Dong and Lan Yao, pulsing with cold, avarice, and madness as it did.

Xu Qing strode forward. He and Erniu attacked from front and back respectively, unleashing deadly force.

However, that was when a magical symbol suddenly flickered into being on Yue Dong's forehead. It was a magical symbol... that Xu Qing had seen before. It was the very same symbol that Yue Dong had tried to use in the past to seal Feng Lintao. It was the mark of a Grand Emperor's spell formation.[1]

The mark flickered, turning into overlapping layers of fluctuation that almost resembled water. They spread out from her at the center, turning into a defensive barrier. And it fought back against the powers of Xu Qing and Erniu. Rumbling sounds rose to shocking levels.

Erniu's eyes glittered as the backlash shoved him backward. However, only an instant later, he managed to fight back and charge back toward the spell formation.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he stopped in place for a moment as if powerful storm winds had slammed into him. He even took a few steps backward. Then he vanished as he entered the sound. Reappearing as a huge sun above Yue Dong's spell formation, he dropped down. Deafening booms rang out.

The Grand Emperor's spell formation was so extraordinary that it managed to repel the joint attack of Xu Qing and Erniu. Yet the spell formation clearly wasn't going to last for very long. And that meant that Yue Dong wouldn't hold strong for much longer. She shivered from head to toe as blood sprayed from her mouth. Her beautiful face was now twisted viciously. Though the formation was offering defenses, it was also serving as a prison!

Given how Xu Qing and Erniu were attacking, it was easy to imagine what would happen once the formation vanished: she would die!

At that moment of crisis, Yue Dong scowled at Xu Qing and Erniu. Then she lifted her right hand and shoved it forcefully down toward the ground. That act caused the glacial surroundings to shatter.

A host of figures shot up from the depths below. They were powerful experts from species subservient to the Firemoons. Their eyes all shone with pain and fury, and within their fate threads were faces that resembled Yue Dong. All of them were emotion puppets. None of them feared death as they shot madly toward Xu Qing and Erniu. However, instead of fighting... they self-detonated! They blew themselves up, using their own lives as a way to delay the two opponents.

At the same time, Yue Dong dropped into a cross-legged position all while forcing Lan Yao to sit down in front of her. Then Yue Dong reached out and touched Lan Yao's forehead as if to extract something from within it. Lan Yao shivered, and her expression became one of pain. In contrast, Yue Dong's aura began to grow stronger, and dao lineaments began to form in her eyes.

Outside, the puppets charged forth and self-detonated, causing booms to fill the area. The sky rippled, the ground cracked, and frigid energy turned into a massive tempest. That said, although there were a lot of self-detonations, they were relatively weak. And clearly it wasn't going to be enough to actually stop Xu Qing and Erniu.

That was especially true of Xu Qing. The self-detonations hardly seemed to affect his fleshly body. The heat he emanated ignored everything else as he once again attacked Yue Dong's spell formation.

As the spell formation shook violently, Yue Dong glared at Xu Qing and finally spoke for the first time.

"It is not possible to live eternally thanks to the six thieves that deceive life. The eyes deceive sight. The ears deceive hearing. The nose deceives smell. The mouth deceives taste. The body deceives labor. The mind deceives thought. And thus, all is lost. This is the origin of the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures, as well as a forbidden skill of immortals!"

As Yue Dong chanted, she began to shine with seven-colored light that formed a tempest around her.

“Disciple Yue Dong hereby uses this skill to deprive these two of their six sensory pleasures, and purge them of the seven emotions, thus turning them into my puppets! Karma and fate is devoured. By means of the bloodline of Lan Yao, daughter of the blood of a Grand Emperor, let one person sustain it! Immortal skill: Six Thieves Deceive Life!”

Yue Dong looked up as she suddenly unleashed a taboo forbidden magic to take control of Xu Qing and Erniu!

1. Yue Dong used the Grand Emperor’s power in chapter 926. ❹

## Chapter 1023: Grand Emperor’s Apprentice

In the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity, immortal skills were created by a Grand Emperor by combining a host of other ancient arts and magics. That time period was one in which Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity’s war against the countless other species was reaching a critical point. Thanks to the immortal skills being distributed to humans and allied species, Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity ultimately conquered Revered Ancient, performing an amazing service for humankind.

However, the price to pay for the use of immortal skills was enormous. Immortal skills were categorized into levels, and the people who used them suffered ill effects depending on the level of the skill they used. Those who suffered minor injuries might lose some life force. Those who experienced serious injuries might end up with their foundation shattered.

After the war, the immortal skills were gathered into various Immortal Skills Halls, where they were sealed up as forbidden magics. Even later, when the broken face came, and Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity left with the emperors of various species, the immortal skills were taken away and circulated among the holy lands. That said, even in the holy lands, those who mastered them could be considered as *rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns*.

Especially noteworthy was the fact that some of the immortal skills could only be passed down through a specific bloodline. In those cases, the vicious nature of immortal skills was made manifest, as the previous generation would die violently when the new generation took over.

And that was exactly the type of immortal skill being used by Yue Dong. It was Six Thieves Deceive Life! As her hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, the seven-colored glow coming off her turned into a sea of light. Xu Qing and Erniu, who were both battering the Grand Emperor spell formation, felt fluctuations in their hearts and minds. Those fluctuations came from outside of them, shaking their thoughts and filling their bodies. They were unstoppable and impossible to defend against!

Yue Dong looked up at Xu Qing and Erniu. As the fluctuations rocked them, she lifted her delicate hand and... touched Xu Qing!

“Deprive the six sensory pleasures. Purge the seven emotions!”

Clearly, the pressure from Xu Qing was the most deadly as far as she was concerned.

The moment her fingers touched him, the seven-colored sea of light shot out of the Grand Emperor spell formation, causing the sky to change colors as it spread out through the surrounding ice plains. The entire world now existed within that seven-colored light.

As the light covered Xu Qing, multi-colored threads spread out from him, which were illusory representations of the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures within him. They were being forced out from inside, whereupon they converged upon each other to form Yue Dong's face. However... although Xu Qing's mind and heart were shaken, his facial expression was one of curiosity.

As the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures were pulled out, Xu Qing's aura was getting increasingly stronger! When all of the threads were out, that curious expression on his face disappeared. He now looked extremely cold and apathetic, and his aura had reached a hair-raising level that caused the sky to dim and the surroundings to fill with rumbling sounds.

From the look of it, Yue Dong's immortal skill wasn't just failing to achieve the desired result. In contrast, it was providing a blessing to Xu Qing! It wasn't as if this immortal skill simply wasn't working at all. It was just that it produced a completely different effect when used on Xu Qing. It deprived him of the six sensory pleasures and purged his seven emotions. And those things were essentially human nature! Because of Xu Qing's uniqueness, when his human nature was taken away, it meant that his godly nature was put on display.

"How amusing," Xu Qing said calmly.

This was something he had experienced multiple times in the past. Temporarily losing his human nature wasn't the least bit unsettling to him. That was why he had simply let Yue Dong do what she wanted to do. When Xu Qing's godliness was in the forefront, that put him in his most powerful state!

As his human nature left and his godly nature spread, Xu Qing began to pulse with extreme levels of rationality and coldness. His aura was so cold that it seemed like it was at one with the surrounding ice plains. In Xu Qing's eyes, everything around him, including all living beings, were pale and meaningless.

On the ground, Little Shadow trembled, as there was nothing it feared more than Xu Qing in this state. Even the sageheaven god vine started pulsing with fluctuations of nervousness. In truth, when godliness took over Xu Qing, he became absolutely terrifying to any enemy.

After looking coolly at Yue Dong within the Grand Emperor's defensive barrier, he pointed his finger up into the sky. Thunderous rumblings echoed out. A majestic pagoda appeared high above.

It was Xu Qing's Sageheaven Pagoda!

It immediately dropped down at high speed before smashing right into the Grand Emperor defenses. A deafening boom echoed out. The ice plains shattered in layers, sending icy chunks spiraling out in all directions.

Xu Qing strode forward, the incarnation of a burning sun. At the same time, the godly authorities of misfortune, sound, and the violet moon all erupted. Merging together, they smashed into the spell formation. Terrifying godsource power roared forth like a tsunami. Most terrifying of all was that Xu Qing launched himself toward the spell formation, as if he was actually a weapon.

The spell formation trembled, and inside of it, Yue Dong's face fell. Reeling, she looked at Xu Qing. There was no way she could have predicted things could turn out like this! When it came down to it, she just didn't understand Xu Qing well enough.

When she saw that her immortal skill caused Xu Qing's aura to grow colder, how there weren't any emotional fluctuations in his eyes, and how his attacks were terrifying, it caused her heart to pound madly.

Around that time, mocking laughter rang out from Erniu, and he said, "My little Junior Brother cultivates both the path of immortals and the path of gods. Apparently you were in a hurry to die, because you actually stripped him of his human nature. I mean, good for you! Now his godly nature is in charge.... Believe me, when little Ah Qing gets like this, even I turn tail and run." RAN BES

Erniu clicked his tongue.

Looking extremely grim in the face, Yue Dong turned to look at Erniu, and seven-colored light blazed from her eyes.

It immediately swept over Erniu. He didn't seem anxious at all. In fact, he looked pleased. "Oh yeah, bring it on! I want to see how this works. Will your immortal skill actually take away my seven emotions and six sensory pleasures? If it works, then I'll owe you some sincere thanks. You see, over all the lives I've lived, I've never succeeded at doing that."

Erniu beamed with anticipation as the immortal skill activated, and his seven emotions and six sensory pleasures began to seethe. One by one, they were all being removed. When the process was complete, a curse would form that would be branded on the body, whereupon the threads of emotion would stitch together to form Yue Dong's face.

When all of this happened to Erniu, the scene that played out was very different from what happened to Xu Qing. With Xu Qing, the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures had been quickly extracted. But with Erniu....

It was as if his seven emotions and six sensory pleasures were neverending. No matter what Yue Dong's immortal skill did, they couldn't be pulled all the way out. That was especially true of his greed. It was like... a bottomless pit!

Yue Dong's face fell again. Xu Qing alone had been a thorny problem to deal with. But Erniu was like some sort of freak. She had never encountered a cultivator with greed like this that, no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't extract. There was just too much.

"This is taking too long!" Erniu said, sound displeased. "It's more like you're just tickling me! And you're not putting much strength into it! You've got me stuck in a rut now! Alright, fine. I might as well help out."

With that, he took a deep breath, stretched out his right hand, and struck himself viciously on the chest. From the crazy look in his eyes, it was almost as if he had spotted some amazing treasure. In order to truly stimulate himself, he even took out Feng Lintao's soul, put it down in front of him, and stared at it, all while visualizing all of the amazing treasures it could lead to. As a result, his greed grew even more intense. Rumbling echoed out as it erupted from him like a volcano.

Unfortunately... the greed was so intense that it surpassed Yue Dong's ability to extract. Ultimately, she shivered from head to toe, and then blood sprayed out of her mouth as her immortal skill collapsed. She was also hit with a backlash. And because Lan Yao was connected by karma, blood also sprayed out of her mouth. Her body withered, and her aura declined dramatically.

That was when Xu Qing unleashed a devastating attack. The Sageheaven Pagoda was fundamentally extraordinary. Its battering attack caused the Grand Emperor spell formation to tremble. Combined with Xu Qing's godly authority and godsource, the formation began to crumble rapidly. Then he used his fleshly body like a weapon to smash into it....

At long last, a loud cracking sound rang out from the formation! This Grand Emperor's spell formation wasn't complete. Feng Lintao had damaged it early on, and now Yue Dong had been hit with a significant backlash. What was more, Xu Qing was attacking it.... It was obvious that it wouldn't be long before it shattered.

As crisis loomed, Yue Dong with her disheveled hair looked viciously outside and then quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture.

"Detonate!" she howled shrilly. Taking advantage of the damage to the spell formation, she took the initiative to blow it up, unleashing mountain-toppling, sea-draining force.

A huge boom rang out from the formation as it shattered. A devastating shock wave rolled out madly in all directions, destroying the ice, and causing supernatural phenomena to appear in the sky.

Taking advantage of that moment, Yue Dong grabbed Lan Yao and fled in the opposite direction. At the same time, she took out a jade slip, crushed it, and threw it up above her. She had hoped to avoid using that jade slip. But now she had no choice.

The moment the jade slip shattered, Xu Qing and Erniu burst through the power of the exploding formation and bore down on Yue Dong.

Xu Qing was like a god, with his every step causing wild colors to flash in heaven and earth. Immense pressure weighed down, along with a very holy sensation. His face was completely expressionless, and his eyes were as cold as ice.

Erniu was exactly the opposite. He shone with the light of boundless greed, and a seven-colored glow surrounded him that caused his surroundings to turn black. Within that black light, Erniu looked like a devil with his hair floating around him. Chuckling darkly, he strode forward.

As of this moment, it looked like a god and a devil were working together!

The sight of it caused Yue Dong to inhale sharply. Then she looked in the direction of the shattered jade slip and screamed,

“Lu Lingzi, why haven’t you shown your face yet?”[1]

The moment the words left her mouth, the shattered pieces of the jade slip suddenly glittered with silver light, along with the fluctuations of teleportation. A huge, spinning vortex appeared, out of which strode a hulking figure that pulsed with an astonishing aura.

All it took was one step for him to emerge next to Yue Dong’s side.

He was a young man with nine major worlds over his shoulders. All of those worlds pulsed with strong life force, which created cultivation base fluctuations that were at the peak of the Smoldering God nine-world level. All heaven and earth was affected, as if they were about to become his own personal world. When he appeared, the first person he looked at wasn’t Yue Dong. Instead, it was the unconscious Lan Yao.

A tender look appeared in his eyes. But then he turned to Xu Qing and Erniu, and that tenderness turned into ferocity.

“Are you two the ones who hurt my nearest and dearest?”[2]

1. Lu Lingzi: Lu is #47 on the list of common Chinese surnames. Ling means “insult, maltreat, intimidate, approach.” Zi is a utility character which essentially carries no meaning here. Madam Deathblade says the name sounds vaguely intimidating. 雷子

2. I’m using “nearest and dearest” for a specific reason here. This newcomer actually uses the character for “wife” here. However, Chinese does not have plural nouns. The only way to tell if a noun is plural is by 1) looking at the context, 2) by adding specific numbers to them, or 3) in some other specific ways in certain circumstances. In any case, given the context, we have no way to know if this person is saying “wife” or “wives.” I think most people would probably assume he’s saying “wife,” but there’s no way to say for sure. There is no way to easily and smoothly create such vagueness in English with his question. This becomes relevant in the next chapter, and you’ll see why I went with this translation choice. 雷子

## Chapter 1024: Erniu Shocks Three People By Saying One Thing

The words spoken by the hulking young man resonated like heavenly thunder, shaking everyone to the core. At the same time, he descended from above in front of Yue Dong and Lan Yao and strode toward Xu Qing and Erniu. He walked decisively and with power, with every step seemingly weighing down on the hearts of those around him.

As he walked, nine major worlds hovered in positions at his shoulders, chest, abdomen, legs, and head, and they glowed with intense light and strong life force. The might of nine worlds caused strange colors to flash in the sky. Terrifying pressure caused the ground to shake. Within that

immense force and horrifying tempest, this person created an indelible image within the eyes of Xu Qing and Erniu.

He was well over two meters tall and extremely muscular, like a rugged mountain that the wind could never sway. His skin was deeply swarthy, as if it had been tempered by both wind and sun for years on end, and honed into a gleaming onyx boulder. He had angular facial features, with strong eyebrows and eyes that glittered like piercing heavenly bodies. His gaze was sharp and penetrating, like thousands of galloping steeds or fires that could reach the highest heights.

Most dazzling of all was his armor, which was of the most exquisite craftsmanship. Every inch of it glittered with extremely cold light. The armor was inset with a host of jewels that shone blindingly in the sunlight, and made him truly seem like a star in the sky.

Xu Qing looked at this newcomer without the slightest expression on his face. After all, he had fully immersed himself in godliness at this point.

As for Erniu, he tartly sized up the suit of armor, then gave a cold snort. “You sure can strut around acting like you’re invincible. But you look more like an earthworm with a shell who thinks he’s a turtle! Tell us, who are you? Lord Ox doesn’t kill nameless nobodies!”

The burly man looked at them with icy cold eyes. Surging with energy, he continued walking toward them and coolly said, “I’m Lu Lingzi, tenth apprentice of Grand Emperor Netherflame from the Devilbird holy land.”

By the time he finished speaking, he was right in front of Xu Qing and Erniu, toward whom he thrust his meaty hand, in a move that seemed capable of grasping the entire world.

All of the godsource in Xu Qing erupted, and his godly authority covered him. Erniu glittered with blue light as an icy sealing swept out.

As they fought back, Xu Qing shivered from head to toe. Even relying only on fleshly body defenses, he wasn’t seriously hurt. But he was shoved backward. Yet only moments later, he was moving forward again. The authority of erasure surged around him, joined by the authorities of misfortune and the violet moon, which he used to probe his enemies, looking for gaps to attack with taboo poison.

Erniu’s defenses weren’t on the same level as Xu Qing’s. A palm strike from a nine-world Smoldering God caused him to explode into a mist of blood that tumbled backward. Some distance away, he formed anew.

“You’re pretty strong! But what did you mean just now when you said nearest *and*

dearest? Don’t tell me *both* of those shrews are your daoist partners? Or is one of them a daoist partner and the other is a mistress?”[1]

Erniu lunged forward again, transforming into a host of blue worms, all of which opened their mouths to exhale frigid energy. He was working perfectly with Xu Qing. One used an icy sealing, the other used a powerful attack. Unfortunately nine-world power surpassed any of the godly entities Xu Qing had faced before. In fact, this person was just a step away from being an Imperial

Sovereign. Xu Qing was extraordinary, and Erniu was very gruish. But there was a big discrepancy in strength here, and thus, no matter what tactics they resorted to, they failed.

Lu Lingzi hadn't even used any divine ability, just the raw power of nine major worlds gathered into a palm.

Everything shook as Xu Qing fell back again, and Erniu exploded. Despite that, Erniu just kept talking.

"No, that can't be. How could your lover turn your daoist partner into a puppet? Hold on just second. Little Ah Qing, I think I've uncovered an itty, bitty secret! I think these three really know how to have fun. I'm talking very *fun* fun!"

Erniu suddenly shoved his hand into his own chest, pulled out his own heart, and crushed it. His heart exploded.

Strangely, Lu Lingzi stopped in place, and a rumbling sound echoed out from his chest. It was as if Erniu's act of destroying his own heart was affecting Lu Lingzi.

"Uh, hey," Erniu went on, "any chance the three of you are looking for somebody new to join you? I'm interested! And look, my heart is pretty amazing, wouldn't you say?" ㄟ( ㄟ〇 ㄟ)ㄟ

Erniu licked his lips enthusiastically. There was no doubt about it. Erniu was really an expert at shattering the atmosphere during any given situation.... Lu Lingzi had really made an impressive entrance. But Erniu's words just now brought something different into the mix, and caused a scowl to appear on Yue Dong's face.

Meanwhile, the coldness in Lu Lingzi's eyes grew more intense, and he reached up with his left hand to touch his forehead. As he did, his forehead split open to reveal a blood-red eye! The moment the eye appeared, a sensation of authority swept out. Astonishingly, there were dao lineaments within the eye.

There were others besides Xu Qing and the Moonrite Region's Heir Apparent and his siblings who could have authority before becoming Imperial Sovereigns. This tenth apprentice of Grand Emperor Netherflame was someone who had authority while still in the Smoldering God level.

The eye glittered with blood-colored light, causing a wild tempest to fill the field of battle. As it did, the entire world turned as dark as evening. The wind became everything. This was the authority of wind!

Where it went, the air shattered. Cracks appeared in the sky, all while glaciers rippled on the ground. Xu Qing and Erniu were sent tumbling backward like kites with their strings cut.

Erniu exploded over and over again. When he finally formed anew, he shouted, "Time to use a flashy move, little Ah Qing!"

A strange light flickered within Xu Qing's calm eyes. Backing up, he looked meaningfully at Lu Lingzi, then pointed up into the sky. Colors flashed and flowed as the Sageheaven Pagoda dropped down through the stormwinds to hover above them. Without any hesitation, Xu Qing entered the

pagoda. Erniu initially looked surprised, but quickly recovered and flew in after him. In the blink of an eye, the pagoda became as stable and unmoving as a boulder within the intense winds.

Upon seeing this, Lu Lingzi frowned slightly.

Inside the pagoda, Erniu stood next to Xu Qing and couldn't hold back from saying, "Little Ah Qing, when I mentioned a flashy move, I wasn't talking about this. I was talking about that jade slip the empress gave you."

Xu Qing didn't react to Erniu, and instead looked thoughtfully down at Lu Lingzi. In his brief clash with this apprentice of a Grand Emperor, he had sensed faint fluctuations of godfire. The fluctuations were so deeply hidden that, under normal circumstances, they wouldn't be possible to detect. What was more, Xu Qing hadn't sensed the fluctuations in his heart or mind. Rather, his fleshly body had detected them by pure instinct. Considering godliness ruled him now, his fleshly body was in a unique state. Without such special circumstances, he would never have detected those fluctuations.

As Xu Qing just stood there lost in thought, Erniu realized he wasn't getting an answer, and it caused him to mutter apprehensively to himself.

*I hate it when little Ah Qing is like this! When his godliness is dominant, he doesn't have any respect for his elders! That said, why is he staring at Lu Lingzi? Could it be that he figured out some of this fellow's secrets?*

Erniu's eyes narrowed as he looked in the same direction and tried to pick up on some of the clues.

On the other side of the defensive bubble, Lu Lingzi attempted to use the power of his authority to reach the pagoda. The stormwinds screamed, and yet they didn't affect the floating pagoda in the least bit.

Upon noticing that, the Grand Emperor's apprentice abandoned such efforts. Looking at Xu Qing through the bubble, he waved his hand. Instantly, a sea of fire raged out, augmented by the wind, which swept over the pagoda as if to assimilate it.

Having accomplished that, Lu Lingzi looked away from the pagoda, turned, and walked over to Yue Dong.

Compared to the hulking Lu Lingzi, Yue Dong looked small and weak. And yet, before Lu Lingzi could say a word, Yue Dong snapped, "Hurry up and take care of those two!"

Lu Lingzi's expression remained neutral as he shook his head. "There isn't enough time."

His gaze shifted to the unconscious Lan Yao off to the side.

Speaking in a tone of complete dominance he said, "First, let's resolve our situation. Although those two humans can evade my authority using that treasure, the reality is that they're trapped. For the time being, we can ignore them. They won't be able to get away before we handle our matter. Now, remove that emotion magic from Lan Yao!"

Yue Dong clearly didn't want to comply. But she could sense how determined Lu Lingzi was, so after a few breaths of time passed, she reluctantly agreed. Reaching over, she touched Lan Yao.

The fate threads on Lan Yao that formed Yue Dong's face suddenly dimmed. A moment later, they disappeared, and Lan Yao's emotions returned to normal. A tremor ran through her, and she slowly opened her phoenix-like eyes. She seemed confused at first, but quickly regained clarity. Then she noticed Yue Dong and Lu Lingzi, and her face paled. All of a sudden, she remembered everything that had played out since she came to Revered Ancient. She remembered the experience of having her emotions manipulated. She glared venomously at Yue Dong.

"I was kind to you from the moment we met, Yue Dong! You were my best friend! Yet you dared to use a ruthless forbidden magic on me?"

Eyes flashing coldly, Yue Dong said, "We *were* best friends. If you want something to blame, blame the fact that you were born in the clan of a Grand Emperor. And you have very pure blood. As for me... I'm a nobody who didn't have anyone to rely on but myself. This is a world in which the weak are the prey of the strong. And I have ambitions!"

Struggling to control her breathing, Lan Yao looked at her daoist partner Lu Lingzi.

Lu Lingzi looked back at her tenderly. "Calm down. We're daoist partners, so I can explain everything. Although, given how intelligent you are, you've probably already guessed the details.

"Lan Yao, as the apprentice of a Grand Emperor, I have qualifications that surpass most other people by a longshot. But with my bloodline, I have no way to gain enlightenment of the heart of the legacy. Reaching Imperial Sovereign in that way will take far too long. My hope is that you can help me. With your bloodline absorbed into my body, I can become a representative of your clan. And then I can gain full enlightenment of the Grand Emperor's legacy.

"Given my Master's current state, I'm sure even he would give his permission for this to happen. Unfortunately, your clan is too influential. Therefore... I had Yue Dong get close to you and ultimately convince you to leave the holy land. That way, she could take control of your emotions. Then, when the time was right, I could absorb you. That's the long and short of it."

Lu Lingzi's explanation caused the venom in Lan Yao's eyes to intensify. Then she opened her mouth to speak. However, before she could do so, Erniu, who was watching the whole scene play out from inside the pagoda, slapped his thigh.

"Holy crap!" he exclaimed. "These holy lands people really know how to have fun!" His eyes glittered as if he had gained new understanding about how the world worked. "Except, why do I get the feeling there's another plot twist coming?"

When his words reached the ears of Yue Dong, Lan Yao, and Lu Lingzi, their expressions all flickered.

1. As I mentioned in the last chapter, it's not totally clear who Lu Lingzi was referring to when he showed up, so this is a very valid question, although also slightly insulting for obvious reasons. ❹

# Chapter 1025: Truly a Skilled Speaker

## Chapter 1025: Truly a Skilled Speaker

The fact that Erniu could astonish three people by saying only one thing just went to show how powerful his words could be. It made sense considering that most people would only have one lifetime to cultivate the use of their tongue. But Erniu had been cultivating that skill for many lifetimes, and by this point, his skill had reached the point of perfection. If there was an actual cultivation system for such things, then Erniu would definitely be extremely close to the peak of the system.

Even Xu Qing under the full influence of godliness couldn't help but take a second glance at Erniu.

Looking very pleased with himself, Erniu puffed his chest out proudly. Xu Qing had just brought a new challenge to the table for him.

*Under normal circumstances, it's not exactly hard to get little Ah Qing to revere me. In fact, it's simple. But now he's under the full influence of godliness. To get him to respect me with full rationality is going to require some real skill!*

Erniu cleared his throat and prepared to continue speaking.

However, it was at that moment that, outside of the pagoda in the ravaged lands of ice, the situation between Yue Dong, Lan Yao, and Lu Lingzi, was reaching a critical juncture.

Yue Dong waved her finger again, and Lan Yao, who had just recovered her thinking faculties, found her emotions surging again. The seven emotions and six sensory pleasures erupted within her, turning into threads that burst out of her and swept toward Lu Lingzi.

Lan Yao shivered, and a look of pain appeared on her face. She wanted to struggle, but in an instant, that desire was completely buried by the other emotions.

Ignoring Lan Yao's agony, Yue Dong turned to Lu Lingzi. "Hubby, earlier on, I already threw Lan Yao's seven emotions and six sensory pleasures into chaos to set the stage. Now, I've stirred up her feelings to meet all of the requirements you set. Afterward, I hope you remember the agreement we made. I need Feng Lintao's legacy to seal my immortal skill and turn it into authority. As for you... you're now going to experience a meteoric rise to the Imperial Sovereign level!"

Lu Lingzi looked tenderly at Yue Dong, then nodded sincerely. "There's no way I would forget. Going forward, you and I will walk the path of a great dao together!"

Yue Dong fell silent. Taking a deep breath, and looking very determined, she again performed an incantation gesture. At that point, the last bit of clarity in Lan Yao's eyes disappeared like smoke in the wind. The only thing left behind was empty blankness. The absorption process could now begin!

Lu Lingzi took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered with anticipation. Walking toward Lan Yao, he lifted his right hand to grab the threads of emotion stretching toward him. The moment he touched them, the threads were sucked into his fingers, becoming a part of his flesh, blood, and soul.

Lan Yao began to shake violently as her aura weakened, and the threads of emotion from her continued to be sucked into Lu Lingzi. Next, the same thing happened with her flesh and blood. She was rapidly withering up! Even her cultivation base power was being pulled along the emotion threads to Lu Lingzi. Most importantly of all, Lan Yao's pure blood from the bloodline of a Grand Emperor was stirring.

The emptiness in her eyes grew deeper. She became increasingly blank. And though it was hard to tell if it was because of grief or something else, crystalline tears began to well up in her eyes and then pour down her cheeks.

When Lu Lingzi saw those tears, he sighed.

Yue Dong noticed that and said, "Having second thoughts?"

Lu Lingzi shook his head. "No," he said with a faint smile. "No second thoughts. I'm just wondering when things changed between the two of you. The tears are actually very realistic. Were you going to wait until I actually completely absorbed her? Yue Dong. I have to admit you hid the secret attack very well within Lan Yao's seven emotions and six sensory pleasures. However... I still found it."

Up in the pagoda, Xu Qing's face remained completely expressionless as he continued to study Lu Lingzi.

Next to him, Erniu, who had been watching closely as the entire dramatic scene played out, suddenly exclaimed, "Here's the twist!! Didn't I say it? These three really know how to crank things up! Yue Dong, he figured out your plan! You need to do something. If you miss this chance, it'll be almost impossible to get a second try."

Ignoring Erniu, Yue Dong frowned and looked at Lu Lingzi. "What's that supposed to mean, Lu Lingzi?" she said.

Lu Lingzi chuckled, and his eyes shone with a strange light. "Didn't you hear what that fellow daoist in the pagoda said just now? You might want to keep the act up, but I've lost interest. In other words, I won't be continuing with the absorption process."

Lu Lingzi suddenly made a grasping gesture in Lan Yao's direction. As he did, nine-world power shot out in a deadly attack that screamed right toward her. He was planning to rip Lan Yao to shreds!

Yue Dong's face fell as she sensed the killing intent from Lu Lingzi. This was not a test. He was really planning to kill Lan Yao! Her hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture.

The emotion threads coming off Lan Yao suddenly shimmered dazzlingly as they transformed into a curse mark that shot toward Lu Lingzi. What was more, the emotion threads that Lu Lingzi already had inside of him also turned into a curse.

Lan Yao, who had looked blank and empty up to this point, suddenly seemed in full possession of her faculties. She could also move again. Expression turning cold, she slammed her hand onto the top of her own head.

A bang rang out as the emotion threads scattered, and fate threads took their place to shoot toward Lu Lingzi. She actually had never lost her mental faculties! This entire situation was actually a carefully laid trap. And the person who had seemingly been the prey was actually the hunter! She had been secretly working with Yue Dong all along. The two of them had been putting on a show the whole time, and now they had turned the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures into an explosive curse.

At that point, a voice echoed out. “This whole thing was set up for your sake, Lu Lingzi! Did you really think that I, Lan Yao, would be unaware of what you were secretly planning? Let me tell you, Little Luey, I know everything about you, from head to toe!

“Big Sis Yue Dong told me everything a long time ago. And our goal was the same all along. You... have always been the prey of me, Lan Yao!”

The person to say these things actually wasn't Lan Yao.

It was Erniu, who was still in the pagoda up above. As he watched the exciting scene play out, he couldn't help but join in the fun.

Neither Lan Yao nor Yue Dong were inclined to pay any attention to Erniu. They were attacking with full ferocity, and were focused on the curse exploding within Lu Lingzi. Lu Lingzi's aura was already in chaos, and he looked like he was weakening dramatically. However, his facial expression hadn't changed at all the entire time, and in fact, he even smiled faintly as he opened his mouth to speak.

“Yue Dong and Lan Yao, you two whores, did you really think you could pull off a win that easily? I, the great Lu, am the apprentice of a Grand Emperor. I've never trusted either of you. And given that my moment of triumph is nigh, it's only natural that I have one hundred percent confidence in being able to absolutely crush the two of you!”

These words were also spoken by Erniu, who almost seemed to be providing the dubbing so that the three participants didn't actually have to tell their own stories.

Lu Lingzi smiled broadly. Even as the curse surged within him, he looked up at the pagoda. “You expressed things perfectly for me, Fellow Daoist.”

Eyes shining, Lu Lingzi lifted a foot to walk. However, instead of walking toward Yue Dong and Lan Yao, he rose into the air, clenched his hand into a fist, and punched in a specific direction. The power of nine major worlds rumbled forth, bolstering the fist with power that could seemingly shatter anything.

The fist caused the empty air to ripple and distort as six figures suddenly appeared, all of whom were struggling to defend against Lu Lingzi's attack. Rumbling booms echoed out everywhere. Blood oozed out of the corners of Lu Lingzi's mouth as he fell back rapidly.

At the same time, blood sprayed out of the mouths of the six figures, who also fell back. All of them seemed to be middle-aged, and their facial features were very similar to those of Lan Yao. As they glared at Lu Lingzi, they pulsed with killing intent.

“So,” Lu Lingzi said, “six nine-world Smoldering God elders of the Lan Clan have secretly come to Revered Ancient. It looks like this hunting expedition didn’t just involve Lan Yao. Your whole clan is out to get me. In that case, I supposed Patriarch Lan will be showing up soon?”

Lu Lingzi turned to look off in a specific direction.

In that spot, the air rippled as an old man appeared wearing fancy garments. His arrival caused wild colors to flash as the might of an Imperial Sovereign weighed down. Lan Yao and Yue Dong immediately bowed in greeting to him, as did the six elders. The old man’s face remained expressionless as he nodded at Yue Dong and Lan Yao. Then he turned to Lu Lingzi.

“You might not have the bloodline of a Grand Emperor,” he said coolly, “but you have a devil-eye the likes of which is hard to come across once in ten thousand years. That’s the reason why our venerable Grand Emperor patriarch took you as an apprentice. It’s also why our clan was willing to accept you as a son-in-law. As for a hunting expedition.... you schemed to get the blood of our clan, and we schemed to get your devil-eye. I’d say that makes things fair.”

Inside the pagoda, Xu Qing’s eyes glittered thoughtfully. Next to him, Erniu blinked a few times.

“Holy crap,” he said. “This whole thing really is a rollercoaster! I wonder if Little Luey has more contingency plans ready to go.”

Outside the pagoda, Lu Lingzi looked at Patriarch Lan and the others. Smiling, he nodded. “Yes, I’d say it’s fair. And it’s also why, even after becoming a son-in-law of your clan and an apprentice to my Master, I never trusted any of you.”

When Lan Yao, Yue Dong, and Patriarch Lan saw how calm Lu Lingzi was acting, their hearts sank a bit.

“I know you’re extraordinary, Lu Lingzi,” Patriarch Lan said. “That’s why I came here in person. By the way, I already used the wartime situation as a cover to nullify all your contingency plans back in the holy land. As of now, you have nowhere to run to.”

Patriarch Lan pulsed with immense pressure that spread out in all directions. It was the might of an Imperial Sovereign, which caused the sky to flash and made him seem like the ruler of everything in the area. He began to walk toward Lu Lingzi, and every step he took caused the entire world to shake.

Yet despite that, Lu Lingzi’s expression remained tranquil, and he was still smiling.

“All my contingency plans?” he asked softly.

As he spoke, he looked up into the sky at... the Sageheaven Pagoda! At Erniu!

Erniu’s jaw dropped.

# Chapter 1026: Fish To Pass Around

The icy surroundings were completely and utterly silent.

Patriarch Lan and the six elders immediately took notice of how Lu Lingzi had shifted the focus of his gaze. All of them were inwardly leery of this apprentice of a Grand Emperor. There was no doubt about it: Lu Lingzi was definitely the most spectacular chosen in the Devilbird holy land.

It was hard for most people to even grasp the depths of his scheming or the profundity of his thought process. Then there was the extremely mysterious devil-eye on his forehead. Not only did it allow him to have authority while only being a Smoldering God, but also, he could use it to unleash a terrifying magic.

In terms of cultivation base, he wasn't the strongest of the Grand Emperor's apprentices in the Lan Clan. But he was astonishing both in his aptitude and in his way of doing things. He also had a lot of powerful backers, and was even considered important by some of the most influential members of Devilbird high society.

Anyone who wanted to make a move against him would only do so with utmost caution. And doing something to him while he was in the holy land would be incredibly difficult.

The only reason the Lan Clan dared to make a move on him was that, because of the war, their species' focus was on humankind, and they didn't have time for ancillary issues. What was more, Patriarch Lan was an Imperial Sovereign, which lent a certain degree of safety to their efforts. But now... even though they had negated all of his contingency plans and created what seemed like a win-win situation for themselves, the fact remained that Lu Lingzi was just smiling and looking up at that pagoda above them.

The people from the Lan Clan felt their hearts pounding with foreboding.

As for Lan Yao, she really was Lu Lingzi's daoist partner, and as such, she knew him better than most. As a result, her face fell, and she started breathing heavily. The sense of foreboding that everyone else sensed was even more intense within her, and in fact, based on what she knew of Lu Lingzi, she was certain things were about to turn ugly.

Yue Dong was reacting similarly; she felt incredibly uneasy. The two women quickly exchanged a glance, and then unhesitatingly turned to flee. All they could hope to do was put enough distance behind them that they might survive what was to come.

Meanwhile, as everyone looked up at the Sageheaven Pagoda, Erniu seemed puzzled.

"What're they looking at me for? What's it supposed to mean? Am I one of his contingency plans? Or is he waiting for more dubbing from me?"

Erniu was about to continue speaking when Xu Qing took a step forward! In the blink of an eye, he was hovering outside of the pagoda! His sudden appearance on the scene instantly attracted the attention of the nervous group of people outside. All gazes shifted from the pagoda itself to Xu Qing.

Erniu felt confused. But then he thought about the look in Xu Qing's eyes earlier, and suddenly had an idea of what might be going on. "Don't tell me...."

Lan Yao looked more bewildered than ever. Yue Dong's expression flickered. Patriarch Lan and the six elders felt even more uneasy than before, and they were frowning deeply.

Only Lu Lingzi was smiling just like before. Looking at Xu Qing, he said, "Are you my contingency plan?"

Xu Qing shook his head.

"Oh? Then why did you step out?" Lu Lingzi's eyes glittered sharply as he sized up Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's face was completely expressionless as he looked out of the barrier created by the bubble at Lu Lingzi.

"I'm not a match for you," he said coolly. "But back when we clashed, I sensed something very interesting inside of you.

"You have some godfire fluctuations in you. They're hidden deeply. If my godliness wasn't dominant right now, I wouldn't have noticed them. But right now, I'm a lot more sensitive to such things. Besides, I have a very unique fleshly body that also helps out.

"Put more precisely, my fleshly body can instinctively sense such fluctuations. The fluctuations are actually familiar to me. It took me a while to figure out why. But now I realize that the godfire in you comes from Empress Summer Departure of humankind."

Xu Qing's gaze was calm, but his words were like shocking bolts of lightning that crashed down everywhere.

Erniu's eyes widened, but quickly went back to normal. Laughing heartily, he strolled out to hover next to Xu Qing. Trying to look as if he had known all along what was happening, he said, "Little Ah Qing is absolutely correct. That's what I was just about to say." **RA NO BE**

Lan Yao and Yue Dong continued to back up without pausing. Patriarch Lan and the six elders were visibly surprised.

Xu Qing's voice didn't contain any emotion at all as he continued speaking. "You have godfire from Empress Summer Departure, and the only way you could have that is if the empress gave it to you personally.

"I'm currently on a mission from the empress to capture Lan Yao.... Except that, given who the empress is, I can't imagine shē would ever care about someone as unimportant as Lan Yao. It seems a lot more likely that this entire thing was a much more complicated fishing expedition. Feng Lintao is bait. Lan Yao is bait. You are also bait. And the fish is the entire Lan Clan.

"There has never been an explanation about how humankind got so many sensitive intelligence reports about the Devilbird holy land. Although the empress made it seem like Feng Lintao was responsible, the reality is... that Feng Lintao isn't important enough to have access to most of those intelligence reports. They had to have come from another party that's working with the empress."

It was another rare occasion in which Xu Qing spoke a lot. His words were like an icy wind that concluded with the following statement.

“And thus, your contingency plan isn’t me. It’s the empress.”

The words were as momentous as a massive wave smashing into the earth.

Patriarch Lan sent his divine will out in all directions. And instead of attacking Lu Lingzi, he shot up into the sky and reached out to tear open a rift. The six elders unleashed their cultivation bases. Looking around vigilantly, they flew up into the air to assist. Xu Qing’s explanation rang true to all of them, and thus, their main goal now was just to get free of this area and return to their holy land. If they got stuck here, and the empress really showed up, then the consequences would be unthinkable. The devil-eye was important, but not more important than their own survival.

What was more, if Lu Lingzi was really working with the humans, and they could prove it, then they wouldn’t need any scheme to get the devil-eye. The Lan Clan would be able to find an above-board reason to take it.

Xu Qing didn’t care what they were doing. Nor did Lu Lingzi.

In fact, Lu Lingzi was looking at Xu Qing with praise in his eyes. “Just what I would expect of the top chosen of humankind. No wonder the empress sent you to help me. Shē promised not to reveal my secrets to anyone. Originally, I thought shē might have gone back on hēr word and told you.”

Xu Qing shook his head. “The empress never said anything. Also, there’s another reason I spoke up; there are now plenty of fish around here. Besides, if I was wrong about everything, it wouldn’t be a big deal.”

With that, Xu Qing took out the jade slip of light that the empress had given him.

Erniu looked on in anticipation. Lu Lingzi smiled. The people from the Lan Clan fled desperately toward the rift Patriarch Lan was trying to open. Right then...

Xu Qing crushed the light-jade!

A crisp sound rang out over the ice plains. Heaven and earth turned pitch-black! It was as if a god had extinguished all the lamps in Revered Ancient, temporarily taking away all of the light there. Despite it being the middle of the day, it was now as dark as night. The only light came from that shattered jade slip, which sent pure white brightness out in all directions.

It was like the explosive light of a Dawning Sun! A scintillating, glowing sea spread out, shaking the dome of heaven.

And then, from within that source of dazzling light, a god appeared! The god wore an imperial robe and an imperial crown, and was surrounded by the destiny aura of humankind, as well as a godly aura as tempestuous as a storm. The moment shē arrived, hēr influence affected both time and space. They became like the background to hēr brilliance.

Because Patriarch Lan needed the rift to be stable, he couldn't move at all, and just hovered in place trembling. Off to the side, the six elders' were trembling down to their souls. In the distance, Lan Yao and Yue Dong were as immobile as statues, and were filled with infinite terror.

All living beings were being affected by hēr. The dazzling figure was, of course, none other than Empress Summer Departure. Shē took a step forward and arrived in front of Xu Qing. Shē opened hēr eyes. Boundless light flowed from within them, turning the darkness of night into the brilliance of dawn. Where that light went, all of the gloom in heaven and earth turned into radiance.

"You did well," the empress said to Xu Qing.

The moment the words echoed out, the human nature that had vanished from Xu Qing came back. He took a deep breath, clasped hands, and bowed. Erniu blinked a few times and then quickly clasped hands and bowed.

The empress looked in the direction of Lu Lingzi.

"Greetings, Empress," he said solemnly. "Your humble servant accomplished his mission smoothly. I managed to lure out Patriarch Lan and six core elders."

With that, he bowed deeply at the waist.

The empress nodded. Just as Xu Qing had said, hēr goal wasn't the measly Lan Yao. Shē wanted to snag the core experts from Lan Yao's entire clan. Only by refining their entire bloodline could shē reach out to their Grand Emperor who had supposedly perished.

The truth was that shē had been working with that Grand Emperor's apprentice for a long time now. And the reason humankind had achieved so much success was that this very person had provided so many intelligence reports.

Now that everything was coming together, the empress coolly said, "And now, I'll give you that which you requested."

The empress waved a hand, and a stream of godfire appeared in hēr hand, which then flew toward Lu Lingzi.

Lu Lingzi immediately inhaled it. His eyes then burned as if with fire. Everything he had done, including betraying the holy lands... was for the sake of godfire!

It would seem to any observer that he had been working hard for the sake of his Master's legacy. But the reality was that after coming to Revered Ancient and learning about what Empress Summer Departure had done, his desire had shifted. He no longer cared about the Grand Emperor's legacy. He wanted the seed of a fire that could propel him to godly ascension! He wanted to become a god!

As far as he was concerned, his own future was the only important thing. That was why he hadn't joined the war effort. He didn't care about Revered Ancient or the holy lands. He didn't want to become cannon fodder in what was essentially meaningless slaughter. It was for personal interests that he had decided to leave the holy lands and strive for godly ascension.

After becoming a god, he could travel far and wide however he wished. After all, this was a universe of gods! Leaving the cultivator system and becoming a god was obviously the best choice!

Originally, he'd never had any reason to believe he could do something like that. But then the empress found him and gave him hope! As the only cultivator who had successfully become a god, the empress gave him a type of hope that defied description. That was what led to all of the events that took place in the war up to this point.

Lu Lingzi took a deep breath. After accepting the godfire, he again bowed to the empress. Then he turned and sped off into the distance. As he left, the ice plains filled with a sea of light.

Within that light, the empress walked toward Patriarch Lan.

Patriarch Lan reeled with astonishment. The teleportation rift was open right in front of him, yet he couldn't move an inch. He could only watch as the empress neared. Immense pressure weighed down on him, and a terrifying aura caused him to shake visibly. No matter how he struggled, he couldn't do anything to a cultivation base power that surpassed him in a way that defied measure.

The empress reached out and gently touched him.

Despair shone in Patriarch Lan's eyes. Light surrounded him, and then he became a part of the light. Empress Summer Departure took the light back. After, the empress looked calmly at the six elders. Their souls went dim. The empress's gaze caused them to melt. An instant later, all traces of their existence had been erased.

Next was Lan Yao. The empress took her away.

Before leaving, the empress spoke to Xu Qing and Erniu. "Yue Dong has an immortal skill. Feng Lintao's soul has a legacy. The two of them are your compensation for this mission.

"Revered Ancient is currently in chaos. Things are complicated. The two of you don't need to get too involved in the war. Find a quiet place somewhere to seek enlightenment of the immortal skill and the legacy."

The words faded away. Heaven and earth returned to normal. The empress was gone.

Xu Qing looked thoughtfully at the unconscious Yue Dong off in the distance. Meanwhile, Erniu looked suspiciously at the horizon for a time.

"Little Ah Qing," he said quietly, "why do I get the feeling something is off about the empress? Why was she being so talkative? And why did it seem like she was trying to send us away...? Could it be that she's doing the same thing the old man did back then? You know, sending us off so she can hog all the loot?"[1]

1. Just want to clarify that Erniu *does not* use the divine pronoun when talking about the empress. I do not think that's a mistake on the author's part (although I suppose it could be). Take it for what you will.... 🙄

# Chapter 1027: Actually Hogging the Loot!

Someone who didn't understand enough about the nuances of human nature and godly nature wouldn't be able to say something as marvelous and imaginative as Erniu had just said.

In fact, it actually interrupted Xu Qing's train of thought. Now that his human nature had returned, he was no longer as coldly rational as he had been before. Therefore, Erniu's words struck him to the core.

After all... an ordinary person would never consider such a possibility. Regardless of how one took the empress' words, they seemed attentive and full of concern. They seemed to be a reminder that Xu Qing and Erniu didn't need to do anything risky to further the war effort, and instead, should focus more deeply on cultivation. But Erniu clearly didn't take her words at face value.

All of a sudden, Xu Qing felt compelled to give a bit of a warning. "Eldest Brother, lower your voice... the empress might not have really left yet."

Looking stunned, Erniu scanned the surroundings. After laughing heartily, he loudly said, "I'm just joking around! Um... so, Feng Lintao's soul has a legacy in it, eh? Allow me to check and see exactly what legacy it is!"

Erniu whipped out Feng Lintao's soul and glared at it.

Feng Lintao shivered as he looked up at Erniu. He was only getting more nervous by the second. After all, he was a paranoid person, and people like that often have very fertile imaginations. He was already starting to think of all the heinous methods that someone might use on him to get his legacy. Maybe they would soulsearch him. Maybe they would assimilate his soul. Maybe they would insert his soul into the fleshly body of an animal and then torture him.... Such thoughts became like tidal waves that slammed into him repeatedly. In fact, Erniu had only glared at him for a short time, and hadn't even said anything, when Feng Lintao took the initiative to start speaking.

"I offer many thanks to you for rescuing me, Fellow Daoist Erniu, oh great benefactor. I, Feng Lintao, have no true way to repay you other than humbly offering to give you my legacy!! My legacy comes from the founder of the Fardark holy land. In other words, he was Grand Emperor Fardark of yesteryear!

"The legacy seems illusory, but the reality is that it's not *completely* illusory. It comes in the form of a sealing mark, and if you gain enlightenment of it, it will turn into a dao lineament of authority!"

Feng Lintao didn't dare to be duplicitous. It wasn't lost on him that, from the moment he came to Revered Ancient, his every interaction with Erniu and Xu Qing involved extreme bad luck. In fact, he had nearly died numerous times thanks to them. Right now, the only thing that he was concerned with was staying alive.

When Erniu saw how straightforward and cooperative Feng Lintao was being, he blinked a few times. Then he started getting suspicious. Looking very malevolent, he narrowed his eyes and started squeezing down on Feng Lintao in soul form.

As pain swept through Feng Lintao, he started to get more anxious. “Wait a second, Fellow Daoist!” he said ingratiatingly. “I haven’t finished yet! In order to activate this legacy, you have to meet three specific requirements.

“The first is that you need to nourish yourself over time with a lot of blood and souls. I’ve accomplished that task already, Fellow Daoist Erniu, so you don’t need to worry about that. I can help you in that regard.

“The second requirement is to enter a state of frigid coldness in which you don’t have even a tiny scrap of heat within you. As far as that goes, I’ve already set the stage for the two of you, Fellow Daoist Erniu. That’s why we’re here in the north of Revered Ancient. We’re surrounded by ice plains, so all you have to do is dig down far enough to find the perfect spot.

“The third requirement is to have some holy fardark nectar. That’s the reason why I went to Fardark County back then. I’m more than happy to help you with the third requirement, Fellow Daoist Erniu. That’s how I’d like to thank the two of you for your assistance.”

There was no denying that Feng Lintao was well-spoken. The more he talked about offering help, the more Erniu felt at ease. It was now becoming apparent that Feng Lintao really was being sincere.

Finally, Erniu cleared his throat. “Set your mind at ease, Little Fengy. I, Lord Ox, am not the type of person who enjoys ruthlessly putting people to death. You did well in this whole thing. You just wait until we finish the main course. We’ll definitely leave behind some leftovers for you.”

With that, Erniu loosened his grip to ease some of Feng Lintao’s pain. He even used his other hand to gently stroke Feng Lintao a bit.

His words and his actions caused a tremor to pass through Feng Lintao. Then he quickly made sure to look as if he were emotionally touched....

At the same time, Xu Qing went over to the unconscious Yue Dong.

Before leaving, the empress had mentioned an immortal skill, which was the same one Xu Qing had personally experienced. Although it didn’t work on him, it was obviously formidable and also very gruish. Not only could it create emotion puppets that could be controlled from afar, but also, it could stir the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures, and use them to create an explosive curse. It could be very damaging and even fatal. An immortal skill like that could naturally be considered extraordinary.

As Xu Qing stood above Yue Dong, his eyes glittered with a seven-colored glow. It was daybreak light, spreading out to make a copy. Unfortunately, the gruish nature of immortal skills was now made fully manifest, as the daybreak light failed to make a copy!

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered faintly as he extended his right index finger and touched Yue Dong’s forehead. A moment later, he frowned. He couldn’t sense any traces of any immortal skills inside of Yue Dong. Either the immortal skill didn’t exist, or it was impossible to find. The only other option seemed to be a soulsearch. However, Xu Qing got the feeling that the soulsearch would fail, and the immortal skill would disappear along with Yue Dong when she died. rǎNòÈS

All of a sudden, Xu Qing found himself thinking of that time he, Master Seventh, and his Eldest Brother went to the Immortal Skills Hall and got those masks. He touched Yue Dong's face, but felt nothing out of the ordinary.[1]

*She's not wearing a mask. Don't tell me this Six Thieves Deceive Life immortal skill is actually even more unique than I assumed?*

As Xu Qing contemplated the situation, Yue Dong shivered and suddenly opened her eyes. She was now awake. Glaring venomously at Xu Qing, she said, "Are you looking for my immortal skill? You won't find it! And I'm not going to give it to you!"

She sneered, and the venom in her eyes grew more intense.

"You *will* give it to me," Xu Qing said coolly. "Little Shadow?"

The shadow rippled out from beneath his feet, pulsing with fluctuations of excitement. Apparently, it had been waiting for a moment like this for a long time. It was finally its turn to prove its worth. Sparing no effort, Little Shadow spread out. And as Yue Dong looked on in shock, it covered her.

Chewing sounds drifted out. Then Yue Dong started panting for breath. She wanted to fight back, except that Xu Qing tapped her, and she deflated like a popped balloon. Having no strength to fight back, she could do nothing as Little Shadow devoured *her* shadow. She could sense an incomparably malevolent and cold power spreading through her, filling her mind and body.

Shortly after, Little Shadow's possession technique worked!

Yue Dong's breathing evened out, and her facial expression became one of fervor. Kowtowing to Xu Qing, she loudly said, "Greetings, milord!"

The venom in her eyes had been replaced by terror.

Off to the side, Feng Lintao witnessed what was happening, and his eyes went wide. Inside, he was feeling immeasurably lucky. From what he was seeing, this was far worse than when Yue Dong herself took control of other people.

"Talk," Xu Qing said calmly. "Where's the immortal skill? And what's your true objective?"

The fervor on Yue Dong's face grew more intense, and she seemed to get incredibly excited. However, the terror in her eyes remained. However, she couldn't stop herself from saying, "Milord, her immortal skill isn't in her soul, nor in her fleshly body. Instead, it's in a memory. I have no way to get it out. That memory has been sealed by her Master, and if I even touch it, I'll vanish like smoke in a breeze.

"That said, I can force her to use the immortal skill in front of you.

"As for her objective, she wants to use the authority from Feng Lintao's legacy to seal the immortal skill. In that manner, she can be like *the turtledove occupying the magpie's nest*, fuse with the immortal skill, and turn it into a new type of authority! If she succeeds, then the skill of Six Thieves Deceive Life will break through the inherent barriers of immortal skills and unleash limitless potential!"

When Little Shadow finished speaking, Xu Qing looked at Erniu.

Erniu chuckled darkly as he stroked Feng Lintao's soul. "Your Fardark legacy is very interesting, Little Fengy. Why didn't you explain those details earlier?"

Feng Lintao shivered and quickly replied, "I was planning to get into that right now, Fellow Daoist Erniu! It's like this: when my legacy becomes authority, it manifests in a most mysterious and profound way. It's a sealing mark! Simply put, it's an empty shell of authority that can seal any power and turn it into a true type of authority. However...."

Feng Lintao suddenly seemed hesitant. "Fellow Daoist Erniu. Fellow Daoist Xu Qing. Based on what that whore Yue Dong said, it should be possible to seal her immortal skill with the authority of my legacy. However, it will only make one instance of authority. Whoever absorbs it and creates a dao lineament, it will be powerful, but also permanently attached to whoever absorbed it."

Feng Lintao looked cautiously at Xu Qing and Erniu. Truth be told, he was extremely leery about trying to manipulate the situation. However, that didn't mean he had really given up. In fact, he had actually embedded some seeds of a scheme within his words. All cultivators longed for authority, and that wasn't to mention that they were now talking about an authority based on an immortal skill. But if only one instance of authority could be created, who would get it? Feng Lintao bowed his head.

Unfortunately, though Feng Lintao's trick might work on random, ordinary people, there was no way it would be successful on Xu Qing and Erniu.

An instant later, a groan erupted from Feng Lintao's mouth as his plan failed.

Xu Qing paid him no heed, and just took the shadow-wrapped Yue Dong off toward the north.

Erniu squeezed down hard on Feng Lintao's soul. Smiling enigmatically, he said, "Sorry, Little Fengy. You lost the privilege of getting leftovers."

With that, Erniu leaped into the air and followed Xu Qing north.

Half a month passed as Xu Qing and Erniu left the east of Revered Ancient and entered the frozen north.

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In the distant Imperial Region of humankind, in a restricted area in the imperial capital, the empress sat cross-legged in meditation. Streams of white light swirled around hēr, and were slowly converging in front of hēr to form the outline of something.

Gradually, that outline came to look like a person! It looked exactly like the apprentice of the Grand Emperor, Lu Lingzi! Whether it was his aura, the karma, or the fate, he looked completely and utterly like the real Lu Lingzi.

The deal between Lu Lingzi and Empress Summer Departure involved more than just a fishing expedition targeting the Lan Clan. It also involved Lu Lingzi's name. He had provided everything about himself. He had given up everything. And it was all to sever his connections to his holy land.

Then he had found a safe place to hide, a place where no one could find him. That was where he would start his godly ascension ceremony.

The empress had taken all of that, and thus, *became* him. An instant later, 'Lu Lingzi' opened his eyes and looked off into the distance.

That gaze emerged from the restricted area, pierced through the spell formation, and went north. After locating the auras of Xu Qing and Erniu, 'he' looked in the direction of the Devilbird holy land.

*All variables have been negated. The Devilbirds... are going to change dramatically very soon.*

1. They went to the Immortal Skills Hall in chapter 519. ❸

## Chapter 1028: The Godly Authority of Good Luck

In the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity, there was a distinction between east, west, south, and north in Revered Ancient. However, there weren't clearly defined borders separating different areas. Dark Serenity himself didn't want there to be hard-and-fast divisions between different parts of the land.

But then Dark Serenity left, and with the arrival of the broken face, everything changed. Catastrophe swept through the Revered Ancient mainland. Countless species experienced death and war. Some species ended up being wiped out forever, while other species rose to prominence. Eventually, there ended up being five top species.

In the east, the Firemoon Darkheaven people were the top species. In the north were the Northfate Kings. In the west were the Redland Nobleplexuses. To the south were the Netherworld Chasmcorpses. The central part of Revered Ancient was occupied by the number one species. Those five top species stood tall in Revered Ancient. They occupied the peak of the world.

Then Empress Summer Departure stepped into the Altar God level, and led humans to prominence. They allied with the Firemoons, and thus became one of the *six* top species in Revered Ancient. The result was that the east became stronger than the west, south, and north. And the east was now catching up to the number one species.

Thanks to the war with the holy lands, it was now possible to get an idea of how strong the various parts of Revered Ancient were. Not one holy land went to the central region. In the east, the fighting was restricted to areas outside of their defensive spell formation. As for the west, south, and north, the flames of war spread without cease, with deaths and casualties mounting on both sides.

That was especially true in the north. Over the better part of the past year, the four celestial-level holy lands that had come to the north waged war over and over again. Even if the Northfate Kings had been even stronger than they were, they would eventually have been put into a bad position.

Taking in the north as a whole, the landscape now wasn't pure white. Instead, there were many areas... that were stained with blood.

That was the state of things when Xu Qing and Erniu entered the north.

They felt the frigid wind, they saw the endless plains of ice, and they could smell the blood and gore. Even Erniu was uncharacteristically quiet. The whimpering wind seemed to carry with it a sense of decay and lifelessness. The ice below was red with blood, and it was possible to see quite a few corpses frozen in death. It was an appalling sight. Most of them were frozen in whatever position they had been in just before dying.

Looking off into the distance, Xu Qing murmured, "Compared to the east, this place... is obviously in dire straits."

"That's why we shouldn't go very far past the border," Erniu said, looking around at the corpses. He sighed. "Maybe we should just stop here. All we need to do is find a place underneath the ice."

Xu Qing nodded. He looked up into the sky, then down at the icy ground. He was just about to lift his right foot to stomp down and shatter the ice when something happened.

The screaming wind brought with it an unfamiliar sound. Thanks to Xu Qing's godly authority, he was able to see an image within the sound as well. There were people off in the distance. It was... a chase to the death.

The person being chased was a middle-aged cultivator with bluish skin and a first-stage Void Returning cultivation base. He obviously wasn't human. He wore fancy clothing and a violet-gold crown that made it clear he was someone important. His garments were embroidered with dark snowflakes. As he moved along, illusory snowflakes would manifest around him, encircling him and sucking in the surrounding frigid energy to create blasting wind that added to his speed.

The two pursuers had similar cultivation bases. They were both in first-stage Void Returning and both wore silver robes. They had scales on their forehead, tails hanging behind them, and horns on their heads. They also pulsed with the aura of the starry sky. Both were obviously nonhuman, and clearly they didn't come from Revered Ancient. They were from the holy lands beyond the heavens. Both had eyes that pulsed with killing intent, and as they gave chase, they performed incantation gestures and sent dazzling magical techniques shooting toward their quarry.

The middle-aged cultivator kept getting hit by their attacks, and had blood oozing out of his mouth. But his expression was placid. He wasn't flustered at all. He just kept up his speed in the hopes of putting distance between him and his pursuers.

His tactic seemed to be working. The distance between them continued to grow. However, the repeated attacks kept hitting him, causing him to cough up mouthfuls of blood. Yet he maintained his composure. He seemed to not care how much he got hurt, nor did he seem to be worried about being caught and killed.

Xu Qing was the first to notice what was happening, but Erniu quickly caught on as well.

“That fellow’s clothing pegs him as one of the Northfate Kings,” Erniu said. “Interesting. Does he realize the two of us are here? Or does he just have some trick up his sleeve? What other explanation could there be for why he looks so relaxed?”

Xu Qing looked calmly at the three people involved in the chase. They were getting very close to the airspace occupied by Xu Qing and Erniu. However, given the level of their cultivation bases, there was no way they could detect either of them. It was impossible to determine if what happened next was a coincidence or not.

As the group neared Xu Qing and Erniu, the two pursuers from the holy lands unleashed trump card attacks. Intense rumbling sounds echoed out as the Northfate King cultivator failed to dodge the attacks, was hit, and coughed up more blood. As he staggered in place, his pursuers cut him off, leaving him no choice but to drop down straight onto the ice plains below.

The two holy lands cultivators closed in with killing intent, and then, the three of them started fighting fiercely right in front of Xu Qing and Erniu. Booms rang out, and the light of magical techniques flared brightly.

The curious scene caused both Xu Qing and Erniu to frown.

“This seems *very* coincidental,” Erniu said, his eyes narrowing. “They just so happened to start fighting right in front of us?”

However, from the way the three were fighting, it really seemed as if they were intent on killing each other. And their facial expressions did not give any indication that they realized anyone else was present.

Erniu was planning to just keep watching and see if any of them actually died. After all, for these three people to appear right here and now really did seem to be too coincidental.

However, Xu Qing only watched them for a short time before his eyes shone with mysterious light, and he suddenly waved his right hand out in front of him. That caused the sound being emitted by the three fighting cultivators to suddenly disappear as it turned into a deadly, invisible attack.

It turned into an explosive sound that caused the holy lands’ cultivators to look around in surprise. Then, before they even had a chance to dodge to the side, the explosive sound swept over them. Booms rang out as the two cultivators exploded. They were dead in body and soul. The only thing left behind was blood, raining down onto the ground below. řaNOBĚ\$

As for the middle-aged Northfate King cultivator, he was visibly taken aback by the sudden development, and instinctively backed up, all while scanning his surroundings. He saw nothing.

Xu Qing and Erniu remained concealed.

A short time passed, whereupon the Northfate King cultivator took a deep breath and bowed.

“Your humble servant is disciple Long Jiu of the Northfate Kings. Many thanks for the grace of saving my life, Senior! [1]

“Since you don’t wish to show yourself, oh benefactor, I will not beg for you to do so. However, the kindness you have shown me will be forever engraved on my heart. Benefactor, if you ever come to visit the Northfate Kings, you can use this medallion to track me down. Unfortunately, I’m on an important errand right now, and therefore, I must hurry on my way.”

The middle-aged cultivator Long Jiu seemed very sincere, and his facial expression was neither servile nor overbearing. As he spoke, he took out a shimmering silver medallion, which he threw onto the ground. He bowed again, waited for a moment, and then seeing he wasn’t getting any response, he took a deep breath and shot off over the horizon.

After he was gone, the command medallion he’d left behind flew up into Erniu’s hand.

“Interesting. This command medallion is crafted from ice crystals. The quality is extremely high. This Long Jiu... has an extraordinary temperament. Considering his actions... I’d say he’s probably an important person among the Northfate Kings.

“If we ever end up visiting that species, maybe this connection will prove useful. That said, this whole thing still seems oddly coincidental. By the way, little Ah Qing, why did you interfere just now?”

Erniu turned to look at Xu Qing, all while fiddling with the medallion.

Xu Qing looked in the direction Long Jiu had disappeared. “There’s more to him than meets the eye, that’s for sure. He has... fluctuations of godly authority on him.”

“Godly authority?” Erniu said, his gaze hardening.

“It seems to be some sort of rare godly authority,” Xu Qing went on. “It’s on the cusp of being made manifest. It just needs some more time. After we finish dealing with this Feng Lintao situation, we can go try to find out more.”

Xu Qing waved his hand, and a sundial rose up into the sky. Next, he lifted his foot and stomped it down onto the ground. The ice shattered noiselessly as a huge chasm opened up. Xu Qing dropped down inside.

Erniu blinked a few times and then followed him.

Beneath the glacial surface, there was an icy river flowing along rapidly. They needed to find a place that was full of frigid cold. It needed to lack even a scrap of heat in order to conform to the requirements of Feng Lintao’s legacy. They needed to go to the bottom of this icy river!

Up above, the sundial rotated, causing the power of time to spread out. As a result, the shattered ice went back to how it was before. After that, the sundial vanished without a trace.

In that manner, time reversed by seven days.

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Some tens of thousands of kilometers away from where Xu Qing and Erniu had just vanished underground, there was a massive glacier.

The mutagen wasn't very strong here compared to other places. In the past, a lot of small sects had gathered here. However, when war came, some sects were conscripted while others moved away. The only one left behind was called the Ice River Sect. It was a very small sect that didn't even have a hundred disciples. Life was normally tough for them, but with the war going on, things were even tougher.

Just now, a figure had flown out of the sky and landed in the grand hall of the sect. He was none other than Long Jiu, whom Xu Qing had recently rescued. Instead of the calm look on his face, he now looked very pleased with himself. As he sat down in the grand hall, a disciple hurried over anxiously and bowed.

"Well met, Master," the disciple said. This was Long Jiu's highest-ranking apprentice.

Noticing the anxiety on his apprentice's face caused Long Jiu's eyebrows to shoot up. "Did something happen?"

"Master... just today another eleven inner sect disciples chose to leave the sect. As of now, we only have thirty-seven people left. What's more, our cultivation resources are running extremely low. What are we supposed to do...?"

Long Jiu smiled. "Don't worry. Everyone has their own aspirations. As for me, I'm just on the verge of achieving success."

Upon hearing that, the apprentice sighed. He knew that his Master was in the throes of obsession, and that nothing could be said to dissuade him. All he could do was ask, "Master, how did the trip outside the sect go? Did you get anything good?"

Long Jiu laughed heartily. "One out of ten times that I leave the sect, I encounter danger. But I also encounter benefactors! This time, I got luckier than usual. In my travels, I actually ran into three benefactors!"

When the apprentice saw how pleased his Master looked, he thought back to all the tough times the sect had gone through and he couldn't help but say, "Master, the disciples have run out of spirit stones for cultivation. Maybe... we should sell one of our command medallions? Just one...?"

Long Jiu frowned. "You're as short-sighted as a rat! I'm going to rely on my own luck to become famous!

"You'd do well to know that the benefactors who saved me are all important people! With my command medallion in their possession, they'll obviously realize how amazing I am. Then, when they visit the Northfate Kings, they'll think of me, and then mention my name to the top experts of the species!

"At first, the important people in the species won't have any idea who I am. But as more benefactors show up and talk about me more and more, the top figures in the Northfate Kings will eventually have a good impression of me. A *very* good impression! And then they'll spread word in the species about who I am.

"Furthermore, every single benefactor can be considered an important connection for me. Because they saved my life, I have to pay them back. And that means karma! All the top figures will

eventually become benefactors. Now, *you tell me*. How could I possibly *not* get famous this way? And once I am famous, how could I end up empty-handed?”

Long Jiu looked at his apprentice. It was true that his apprentice had been following him for years, and had gone through some really tough times.

“Just wait a bit longer,” he said comfortingly. “I have the premonition that by the time I give out the last seven medallions, it’ll be the time to strike! But enough of that for now. I need to rest and recover a bit. Afterward, I’ll go out and look for more benefactors.”

The apprentice wanted to say some more, but given his Master’s current mood, he knew that it wasn’t the time. That said, he had to admit that his Master had been quite lucky over the past few years. He had ended up in a lot of deadly chases, yet there always seemed to be an important person around to save him. As for his Master’s plan to become famous....

*I just hope it works out.*

The apprentice sighed again.

1. Long Jiu: Long is number 81 on the list of 100 common surnames. It means “dragon.” Jiu means “nine, ninth.” Hold on.  $9 \times 9 = 81$ . And the surname is the 81st most common??? Holy moly! Nine is a fairly auspicious number in China/Chinese, and of course, dragons are also auspicious, so combining them is... well, very auspicious indeed. Ever heard of Kowloon in Hong Kong? In Cantonese, kow is “nine” and “loon” is dragon, so basically, the reverse order of this person’s name. In Mandarin (as opposed to Cantonese) Kowloon is Jiulong. Incidentally, and this is a sort of minor obscure spoiler, but there is a character who has this same name in the classic wuxia novel I translated *Dragon King with Seven Stars*, although in that novel it seems to treat it more like a nickname than an actual name. And there is a connection between that character and another character in my other translation *Seven Killers*. 弑

## Chapter 1029: You Bring the Wedding Gift, I Enter the Bridal Chamber

In the lands where the east met the north, far beneath the glaciers, everything was pitch-black.

Successive sheets of ice formed the sky over the river, the water of which was bone-penetratingly cold. Considering that the air was also freezing, it was no surprise that the surface of the river was constantly freezing up.

However, the water was unusual, and had the aura of a god in the form of mutagen. It also had ordinary spirit power. Because of the varying interactions between all those things, the freezing point varied wildly. The further down one went, the more the freezing point surpassed understanding.

Even though Xu Qing and Erniu couldn’t sense even a bit of heat, and had to rely only on their cultivation base to keep themselves alive, the river water still didn’t freeze solid.

As they got deeper, the cold got more intense.

When they were down to about 30,000 meters, Xu Qing stopped briefly. If he went further down, his fleshly body would be able to sustain the cold, but his soul would start to feel the pressure. That said, it would definitely last until at least 60,000 meters.

Unfortunately, Feng Lintao and Yue Dong were at their full limit. If he continued, the two wouldn't be able to unveil the immortal skill or the legacy.

In contrast, Erniu's miraculous nature was fully on display. He... wasn't being affected at all! In fact, Xu Qing got the feeling that Erniu felt more comfortable here than he did outside of this coldness.

Upon noticing Xu Qing looking at him, Erniu proudly said, "Your Eldest Brother will always be your Eldest Brother."

Xu Qing's look of admiration made Erniu feel incomparably pleased. However, he also knew that Feng Lintao and Yue Dong couldn't go any further down.

Erniu and Xu Qing exchanged a glance, and in doing so, confirmed with each other that this was the place to activate Feng Lintao's legacy.

Erniu waved his hand, causing Feng Lintao's soul to appear in the ice river.

Feng Lintao immediately began to tremble, and it was obvious that he was already starting to freeze. An intense sensation of deadly crisis filled him, prompting him to unleash every scrap of soul power possible to fight back against the cold. The results were minimally effective.

Eventually, Feng Lintao had no other choice than to float up until he was higher than 9,000 meters before he was able to stabilize himself and stop the freezing process.

"So useless!" Erniu snapped with a frown.

Feng Lintao felt more than a little humiliated. He wanted to point out to Erniu that he was in soul form, without a fleshly body, which meant that he was obviously much weaker than he should be. And he wasn't in this situation out of choice. It was because of everything that happened with the fishing expedition.... What was more, the way the two of them had sealed him along the way made him even less strong.

But in the end, he didn't dare to give voice to all of that. Burying such feelings deep inside, he plastered an ingratiating look onto his face. Truth be told, what really worried him was the possibility that, after he handed over his legacy, he wouldn't be valuable anymore.... And if he displeased his captors now, then it was entirely possible that they would put him to death then. He had put a lot of thought into how to extricate himself from the current situation. But in the end, he hadn't come up with any solid plan.

Seeing Erniu and Xu Qing looking at him like tigers eying prey, Feng Lintao trembled inwardly. Not daring to be uncooperative, he cleared his thoughts and turned to Xu Qing.

“Fellow Daoist Xu Qing, going forward, I’ll act in complete sincerity and wholeheartedness. I won’t hide anything. I won’t try to pull any tricks. I’ll do everything possible to produce my legacy and help the two of you seal authority.

“I have no demands. I don’t even expect to get my freedom. I just want to stay alive. You can even enslave me if you’d like. That’s fine! And therefore, Fellow Daoist Xu Qing... I trust you! And I just hope you can promise me one thing!”

Feng Lintao wasn’t finished, nor had Xu Qing responded to him.

But Erniu, feeling a bit miffed, jumped in by saying, “What’s that supposed to mean? You don’t trust *me*?”

Feng Lintao shivered deeply and was about to offer an explanation when Xu Qing started talking.

“I’ll do everything in my power to get you back to humankind when this is all over. As for whether you live or die afterward, that’s going to be up to the empress.”

Xu Qing’s words caused Feng Lintao to calm down a bit and even breathe an inner sigh of relief. If Xu Qing had offered some long and glib response, it might have had the opposite effect. But his response seemed succinct and sincere.

Feng Lintao’s eyes filled with determination, and he didn’t make any more requests. He quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then touched his forehead. His soul body shone with dazzling light, making him seem like a star within the pitch-black river. ƒÂÑÕÆŠ

Strands spread out, floating around his soul form, connecting with each other to make the shape of a flower. The flower even emanated a strange fragrance. It started expanding....

A primeval aura began to build on it. It was... the aura of a Grand Emperor. In the outside world, that aura would have been illusory. But here in this icy river with frigid surroundings, it was corporeal.... It became a ring made of countless sealing symbols, surrounding Feng Lintao and rotating constantly. The aura shone onto the flower. In the end, the ring, like the external manifestation of the flower, turned into a flower itself!

The sealing marks that made up the flower all pulsed with a sensation of a gathering dao. Close examination would reveal that the sealing marks were all empty, without any will, nor any sort of magical technique. All they had was the pure accumulation of a foundational dao.

“That is the manifestation of Grand Emperor Fardark’s authority. It’s empty, and can seal any appropriate magical technique or divine ability, and thus turn it into authority! It won’t work with all magical techniques. And every failure will cause the legacy sealing symbols to disappear forever. Therefore, succeeding on the first attempt is the best outcome.”

As Feng Lintao spoke, he grimaced. Clearly, manifesting this legacy in these surroundings caused him a lot of pain. “Fellow Daoists, I can only last for the time it takes an incense stick to burn! Quickly, decide which magical technique you want to seal!”

Xu Qing looked at Erniu. At this point, they could proceed with Yue Dong’s immortal skill....

“Yue Dong was working on her plan for a long time,” he said quietly, “and definitely made preparations to ensure she would succeed.”

Erniu’s eyes narrowed. “Something just occurred to me, little Ah Qing. Was Yue Dong’s plan really just to turn that immortal skill into authority...? Given all of our dealings with her, I get the feeling that her plan was probably much more complicated. Do you think it’s possible that there is more to her plan...? Maybe sealing authority was only the first step for her.”

Xu Qing considered the possibilities. For one thing, he thought back to how Yue Dong and Lan Yao had been working together. If Yue Dong wanted Feng Lintao for that purpose alone, then there didn’t seem to be any need to bring in the Lan Clan and Lu Lingzi. She surely could have come up with some way of avoiding dealing with the Lan Clan, but still getting Feng Lintao’s legacy. But she chose the path that would actually bring great benefit to the Lan Clan if she succeeded.

“She definitely had another objective!” Xu Qing said.

He and Erniu exchanged a glance. Then Xu Qing waved his hand, causing the shadow-wrapped Yue Dong to appear in the river.

Yue Dong shivered from the cold, and her eyes overflowed with venom. However, with Little Shadow controlling her, she couldn’t fight back. And Little Shadow could also force her to speak.

“Milord, this woman’s memories don’t contain any other purpose. Turning the immortal skill into authority was her only objective.”

Xu Qing looked coldly at the hate-filled Yue Dong. “Force her to use her immortal skill,” he said coolly. “Use the legacy authority to seal the immortal skill, and nothing else!”

Little Shadow complied. Yue Dong’s hands flashed as she unleashed the immortal skill of Six Thieves Deceive Life. As seven-colored light glowed, the venom in Yue Dong’s face turned into anxiety. However, there was nothing she could do other than watch her fleshly body act beyond her control to activate the immortal skill.

Soon, she was shimmering with seven-colored light, which created a dazzling sea around her and covered over the flower outside of Feng Lintao. Within the empty marks, color began to appear. Seven-colored light built up, until finally Little Shadow forced Yue Dong’s two hands up to sever the light.

The seven-colored light was ripped away from Yue Dong. All of it poured into the legacy flower of Feng Lintao, filling the sealing marks, and causing the flower itself to shine with seven colors.

Feng Lintao looked at the flower with mixed feelings. He felt the impulse to take it for his own. But an instant later, Xu Qing appeared behind him, and Erniu appeared in front of him. Xu Qing looked on coldly. Erniu smiled enigmatically. And then Feng Lintao had no choice but to put away such thoughts.

“Fellow Daoists,” he said sincerely, “the bestowal of holy fardark nectar will provide stability. That nectar is hidden in my soul. Being in this current state, no outsider could extract it. It would influence the formation of the authority. Therefore, I hereby request that you release the seals binding me so that I can take it out.”

Feng Lintao worked hard to make sure his expression was one of full sincerity. This was his final trump card. Unfortunately, he had made a very big miscalculation.... Xu Qing also had holy fardark nectar. And he had a lot more than Feng Lintao did....

Xu Qing pulled out a bottle, uncorked it, and then poured out ten times as much holy fardark nectar than Feng Lintao could have. There was plenty for the seven-colored flower, as the flower rapidly solidified and went from being illusory to being completely real.

Xu Qing reached out. Cracking sounds rang out as the flower separated from Feng Lintao and flew to Xu Qing. He grabbed it.

When Feng Lintao saw this scene play out, his heart lurched. *So much....*

He could instantly speculate about what was going on. Back in the Fardark Cistern, there hadn't been nearly that much fardark nectar. Obviously Xu Qing must have taken it away earlier! His mind and heart reeled as countless emotions swept through him. In the end, he had no choice but to suppress them. He put away his humiliation and bitterness, and forced a fawning expression onto his face. Right now, all of his hope rested in the seven-colored flower.

The flower pulsed with a majestic aura, and the sensation of a great dao accumulation. It was becoming true authority. Right now, it was masterless, and thus, whoever fused with it would gain a dao lineament. Good fortune like this, if made public, would cause innumerable cultivators to descend into madness. Even gods would be moved.

*But there's only one available...*

If Feng Lintao had the option, he would fight with his blood brother to get something like this, much less a fellow disciple. But what happened next caused his heart to pound.

Xu Qing took the seven-colored flower and tossed it to Erniu. Erniu took it, examined it, and then looked at Feng Lintao. Feng Lintao's ingratiating expression grew stronger.

Erniu grinned. "I'm going to show you a little magic trick, Little Fengy. To be honest, this magic trick is only possible due to your great generosity."

As Feng Lintao looked on in confusion, Erniu glanced at Xu Qing. It was on the journey to this place that he had figured out a way to deal with the fact that there would only be one portion of authority.

Xu Qing waved his hand, causing his sageheaven god vine to appear and fly over to Erniu. Erniu threw out his own sageheaven god vine. The two god vines had once been part of the same whole. Later, Erniu cut that whole into two halves. Now that they were close together again, they fused, once again becoming whole.

As Feng Lintao reeled in shock, Erniu took the seven-colored flower and tossed it toward the god vine. The god vine opened its mouth and devoured the flower. An instant later, seven-colored light flowed across the vine, turning into a dao lineament that covered the entire thing. After, the vine split into two parts again.

One merged with Xu Qing, the other with Erniu. Both of them shivered and closed their eyes, whereupon their auras started to climb.

The immortal skill of Six Thieves Deceive Life had been perfectly split in half!

Feng Lintao's heart sank, all while filling with a sensation of extreme helplessness. Off to the side, Yue Dong's eyes shimmered with similar emotions. As of this moment, for the first time in their lives, these two people were completely in sync.

In the end, they couldn't change a thing. Both were shaken for a few dozen breaths of time. Then Xu Qing and Erniu both opened their eyes at the same time. Both immediately turned to look at Yue Dong.

"Oh, so that's how it is," Erniu said. "So you hid your true objective within the immortal skill. It was hidden so well... that without forming authority, it would be extremely difficult to uncover.

Xu Qing's eyes flashed. "No wonder Little Shadow couldn't find it in your memories...."

Yue Dong really did have a much more complicated plan. And that plan was the reason why she had chosen to cooperate with the Lan Clan. In a critical moment, she had taken that concept out of her own memories and transferred it to the immortal skill, thus preventing Little Shadow from detecting it.

Now, with Xu Qing and Erniu working together with authority, they figured it out.

Assimilating Feng Lintao's legacy and using it to turn the immortal skill into authority was actually only the second step in Yue Dong's plan. The first step was working with the Lan Clan to draw out the Grand Emperor's apprentice, all while conspiring to seize Feng Lintao's legacy. The second step was to absorb Feng Lintao, and turn Six Thieves Deceive Life into authority.

The third step was her true objective. Her agreement with the Lan Clan was that, after the Grand Emperor's apprentice had his devil-eye extracted, she would get his fleshly body to turn into an emotion puppet. Then she would use that puppet to work with the Lan Clan to get close to the Grand Emperor's secluded meditation facilities. The ultimate objective was to abscond with the supposedly perished Grand Emperor!

It was impossible to say what tricks the Lan Clan had up their sleeve to make them fully confident in succeeding. But they had revealed to Yue Dong that the Grand Emperor wasn't 'suspected' to be dead. He really was dead. However, the secluded meditation facilities had been tightly sealed. The dao accumulation and cultivation base the Grand Emperor had left behind, if absorbed, could be used to advance by leaps and bounds in one's cultivation. If things went as planned, she would be able to do just that.

Meanwhile, the Lan Clan would acquire the Grand Emperor's other legacies and his remaining cultivation base. Then, Yue Dong could use her authority to seal the Grand Emperor's corpse, and refine it into a Grand Emperor zombie puppet.

It was a complicated plan, with plenty of opportunities for either side to scheme against each other. After all, Yue Dong only had limited usefulness in the entire thing. But in the end, the Lan Clan still chose to work with her....

Of course, not all the details were visible to Xu Qing and Erniu. And they had no idea where such details were hidden. Perhaps they were in the emotions of some other person, or perhaps they were with the Lan Clan.

Regardless, even Erniu still found the plan to be a completely crazy one. It was actually quite moving to him.

“This Yue Dong is totally crazy! I mean, completely daring! I have to say... I’m a fan!” Eyes shining, he turned to Xu Qing. “Little Ah Qing, since Yue Dong is obviously connected to us by destiny, and since we’ve already reached his point in her plan, I say, why not help her finish things up? If we don’t, our consciences will definitely start bothering us.

“Besides, if that Grand Emperor’s secluded meditation facilities really have some dao accumulation and cultivation base that can be considered a destined opportunity and good fortune, then we might as well give it a shot. After all, cultivating the ordinary way is just too slow!

“There will be dangers, but it’s been a long time since we pulled off a *really* big job. If we back down now, then our dao hearts are definitely going to become unstable!”

Erniu licked his lips as a crazy look overtook his eyes.

*Deathblade’s Thoughts*

*This chapter is nearly 1,500 characters longer than average.*

## Chapter 1030: Seizing True God Authority

The fact that Erniu spoke of the dao heart becoming unstable just showed how absolutely determined he was to go to the Devilbird holy land.

All in all, Xu Qing knew that his Eldest Brother’s dao heart was a heart centered around treasure and good fortune. And there was one thing his Eldest Brother said that was completely on point. It had been years since the two of them pulled off a really big job. Besides, a destined opportunity in a Grand Emperor’s secluded meditation facilities, which could increase one’s cultivation base, was obviously something moving even to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing was aware that he had essentially fallen into a rut when it came to cultivation base progress. If he wanted to break through from Void Returning to Smoldering God at this point, it was going to be extremely difficult. The problem was that he had too many types of godly authority. He had over a hundred. Although that would give him incredible battle prowess, it also was holding him back significantly.

The only way to break through into the Smoldering God level would be for him to gain enlightenment of all those types of authority. He would be a type of Smoldering God without parallel in history, surpassing all others in that level. In fact, he would be immeasurably close to the level of an actual god. But... it would take a huge amount of time to succeed.

If times were peaceful, there wouldn't necessarily be a sense of urgency. But the holy lands had come, and Revered Ancient was embroiled in war. It was impossible to say what the future would bring.... Right now, improving the cultivation base and getting stronger were the most critical things to do as far as Xu Qing was concerned. As Xu Qing considered such things, he looked at Feng Lintao and Yue Dong.

Feeling suddenly flustered, Feng Lintao plastered an ingratiating expression onto his face. Yue Dong was under the control of Little Shadow, and thus inclined her head respectfully.

After some consideration, Xu Qing looked at Erniu and said, "Eldest Brother. If we want to go to the Devilbirds to seize some good fortune, we'll need to have a good cover identity."

When Erniu realized Xu Qing wasn't rejecting his proposal, he immediately started getting excited. Eyes flitting over to Yue Dong and Feng Lintao, he chuckled darkly.

"Don't we have two identities ready to go right here?"

Feng Lintao felt more flustered.

Yue Dong's eyes shone with despair, and then increased in venom. Little Shadow had taken control of Yue Dong's body. But she could still see and hear. And upon realizing that these two individuals were planning to take advantage of all her preparations, and even assume her identity to do so.... Her heart felt like it was ripping apart and bleeding profusely.

Of course, neither Xu Qing nor Erniu were paying any attention to Yue Dong's feelings on the matter.

Licking his lips excitedly, Erniu said, "Little Ah Qing, do you remember back when we infiltrated the Nightshades? Back then, we assumed the identities of Nightshades using a special type of pill from the Garmentfolk. The shadeheaven demonmoon tablet![1]

"Thankfully, I'm on great terms with the Garmentfolk. Last time I was there, they gave me quite a few things, including some blank versions of those medicinal pills that were never imprinted. Therefore... you can become Yue Dong, and I'll become Little Fengy! With those assumed identities, how couldn't things *not* go perfectly in the Devilbird holy land?"

Erniu's eyes glittered as he thought with deep anticipation about the prospect of Xu Qing transforming into Yue Dong.

Xu Qing, of course, immediately knew exactly what his Eldest Brother was thinking. Therefore, he slowly shook his head. "Eldest Brother, didn't you just say you're a fan of Yue Dong? Her plan is totally crazy, which is a perfect match for you. Clearly, it makes a lot more sense for *you*

to be Yue Dong, considering how similar your personalities are. Furthermore, you have a lot of experience impersonating female cultivators. Remember that situation with the Seazombie princess? You imitated her in such a lifelike way that I would say your performance was flawless."  
[2]

Erniu's eyes opened into a glare. "I'm the Eldest Brother, little Ah Qing. You are being *far* too hurtful. It pains me!"

Xu Qing clearly wasn't moved, as he simply looked at Erniu and said, "I suppose we could do it the usual way...."

Erniu gritted his teeth as his heart sank. When Xu Qing mentioned 'the usual way,' he was obviously talking about them fighting each other. In the past, he might have felt confident in coming out on top. But nowadays Xu Qing had a completely ridiculous fleshly body. If they had to fight things out... Erniu realized he might die of exhaustion before the fight ended, and what would be the point of that?

The only thing that might change that would be if he released some more seals. Unfortunately... that was something he normally only did when his life was on the line. Opening seals right now could have some very negative ramifications later.

On the other hand, if he agreed to be Yue Dong, then it meant he wouldn't be able to indulge his desire to see Xu Qing dress up as a woman. It was really a hard decision.

Upon seeing Erniu vacillate, Xu Qing softly said, "There's another thing to consider, Eldest Brother. The only person who could successfully impersonate someone like Yue Dong is someone who truly understands human nature. It has to be someone who is extremely slick and intelligent, someone who is meticulously conniving, and someone who speaks with airtight logic. Only a person like that could pull off the job without anyone being the wiser.

"In other words, this is not a job for an average person. I hate to say it, but... I know that no matter how hard I try, I would fail. I need to learn from *you*, Eldest Brother. And *that's* what I'm hoping to accomplish on this job."

Erniu found Xu Qing's words to be very pleasing. Sticking up his chin, he said, "You're actually completely right about that!" Thinking about the good fortune to be had among the Devilbirds, he cleared his throat. "Alright, alright. Fine. You're the little Junior Brother, and I'm the Eldest Brother. I should let you have your way sometimes. I'll be Yue Dong. After all, this isn't my first time wearing women's clothing. As for you, little Ah Qing, you'll be my puppet! And this time around, pay close attention and make sure to learn a thing or two!"

Erniu ended by glaring at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing decided to quit while he was ahead. Nodding, he plastered a thankful expression onto his face, then clasped hands and bowed deeply to Erniu. "Many thanks, Eldest Brother. I'll remember this forever and ever! And I'm definitely going to work very hard to make some progress!" rANqBES

Although Erniu still had some misgivings, seeing Xu Qing acting like this made him feel a lot better. Waving magnanimously, he looked down his nose and said, "Stand aside and see how things are done. In order to properly use one of the Garmentfolk's shadeheaven demonmoon tablets, you first need to fuse it with the target, completely covering them to make a set of clothing.

"Then, when you wear that clothing, you become completely undetectable by anyone, as long as you're careful to steer clear of any Grand Emperors. As for the pill preparation, it should take... about a month."

Xu Qing nodded. Thinking back to that person, Long Jiu, that they had encountered, he said, “Eldest Brother, since you need a whole month, I’m going to go take care of a few things. I’ll meet you back here in a month.”

Erniu always prepared thoroughly for big jobs, so he simply waved dismissively. “That’s fine. Go do what you have to do.”

With that, he strode over, grabbed Yue Dong and Feng Lintao, and took them higher up in the river to start the process with the pills.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, sped toward the outside world. It didn’t take long to break through all the ice layers and appear in the lands above. A cold wind screamed, carrying with it countless dancing snowflakes.

Xu Qing closed his eyes and cast his senses out. Upon parting ways with Long Jiu, Xu Qing had left a mark on him which made it possible to sense his location. After determining the general direction, he vanished. He traveled via sound.

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Seven days later, Long Jiu stood atop an expanse of shattered ice, his face pale. He looked neither servile nor overbearing as he clasped hands and bowed to an old man who was a one-world Smoldering God.

“Your humble servant is disciple Long Jiu from the Northfate Kings. Many thanks for the grace of saving my life, Senior! The kindness you have shown me will be forever engraved on my heart. Benefactor, if you ever come to visit the Northfate Kings, you can use this medallion to track me down. Unfortunately, I’m on an important errand right now, and therefore, I must hurry on my way.”

With that, he placed a command medallion down in front of him, took a few steps back, and bowed. Then he sped off into the distance.

The Smoldering God looked at the command medallion with the same expression as Erniu on that day recently....

Up in the canopy of heaven was Xu Qing, his aura concealed as he watched what he was saying. He had tracked down Long Jiu on the very first day he went looking for him. After that, he followed him secretly and learned his routine.

This Long Jiu... had encountered three dangerous situations that could easily have proved fatal if he slipped up in any of them. In each situation, someone eventually came along and saved him. None of the situations seemed to have been set up by him. They all seemed to be random chance. Every time someone saved him, Long Jiu would give them a command medallion.

*With each medallion he gives out, his godly authority fluctuations get stronger.... That godly authority is almost mature....*

Xu Qing kept his eye closely on Long Jiu as he followed him around. After a few more days of observation, he got some more information.

*Why would a godly authority related to good luck manifest on a cultivator who doesn't have even a hint of godliness? It's very clear that this godly authority is fragmented. Incomplete. It's as if some unknown entity has taken the actual godly authority of good luck, broken it into parts, and scattered it. One of those parts is now inside of Long Jiu.*

Xu Qing's eyes glittered. *The only way to know the details would be to get more familiar with the godly authority in him.*

Xu Qing took a step forward and then vanished. He continued to secretly follow Long Jiu around for about half a month.

Similar situations occurred with Long Jiu several times. Eventually, he only had a single medallion left. As Xu Qing looked on, he ran into another benefactor. Long Jiu bowed, offered thanks, handed over the medallion, then left. Shortly after, the godly authority fluctuations on him erupted.

They didn't spread out very far, but they did cause ripples to appear in the sky. An aura of return then rose from Long Jiu, like something calling out to beyond the heavens....

Long Jiu himself didn't notice that. He just kept going on his way, his flesh clearly withering, and his quintessence fading. It was as if his soul, body, and everything else about him had turned into nutrients for another.

They were threads that began stretching out to the starry sky. All the while, he was unaware of what was happening. His own perceptions were being clouded.

When he lost about half of his total energy, he slumped forward unconscious, a contented look on his face....

Around that time, Xu Qing stepped over to Long Jiu's side, reached out, and touched his head.

Instantly, Xu Qing could sense something far off in the starry sky. It was like a massive ball of light, growing larger, but at the same time, collapsing in on itself.

The ball of light was emanating a terrifying aura that Xu Qing could identify. It was the aura... of a True God!

Thousands and thousands of threads were rising from Revered Ancient toward it. Every single one was godly authority of good luck. About thirty percent were already out in the starry sky and had connected to that ball of light.

Xu Qing shivered from head to toe. Thankfully, because Long Jiu was unconscious, Xu Qing's flesh body could sustain the force. He removed his hand from Long Jiu's head. Eyes glittering, he looked up into the dome of heaven.

*Senior Yu Liuchen said that True Gods can't actually perish. As long as the name of a True God continues to exist, then even after death, that god can return....*

*This must be a returning True God! Whoever it is, thēy scattered thēir godly authority and sent it to parasitize other living beings. Obviously, it's still very early in the process. Thēy need thousands of those guiding threads of godly authority to guide the way back. And they need to be mature versions.*

*Every thread of godly authority that becomes mature, requires the host's life to be sacrificed. They end up dead like this Long Jiu.*

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. He looked down at the withering Long Jiu, and sensed the godly authority of good luck within him. Then his eyes gleamed with decisiveness and... craziness.

*In that case... I might as well take it from him. It'll count as saving his life.*

1. The Nighshade infiltration arc started in about chapter 440, and that was also where the shadeheaven demonmoon tablets were first mentioned. They were mentioned in a few chapters after that, as well, including chapter 564. ❹

2. Surely none of us have forgotten how Erniu impersonated the Seazombie princess. He disguised himself as her in chapter 183, and events played out for a few chapters after that. ❹

## Chapter 1031: Am I Beautiful, Little Ah Qing?

### Chapter 1031: Am I Beautiful, Little Ah Qing?

Eyes glittering, Xu Qing reached out with his right index finger and touched Long Jiu's forehead. Next, his godsource erupted, pouring into Long Jiu and turning into a spinning vortex.

The gravitational force exerted by the vortex then started devouring all of the godly authority within Long Jiu. The godly authority was very deep-rooted. It had parasitized him to a great degree, entwining itself into his flesh, blood, and soul.

Extracting it wasn't going to be easy. That was especially true considering that Long Jiu's body was rapidly weakening. At the very most, it would take an incense stick of time for him to be completely and utterly dead. In other words, Xu Qing's first priority was to keep Long Jiu alive.

His left hand flashed in an incantation gesture all while he produced a host of medicinal pills. After scattering the pills, he destroyed them, turning them into dust that seeped into Long Jiu and nourished him. Xu Qing also unleashed the flame of his life force, which spread out and bolstered Long Jiu. As a result, his soul, which was teetering on the verge of being extinguished, ended up stabilizing. Even those seemingly simple measures were proving to be difficult to manage.

The godly authority of devouring was extremely domineering, and it seemed intent on completely devouring Long Jiu.

In the end, the one thing that actually kept Long Jiu alive in the most critical moment was the very same flesh-and-blood pill that Xu Qing had concocted in the Moonrite Region using the white wind. That pill had the most extraordinary effect on life force, to the point where it would cause flesh to rapidly grow on whoever consumed it.

Although the effects of the pill were chaotic, one thing was for certain: it could dramatically bolster life force. In other ordinary circumstances, the pill would provide little benefit and a lot of harm. But right now, it was the key to turning the situation around.

Time passed as Xu Qing worked hard. Five days went by in a flash.

During that time, Xu Qing struggled to keep Long Jiu alive. On numerous occasions, Long Jiu clung to life by the thinnest thread. But he somehow managed to stubbornly cling to life.

That gave Xu Qing the time he needed to slowly extract the godly authority of good luck using his godsource vortex. In the end, the Grand Emperor shears floated into being above Xu Qing.

The arrival of the shears caused wild colors to flash. And when they snapped closed, a loud cracking sound echoed out. The shears vibrated. They were so rusted that they couldn't complete the job in one attempt. After all, this godly authority was from a True God. In terms of personhood, it existed at such a high level that, if the godly authority were complete, a pair of Grand Emperor shears wouldn't be capable of doing anything to it. Thankfully, this was not the complete godly authority. It was only a scrap of it.

Xu Qing gritted his teeth, and despite the rust that was forming from the effort, snapped the shears shut again. The threads going out into the starry sky were being severed bit by bit.

After nine forceful uses of the shears, the threads of godly authority were completely severed! When it happened, Xu Qing used his godsource to envelop the godly authority and steadily drag it inside of himself. An instant later, he dropped into a cross-legged position, closed his eyes, and remained completely motionless as he exerted every scrap of strength to subjugate it.

Long Jiu lay next to him, shivering, with large volumes of blood pouring out of his mouth. However, he was no longer being devoured. Though his aura was weak, it was no longer declining. He was in a much more stable position.

A day later, Xu Qing opened his eyes. They were bloodshot. His soul was exhausted, but he was in very high spirits.

The godly authority of good luck eventually turned into a downy willow seed that he fused into his void soil, where it became a godly authority seed.[1]

*That said, this is going to create some karma with this returning True God.... That said... I have karma with the broken face, so why should I be afraid of other types of karma? Besides, given how this god has set things up, they probably won't come back for thousands of years. If I'm still alive when that happens, I won't have any reason to fear a god like that.*

Xu Qing's eyes shone as he looked at Long Jiu. Long Jiu was still unconscious, but his aura had stabilized, and his face had some color again.

Previously, there hadn't been anything connecting Xu Qing and Long Jiu. They were strangers who had hardly interacted. Thanks to the godly authority, Long Jiu had been struggling on death's door. If Xu Qing hadn't interfered, he would be dead now, sacrificed to become one of the threads drawing back that unknown True God.

Although Xu Qing's primary motivation was to get a bit of godly authority, there was no doubt that his actions could be considered a stroke of luck for the dying Long Jiu. Because Xu Qing took away the godly authority, Long Jiu's looming death was reversed, and he managed to survive.

*This godly authority really is marvelous. To a certain degree, I bet me saving him has something to do with that godly authority coming into effect. Every time he experienced mortal danger, he also encountered a benefactor.*

It gave Xu Qing a bit more information about the godly authority of gods.

*It's completely different from the essence that cultivators work with. Godly authority is a much more ancient power.*

After checking the seed of godly authority within him, he took a deep breath and stood up. He was about to leave when he took a last look at the unconscious Long Jiu.

"I took some godly authority from you. But that also saved your life. Going forward, any karma between us is severed."

Xu Qing waved his hand and sent some more life force into Long Jiu. Then he rose up into the sky and disappeared.

A moment later, as the frigid wind blew, Long Jiu shivered and slowly opened his eyes. His gaze was blank at first. But then his eyes widened and he jumped to his feet. First he checked his surroundings, then he looked down at himself. When he found that nothing was out of the ordinary, a suspicious look appeared in his eyes.

*I definitely remember something devouring me before I fell unconscious. But now, I'm fine. In fact, I seem unprecedentedly pure. Like I was cleansed. But why?*

It was a bit confusing to Long Jiu, but given his previous experiences, he got over that fairly quickly.

*I'd say there's an eighty to ninety percent chance that a benefactor came along after I passed out.*

Having reached the conclusion that this was likely what happened, he started to get excited. He had already given out all of the command medallions, and based on his plan, the next thing that would happen would be that his benefactors would go to the Northfate Kings looking for him.

*I'm definitely going to rise to prominence among the Northfate Kings!*

Taking a deep breath, he started walking. However, he had only taken a few steps when he hurried back to the same spot, clasped hands, and bowed in various directions.

"Many thanks, benefactor! Your humble servant is disciple Long Jiu from the Northfate Kings. I'll definitely repay you in the future for your grace. Benefactor, if you ever come to visit the Northfate Kings, I would be happy to handle any of your important errands as my means of repayment."

With that, Long Jiu bowed yet again, then flew up into the wind and disappeared off into the distance.

The snowflakes that drifted through the evening sky seemed like a starry sky and the clouds seethed like nebulae.

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Out in the starry sky beyond Revered Ancient, nebulae swirled. The void was dark and gloomy.

But then a white pinprick of light appeared. It rapidly grew larger until it was a huge ball of light. It grew larger, but at the same time collapsed. And from within it came a vague chanting.

*“Star ring of myriad ancients; countless worlds and living things.*

*“My name beeth Starvast, with authority over the aeons.*

*“Call mine name, I shall bestow upon you luck.*

*“Worship my incarnation, exist for all eternity.”*

The chanting came from within the light, and spread out into the star ring. The chants were like seeds, spreading out everywhere. Most of them went... toward Revered Ancient.

Threads connected to them, pulling the light, moving it forward. Then, one of the threads glittered brightly before suddenly fading. Then a twang rang out as it was severed. The ball of light shivered, and the light expanded. And yet, the ball of light had no consciousness, and just kept acting on instinct to continue chanting....

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Xu Qing looked up and again used the Grand Emperor shears. The chanting was severed. On the way to meet Erniu, he had already used the shears seven times to cut away the sound of the chanting.

Xu Qing wasn't surprised by what was happening. Whenever the chanting popped up, he used the shears. Gradually, the sound was growing weaker. In fact, after using the shears this most recent time, he ceased to hear it.

*I guess it really was a god who perished and left behind only a true name.*

Xu Qing looked up at the dome of heaven briefly, then looked away. He vanished into the wind and snow, using the sound of all living things to pierce through the void.

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He was early in getting back to Erniu.

Erniu wasn't finished working.

Xu Qing spent a few days seated cross-legged on the ice plains. Finally, he opened his eyes. The ice beneath him shattered, and Little Shadow flew toward him. At the same time, a lithe figure shot up into his presence.

It was a woman.

She was like a spring breeze in these frozen lands, someone who brought shining color to the darkness of heaven and earth. Her face was as exquisite as a living painting. She had eyebrows that were as picturesque as clear streams winding through the mountains. Her eyes were like deep lakes, glittering with such wisdom that she surely understood all the profundities of the world. The faint smile on her face revealed tranquil self-confidence, as if no manner of circumstances could make her lose her cool.

She wore a simple but elegant gown that flowed perfectly across all her curves. The skirt swayed as she walked, almost like the wings of a butterfly hovering above a flower. She was charming, feminine, gentle, yet at the same time independent and strong. As she neared, she smiled radiantly.

“What do you say, Lil’ Bro Qing. Am I beautiful?”

Xu Qing didn’t say anything.

The woman wasn’t ready to give up. She lifted a dainty hand to tuck some hair behind her ear. Looking at him gently, she gave a soft laugh. “Who’s prettier, me or Ling’er?”

A vein bulged on Xu Qing’s forehead.

“Who’s hotter, me or that slutty fox?”

The authority of erasure glittered in Xu Qing’s eye.

“Who’s more beautiful, me or Plumdark?” The woman stroked her hair coquettishly, all while flashing a sensuous but dirty smile.

Xu Qing’s godly authority erupted. At the same time, he inhaled deeply, took out a recording jade slip, and calmly said, “Eldest Brother, I didn’t hear you clearly. Could you repeat all of that again?”

The woman’s jaw dropped. Then she cleared her throat. “Stop messing around, little Ah Qing! It’s time to get down to business!”

1. Downy willow seeds, which are sometimes called willow catkins, look like wispy cotton balls that blow in the wind and often gather into larger conglomerations on the ground. They aren’t something I saw much where I grew up in Southern California. But where I lived in China, they were ubiquitous. During the time of year when they appeared, they were everywhere in the city. They look beautiful, at least until they start clogging up the gutters and getting everywhere. Honestly they get kind of annoying. Anyway, here is a little [gallery of pictures](#) that show what they look like when they are in season in China. 柳絮

# Chapter 1032: Qing and Niu Enter Devilbird (Green and Ox Enter Devilbird)

Chapter 1032: Qing and Niu Enter Devilbird (Green and Ox Enter Devilbird)

The frigid wind blew over the ice plains, sending snowflakes flying everywhere.

The woman in the snow seemed incredibly beautiful and charming. But as far as Xu Qing was concerned, those good looks were as *unrealistic as flowers in a mirror or the moon in the water*. He looked up at Erniu.

“Eldest Brother,” he said coolly, keeping a firm grip on the recording jade slip. “There’s a hole in the plan.”

Erniu’s eyes flitted to the jade slip. Inside, he was muttering apprehensively. There was no doubt about it. To someone like Erniu who valued face a lot, this particular strategy being employed by Xu Qing was deadly, to say the least. At the very least, Erniu simply couldn’t be as cocky as normal.

Erniu cleared his throat. “What hole? You mean the fact that Feng Lintao has a bounty on his head again?”

Xu Qing nodded.

“I already accounted for that,” Erniu said. “Granted, that bounty on Feng Lintao isn’t ideal. But Yue Dong can have more than one puppet.”

Erniu waved his hand, and a coffin flew out of his bag of holding to land with a thump on the ice. It was pitch black and covered with a host of magical symbols. And it was sealed tightly with a handful of nails. Erniu performed an incantation gesture, and the nails started shaking. A moment later, the nails pulled out of the lid, the magical symbols flared, and the coffin opened.

Out stepped a zombie that looked like a seven- or eight-year old child. It was pitch black from head to toe, with necrotic patches all over it. What was more, it pulsed with the fluctuations of the great circle of Void Returning.

“You see,” Erniu continued, “we don’t need to rely on Six Thieves Deceive Life to actually make any puppets. I found this one right inside of Yue Dong’s bag of holding. I got the details about it from Yue Dong’s own memories. This used to be her Junior Brother.

“Yue Dong comes from a very famous family in the Devilbird holy land, and her Master, in a past life, was the ‘grand immortal adept.’ Yue Dong and her Junior Brother were at odds with each other for years until Yue Dong eventually put him to death and refined him into a zombie puppet.”

Erniu clicked his tongue mockingly. “Yue Dong eventually achieved a cultivation base breakthrough, whereupon the puppet became obsolete. But she kept it around to occasionally bring it out and torment it. That alone shows you how much she hated this Junior Brother of hers.

Therefore, little Ah Qing, doesn't this impress upon you how amazingly your Eldest Brother treats you? You should really treasure that!"

Xu Qing nodded.

Feeling very pleased, Erniu decided he had done enough educating. He pointed at the coffin. "Little Ah Qing, you can feel free to transform into him now. Take this medicinal pill to help the process."

Erniu tossed a black medicinal pill to Xu Qing. It was none other than one of the Garmentfolks' shadeheaven demonmoon pills.

Xu Qing caught it, looked at the zombie, and then quietly said, "How many times can the pill be used, Eldest Brother?"

Erniu chuckled darkly. "Don't worry. It'll work several times in a row. If you don't like this puppet, then after we get to the holy land, we can find another hot female cultivator similar to Yue Dong. That would be an even better fit for you. And then the twin beauties Qing and Niu could really shake things up in that holy land!"

Erniu suddenly looked very proud.

Xu Qing acted as though he hadn't heard any of Erniu's lofty aspirations. He pushed the medicinal pill against his forehead, whereupon a black energy swept out, turning into a garment that covered him.

From Erniu's point of view, Xu Qing was transforming. He shrank down, his skin turned pitch black, and a host of necrotic patches popped up all over him. A strong aura of death began to swirl around him. The entire process lasted for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. After it was over, a boyish zombie stood in front of Erniu.

Xu Qing opened his eyes. They were pure white. The contrast they formed with the pitch black skin made him look like an evil ghost, the mere sight of which was shocking to the core.

"Most excellent!" Erniu said, licking his lips.

Xu Qing turned to look at the body in the coffin, then he looked at Erniu. Suddenly, he waved his hand. The Grand Emperor needle appeared, shot forth, and began stitching the zombie's fate and karma to Xu Qing. When that was accomplished, Xu Qing sent the needle flying to Erniu. The work continued, causing Yue Dong's fate and karma to be grafted onto Erniu. The end result was that all such karma, fate, and aura was deeply a part of both of them. RaNÓBÈS

"Perfect!" Erniu exclaimed, his eyes shining proudly. Beckoning, he continued, "Let's go, Junior Brother. It's time to go home!"

Erniu shot up into the air toward the sky.

A host of threads spread out from Xu Qing in his boyish zombie form, which connected to Erniu. They were the representation of the immortal skill of Six Thieves Deceive Life. The presence of that immortal skill was the final cover concealing their subterfuge.

As Erniu flew up, he looked up, performed a double-handed incantation gesture, and then waved his hands above his head.

That motion caused a rift to open up. It was like a wound in the sky, and it was so unstable that it started closing almost immediately. It was a magic Erniu had taken from Yue Dong's memories, and it created a teleportation that led directly back to the Devilbird holy land.

The moment it appeared, anticipation flashed in Erniu's eyes. However, he quickly suppressed it. With icy eyes and a cold face, he strode into the rift.

At the same time, he grasped the fate connected to the zombie puppet and... pulled it with him into the rift. In an instant, the two of them vanished.

The rift closed. Only the cold wind remained, covering everything and sweeping with it the snowflakes of the north.

The teleportation process was guided by a mysterious power that locked onto the two of them to check their identity. The thorough inspection included a check into aura, blood, and fate.

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In the east of the Devilbird holy land, quite a distance away from the Grand Emperor dao altar, there was a vast plane known as Heavenfall. In that location, a spring wind carried with it birdsong and the fragrance of flowers. There was virtually no mutagen here. The spirit energy there was so strong it could be considered rare in Revered Ancient.

It was a place that could well be called a celestial paradise, and it was also home to a teleportation portal. The portal connected to Revered Ancient, and was one of the ways that Devilbird cultivators could return to their holy land.

There were currently about a hundred Devilbird cultivators seated cross-legged around the portal. They wore silver robes embroidered with starry sky designs. The fluctuations they emanated were extraordinary, and all of them had wings. The cultivation base levels were varied. The weakest were in the Nascent Soul level, with the most powerful being five- or six-world Smoldering Gods.

Their job during this time of war was to guard the teleportation portal and check the identities of everyone who came through it. Although the spell formation itself would weed out any non-Devilbird infiltrators, the fact that a war was on meant that there couldn't be any slip-ups. And thus, this team of cultivators was here to do additional inspections. Their primary task was to check whether or not the people coming through the portal had their names in the holy lands' records. If necessary, they could forcefully inspect travelers' bags of holding.

At the moment, the light of the teleportation portal flared, and powerful fluctuations rolled out. The surrounding cultivators' eyes locked onto the portal, and they activated their cultivation bases. They looked like they were ready to face any enemy who came through.

A moment later, a burst of snow shot out of the portal as two figures emerged, one tall, one short. It was a boy and a woman.

After a few breaths of time passed, the portal deactivated. There on the platform stood Xu Qing in the form of a zombie and Erniu in the form of Yue Dong. Xu Qing's face was expressionless. He was supposed to be a puppet, and a zombie, so he didn't need to reveal even the slightest bit of emotion. All that work was to be handled by his Eldest Brother.

Erniu didn't disappoint. He stuck his chin up, and with a cold expression on his face, he walked toward the stairs leading off the portal.

When the surrounding Devilbird cultivators saw 'Yue Dong,' their expressions flickered, and some of them chose to clasp hands and bow.

"Greetings, Immortal Adept!" they said. When Xu Qing heard that form of address, he didn't react at all. He just followed Erniu.

Erniu ignored everyone. Just as he was about to walk off the portal, a person stepped out of the group of cultivators.

"Halt!" he barked.

Erniu looked over. "You're going to stop me?"

The cultivator hesitated briefly, then took a deep breath. "Protocols are stricter because of the war, and I'm in charge here. I hope you can understand. Immortal Adept Yue Dong, I know that you had an exit permit, which means you're allowed to come back. However, there is no record of your zombie puppet, which means that we have to perform an inspection. If the puppet passes the inspection, then as long as you explain who he is, that should suffice."

Erniu looked back at him expressionlessly.

The cultivator gritted his teeth and performed an incantation gesture to unleash a magical technique. As the power of the spell formation swept over Xu Qing, the cultivator took out a jade slip to check whether or not this puppet was actually from the holy land.

The inspection didn't take long. Afterwards, the cultivator breathed a sigh of relief. That said, he was still slightly suspicious about the zombie.

"He's my Junior Brother," Erniu said coolly. "Back when we were fighting over the position of immortal adept, I refined him into a zombie puppet."

Her words caused the surrounding cultivators' hearts to pound. They all knew who Yue Dong was, and were aware that, in a previous life, her Master had been the famous grand immortal adept of the eastern Devilbirds.

That meant that he was in charge of the eastern Immortal Skills Hall. In the holy lands, immortal skills weren't just passed around to anyone. Most people would be lucky to encounter even one, and even then, would rarely do more than master the basics. The most terrifying of the immortal skills were kept secure in the Immortal Skills Halls, and only those with the title of immortal adept could study them.

The cultivators present had heard stories about how Yue Dong refined her Junior Brother into a zombie puppet. But this was their first time seeing the actual puppet. Erniu's words caused the cultivator in charge to mutter apprehensively to himself. If this were any other person, he could demand that they submit to a thorough inspection. But he was actually a bit scared of Yue Dong.

*Every person who cultivates an immortal skill is a psycho.... Yue Dong has a good relationship with the Lan Clan, and right now, that clan has run into some really bad luck. What's more, that exalted individual is on the way.... It's a sensitive time period right now. I should probably stay out of all this.*

Having reached the conclusion that this was definitely the best idea, the cultivator backed away to make room for Yue Dong and the zombie puppet to leave the portal.

The group of cultivators watched as the two of them flew off into the distance. Of course, more than a few of them were whispering into transmission jade slips. Almost immediately, word began to spread that Yue Dong was back.

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Up in the sky, Erniu laughed coolly. "Junior Brother, your new identity is already on the way. It'll surely find you automatically."

Hearing that, Xu Qing said, "I hope whoever comes is suitable."

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News spread rapidly thanks to the team of cultivators at the teleportation portal. One of the people to be notified was in a mansion grotto on an unassuming mountain in the east of the holy land. When his eyes snapped open, they were as red as blood.

*You've finally shown your face, Yue Dong. I've already traded in the battle credit I earned fighting the humans to get the cultivation resources I need. Now my cultivation base has improved dramatically. Meanwhile, you are connected to the Lan Clan, which is going through a big catastrophe right now. They're already on the decline. In that case, it's time for me to track you down and end this grudge between us!*

Rumbling sounds echoed out as a figure shot out of the mansion grotto and flew up into the sky, surrounded by a cloud of blood.

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In another location in the east of the Devilbird holy land was a huge war chariot rumbling through the sky. It was being followed by a contingent of cultivator guards, all of whom had solemn expressions on their faces. The chariot was incredibly fancy. A single glance made it obvious it was extraordinary.

At the moment, excited laughter was ringing out from inside the chariot. "Change directions immediately! We're not going to the battlefield. We're going to the Heavenfall Planes!"

The chariot changed directions immediately.

Inside of the chariot was a young man wearing an extravagant gown, with a delicately beautiful face. *You're finally back, Miss Dong'er.... Do you know how much I've missed you...? I prayed for you on every one of the 529 days you've been gone. Don't worry, Little Dongdong. I'm not like I was before. From now on, I'll be around to make sure nobody bullies you.*

## Chapter 1033: Immortal Skill: Five Dogs Cleave Immortals

In the east of Revered Ancient, the Devilbird holy land was suspended above the grand spell formation set up by humankind and the Firemoon Darkheaven people. The holy land looked incredibly magnificent. From a distance, it looked circular, and was so enormous it was akin to an entire region.

The holy land also featured two enormous statues, one on the east side and one on the west side. They resembled two huge wings! And they were angled up so that they looked exactly like wings would look when being unfurled.

Inside the holy land, Xu Qing and Erniu sped along. Looking at one of the enormous wing statues, Erniu said, "Those are the Grand Emperor dao altars of the Devilbird holy land! Based on information from the memories of Feng Lintao and Yue Dong, I have a pretty good understanding of how the Devilbird holy land is laid out.

"It's divided into eastern and western lands. There's a Grand Emperor dao altar on each side, which supports them culturally and spiritually. Unfortunately, in recent days, the dao altar in the east, that of Grand Emperor Netherflame, has begun to dim...."

As Erniu spoke, Xu Qing listened and eyed the distant dao altar. Though it was far off in the distance, the altar was so magnificent that it was clearly visible. Just as his Eldest Brother was describing, the wing-shaped dao altar seemed to be losing its luster. It was dark. Dull.

"Just like the eastern Devilbirds, it's bleak and desolate." Eyes narrowing, Erniu looked to the west and said, "Things are different in the west. Over there, Grand Emperor Devilbird's dao altar is dazzling and eye-catching to the extreme. Its light shines over the entire holy land.

"Because of that, the western forces are dominant. The western Devilbirds are powerful and glorious. The eastern Devilbirds are dispirited and weak." Erniu turned to look at Xu Qing. "Of course, that's good news for us. The weaker the eastern Devilbirds are, the better."

Xu Qing nodded in agreement.

"Of course," Erniu continued, "you probably ought to know about the various factions and organizations to be found in the east. There are three ancient clans here. They were around when the holy land was founded, and they've lasted until now. The Lan Clan is one of them."

Xu Qing had to admit he knew almost nothing about this holy land. What was more, Erniu was the one who usually handled intelligence reports. It was almost a routine for Erniu. Therefore, during the month that had passed, he had poured through quite a few reports.

“In addition to the three great clans, the east also has nine Imperial Sovereign mountains. Together, they form an allied faction.”

“Imperial Sovereign mountains?” Xu Qing said, looking at Erniu. Just the mere mention of Imperial Sovereigns caused his ears to perk up.

Erniu nodded. “A mountain that has an Imperial Sovereign is naturally referred to as an Imperial Sovereign mountain. There are nine of them, with six of those Imperial Sovereigns being apprentices of Grand Emperor Netherflame. Only people who achieve that Imperial Sovereign cultivation base breakthrough qualify to establish their own Imperial Sovereign mountain.”

Xu Qing thought for a moment, then asked, “Eldest Brother, remember that Lu Lingzi fellow? He called himself the tenth apprentice of Grand Emperor Netherflame. But now you’re saying there are only six apprentices with Imperial Sovereign mountains?”

Erniu grinned. “Yue Dong’s memories contain all the information about that. Lu Lingzi has three Elder Brothers who perished a long time ago. The Imperial Sovereign mountains only belong to *living* Imperial Sovereigns. If one perishes, the mountain goes away with them.”

Xu Qing nodded. It made sense.

Seeing that Xu Qing had no further questions about the Imperial Sovereign mountains, Erniu took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered with anticipation. “Alright, little Ah Qing. We’ve talked about the three ancient clans and the nine Imperial Sovereign mountains. There’s another superpower organization among the eastern Devilbirds. And it’s an organization you and I are actually familiar with. It’s called the Immortal Skills Hall.

“It carries on the legacy of the immortal skills from the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. In the holy land, they train certain cultivators to use those skills. Cultivators like that are called immortal adepts.

“Yue Dong’s Master was the grand immortal adept of the current generation, and ran the Immortal Skills Hall. However, years ago, after he accepted his legacy, and after Yue Dong mastered Six Thieves Deceive Life, he passed away into meditation. What’s more, because of the decline of Grand Emperor Netherflame, the eastern Devilbirds’ Immortal Skills Hall has also grown weak.

“Yue Dong’s original plan was to use Feng Lintao’s legacy to turn her immortal skill into authority. If she succeeded, then she could return triumphantly, become the grand immortal adept, and lead the Immortal Skills Hall to prominence once again. Obviously, accomplishing that would have given her a very different status than before.”

Erniu sighed in a very regretful manner. “Yue Dong accomplished the first step in her plan. Given how much she’s done for us, I’m naturally obliged to help make her dream a reality. Therefore... what I need to do next is become the grand immortal adept and take over the Immortal Skills Hall.”

Erniu thumped himself on the chest and grunted proudly.

Xu Qing mostly ignored his Eldest Brother’s expression of regret and his declaration of grand ambitions. Instead, he looked toward the western Devilbird area. “Eldest Brother, what are the western Devilbirds like?”

Erniu's expression turned serious. "The western Devilbirds are led by a Grand Emperor. They have five ancient clans, twelve Imperial Sovereign mountains, and quite a few important sects.... They also have their own Immortal Skills Hall. And the main immortal skill they pass down is called Five Dogs Cleave Immortals!"[1] *ῚῚῚῚῚ*

Erniu said nothing further.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was visibly taken aback. The name of this immortal skill was strange to say the least.

However, after a moment, his eyes glittered. "Six Thieves Deceive Life. Five Dogs Cleave Immortals.... It seems like these two legacy immortal skills are actually part of the same system."

Erniu nodded. "Based on Yue Dong's memories, I can tell you that the two Immortal Skills Halls of the Devilbird holy land carry on the legacy of one of the most deadly immortal skills from the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity.

"The original immortal skill had a very long name. It was called the Three Poisons Four Vipers Five Dogs Six Thieves Seven Banes Eight Evils Myriad Depravities Magic! [2]

"The Devilbird holy land only controls two parts of that larger immortal skill. Supposedly, the reason all living beings are stuck eternally within the Three Realms is that they suffer endless bitterness that can never be escaped. And the source of that bitterness comes from the following: the firing of three poisoned arrows; the bite of four vipers, the plundering of five dogs; the terror of six thieves, the ransacking of seven banes, the constraining of eight evils, and the gathering of myriad depravities.

"The three poisons are foolishness, love, and desire. Renouncing life and choosing the heart. That is called foolishness. Having a thing, then letting it go, yet continuing to obsess about it. That is called love. Coveting feminine charms. That is called desire. These three things can cast the heart into chaos. That is what it means to be mortal.

"The four vipers are putrefaction, rage, jealousy, and envy. Ignoring benevolence in others. That is called putrefaction. Being angry but holding it in. That is called rage. Fearing that others will surpass you. That is called jealousy. Seeing someone's goodness, but not using it to safeguard their splendor. That is called envy.

"The five dogs are stinginess, greed, foolishness, depravity, and austerity. The inability to abandon things. That is called stinginess. Having insatiable desire. That is called greed. Renouncing the rules of life. That is called foolishness. Arguing without understanding the facts. That is called depravity. Renouncing the three paths of hell before attaining lifelessness. That is called austerity.

"As for the seven banes and eight evils, Yue Dong doesn't really understand them. Her memories are mostly focused on the western Devilbirds' Five Dogs Cleave Immortals.

"That particular immortal skill can be summed up in this way: the stingy dog cleaves to a place and loses treasure; the greedy dog cleaves to a place and is bound; the foolish dog cleaves to a place and falls into death; the depraved dog cleaves to a place and falls into hell; the austere dog cleaves to a place and forever loses the body.

“It sounds like a very extraordinary magic. If we can get this Five Dogs Cleave Immortals from the western Devilbirds, and afterward think of a way to get the other immortal skills from the other holy lands... then we could put them together! And then, we could use it on anyone who rubbed us the wrong way!

“And the result would be them feeling, very, *very* uncomfortable!”

Erniu’s eyes shone with anticipation.

Even Xu Qing was starting to feel a bit of anticipation. That said, it was also obvious how much his Eldest Brother was looking forward to the possibility of having a complete immortal skill. He was just about to open his mouth to say something when his eyes suddenly seemed to become vacant, and his expression empty.

Eyes flashing coldly, Erniu stopped in place and turned to look off into the distance, a frown on his beautiful face.

Rumbling sounds could be heard from the horizon. They started off weak, but gradually became like the beat of a drum, causing winds to scream as mountain-toppling, sea-draining force surged in their direction.

The wind was the color of blood. Within it was a young man in a blood-colored robe, pulsing with the cultivation base fluctuations of a seven-world Smoldering God. He had bright red hair that, combined with the stench of blood that surrounded him, made him seem unusually fierce.

As he neared, he shouted, “Prepare to die, Yue Dong!”

His voice echoed like thunder as he shot toward Erniu and Xu Qing.

Erniu’s lovely eyebrows shot up. However, instead of dodging out of the way, he took out a Wordless invisibility seal. At the same time, something glimmered within Xu Qing’s vacant eyes.

He wasn’t sure who this newcomer was, but the man had an extraordinary cultivation base. And given that he dared to directly attack Yue Dong, he was obviously someone important.

An instant later, the tempest arrived. The young man in the blood-colored robe pulsed with a killing intent that caused the blood-colored clouds to seethe around Xu Qing and Erniu.

Lightning cracked within the tempest. A moment later, the crimson clouds churned violently as a blood-red figure became visible within. It seemed like it was about to break out into the open, but then two god vines snapped out, wrapped around him, and jerked him back inside.

The figure struggled, but it was all in vain. And before he could cry out, a delicate hand reached around him from behind and clamped down onto his mouth. In the end, he couldn’t stop the vines from dragging him back inside.

Next, the fluctuations of Six Thieves Deceive Life pulsed out of the blood clouds, spreading in all directions. They grew increasingly magnificent.

However, that was when powerful ripples appeared off in the distance as a fancy war chariot pierced through the sky. Behind the chariot were numerous bodyguard cultivators, all of whom pulsed with the somber and desolate aura of war veterans.

Then, someone shot out of the chariot and flew toward the crimson clouds. It was none other than the young man in the fancy robe who was obviously an admirer of Yue Dong.

He looked very anxious as he shouted, “Sir Blood Dust! How dare you lay a finger on Miss Dong’er! I’ll kill you! Cultivators, heed my command! This deranged and psychotic Sir Blood Dust has conspired against me! Lock down this area and put Sir Blood Dust to death!”

The surrounding warrior cultivators pulsed with killing intent as they shot toward the blood clouds.

By that point, the young man in the fancy robe was already on the edge of the blood clouds. “Fear not, Dong’er! I’m here to save you!”

1. There is some serious wordplay in Chinese when it comes to this technique that I’m rendering as Five Dogs Cleave Immortals. I’ve managed to convey some of that wordplay in the English rendering, but not all, as there are actually three levels of wordplay that cannot all be ported into English. Everything will be explained later in the narrative and by means of footnotes. ㊦

2. I’m fairly certain this takes the record for the longest name for a magical ability in anything I’ve ever translated. ㊦

#### *Deathblade’s Thoughts*

*You might remember a translator note many chapters ago in which I mentioned that some chapters take a lot longer to translate than others. This is such a chapter. Erniu’s explanation of the suite of immortal skills (some of which is based on some real Buddhist doctrines/sutras), was so complicated that translating that one section took probably 3 times as long as an ordinary chapter. And yeah, I’m just talking about that one section, not even the rest of the chapter. What’s more, I had to come back four or five times to make changes based on later wordplay of certain sections. Suffice it to say, this chapter was very frustrating. I don’t get paid more if I spend more time on a chapter, but that’s just how things work in this industry. I hope the effort I put into it made for a good reading experience. And yes, there are things in this chapter that will be important later, heh heh....*

## Chapter 1034: Better Not Even Think of Hogging the Loot!

Even as the young man’s anxious voice echoed out, he shot into the blood cloud without a moment of thought given to his personal safety.

At the same time, his subordinates erupted with battle prowess. Those subordinates were from a guard contingent this young man’s clan had assigned to him to keep him safe. They all had extraordinary cultivation bases, and given how many of them there were, not even the special blood clouds could stand up to them.

Rumbling booms echoed out as the blood clouds were ripped apart as if by a giant pair of invisible hands. As they collapsed, three figures appeared!

One was Yue Dong, her expression cold as she pulsed with a baleful aura. Her hands were flashing in an incantation gesture, causing immortal skill fluctuations to roll out. Another of the figures was a zombie puppet with a swarthy face, who appeared to be only seven or eight years old. He was opposite of Yue Dong, and together, they were using magic to bind Sir Blood Dust in place.

The immortal skill fluctuations coming off of Yue Dong and the zombie puppet caused a host of seven-colored threads to wrap around Sir Blood Dust, many of which were connected to his fate. If things continued in this manner, it wouldn't be very long before Sir Blood Dust was assimilated by the immortal skill. Sir Blood Dust was currently struggling, but it wasn't doing him any good.

However... the sudden developments, including the collapse of the blood clouds, somehow affected the assimilation process.

The wild winds at play had been unleashed by the young man in the fancy robe as part of his attempt to rescue Yue Dong. But now... a freak combination of factors was resulting in those very same winds saving Sir Blood Dust instead.

In the blink of an eye, Sir Blood Dust's struggling reached an apex of intensity. Not holding anything back, he unleashed the power of his cultivation base. He even detonated two of his major worlds, sending destructive power sweeping out in all directions.

Meanwhile, the anxious shouting of the young man in the fancy robe caused Erniu's eyes to widen. As a result of the shock, the immortal skill threads started trembling. At almost the same time, the zombie puppet was also affected, and the threads coming off him started snapping.

In turn, the power of the major world detonation surged out, and Sir Blood Dust shone with blinding blood-colored light. This was because he was unleashing a secret magic that, while inflicting significant injuries on him, also allowed him to transform into a beam of blood-colored light....

An instant later, he broke free. After vanishing from the spot between Yue Dong and the zombie puppet, he reappeared a moment later some distance away. He didn't pause for a moment. With another flash of blood-colored light, he shot toward the horizon. An instant later, he vanished completely. He had escaped!

Xu Qing, in the form of the child zombie puppet, hovered there with his face completely expressionless, an aura of death surrounding him. He didn't start chasing after Sir Blood Dust. After all, this puppet form only had a Void Returning cultivation base, and wasn't supposed to be intelligent. He didn't want to do anything to break that cover. Although the arrival of this young man in the fancy robe had allowed Xu Qing's prey to escape, it would still be possible to track down Sir Blood Dust later on. Therefore, Xu Qing wasn't in any rush. He let the prey escape.

In the final analysis, Xu Qing didn't mind some unexpected twists and turns popping up. In contrast, Erniu, in his Yue Dong disguise, absolutely had to react in some way.

Spinning, he glared at the young man in the fancy robe.

“What was that all about?” he snapped.

Truth be told, the young man was just as surprised by what happened, and could only smile wryly. He was well aware that his good intentions had led to an unfavorable result. “Miss Dong’er, I happened to hear that you were back, and I was worried about your safety. That’s why I rushed over here. I never imagined that... that I would—”

“Shut up!” Erniu barked, looking very cross. Not only was he irritated at what just happened, but being addressed as ‘Miss Dong’er’ made him feel very uncomfortable.

That was especially true considering that... though he knew from Yue Dong’s memories that there were people who wanted to woo her, the details weren’t very clear. Obviously, Yue Dong didn’t care much about such admirers. Because of that, Erniu had no idea who this young man was. Given that he was feeling irritated and uncomfortable, it was no surprise that his killing intent started bubbling. However... when he noticed all of the bodyguards in the area, he quickly suppressed that killing intent. That said, Yue Dong was a cold person, so he still let out a cold harrumph.

“Don’t show your face around me ever again!” With that, Erniu made a grasping gesture in Xu Qing’s direction. With a yank on the threads, he dragged the zombie puppet toward him and turned to leave.

The young man looked cautiously at Yue Dong. He was obviously frustrated at how things had played out. Seeing that she was about to leave, he anxiously cried out, “Miss Dong’er, it was really just an accident. I... I was concerned for your safety! You’ve been gone for over 500 days, and I missed you that entire time!”

That just irritated Erniu even more, so he sped up. There was still no expression visible on Xu Qing’s face, but he was paying very close attention to everything that was happening. Truth be told... he was very pleased to see something like this happen to his Eldest Brother.

The young man in the fancy robe looked very pale in the face, and his heart was overflowing with regret. As Yue Dong got further off into the distance, he grimaced.

“It really was an accident, Dong’er,” he said. “I’ve been waiting for over 500 days to meet you in person again. I even went to the trouble of preparing a special gift for you.”

Erniu suddenly stopped in place.

The young man, meanwhile, continued speaking. “I know you don’t want any gifts. You never accept anything from me. But I—”

Before he could finish speaking, Erniu spun in place. “What gift?”

The young man’s jaw nearly dropped. Suddenly looking elated, he gushed, “It’s stardragon marrow! Back at the Lan Clan, I overheard someone saying that you were injured from cultivating an immortal skill. So I begged the patriarch for some of that specific kind of marrow....”

With that, he pulled a jade bottle out of his bag of holding.

Erniu vanished, then reappeared in front of the young man. Grabbing the bottle, he opened it, took a sniff, and then put it away in his robe.

“Fine, I’ll take your gift,” he said coolly. “But what you did just now was simply intolerable....”

The young man looked very excited. He had been pursuing Yue Dong for years, and this was the first time she had ever taken a gift from him. As far as he was concerned, it was a sign. A sign that he had touched Dong’er’s heart!

*I need to strike while the iron’s hot!*

Quickly producing a dazzling bracelet, he said, “Dong’er, this is another gift I prepared for you. It’s made from starcrystal.”

Erniu looked at the glittering bracelet. He blinked a few times. Then he took it, put it into his robe, and cleared his throat. “Alright, fine. Fine. I can see you’re being sincere....”

“Miss Dong’er, I have another gift. It’s a hair clip made from supreme-grade immortal jade....”

Getting increasingly excited, the young man started taking out one gift after another. Erniu took all of them, and his eyes began to glitter brightly. Ultimately... the young man beamed with anticipation as he suggested traveling with Yue Dong as an escort.

Erniu hesitated. The young man then took out another gift. Eyeing the gift, Erniu took a deep breath and decided not to refuse after all. Smiling, he nodded. That smile caused the young man’s heart to surge.

Xu Qing stood by while it all happened. Then, as they started traveling, he continued to observe the scene play out.

The young man began to explain what happened in the holy land in the more than 500 days that Yue Dong had been gone. He spoke with tender warmth, with his every word full of passion. And he continued to produce gifts....

Erniu had never experienced anything like this, not in his current life nor in any of his previous lives. Eventually, he was left looking visibly stunned.

As for Xu Qing, he was getting a much better understanding of the Devilbirds thanks to this young man. And especially noteworthy... was that he got information about Lu Lingzi, the apprentice of Grand Emperor Netherflame, as well as the Lan Clan.

After those matters were covered, Erniu asked some follow-up questions. The young man was happy to provide even more detailed information. Lu Lingzi had returned a month ago!

“For a long time, Miss Dong’er, I only knew some surface-level information about Lu Lingzi and the Lan Clan. That’s why I never said anything to you about them before. However, after being promoted within my clan, I heard our patriarch talking about them.... As it turns out, the high-level members of our holy land have long since been aware of the friction between the Lan Clan and Lu Lingzi.

“Of course, no one could predict who would come out on top of that conflict, the Lan Clan or Lu Lingzi. What’s more, it didn’t matter to them which side prevailed. They would support whoever it was that came out on top.

“A month ago, Lu Lingzi returned with an Imperial Sovereign cultivation base. He announced publicly that the Lan Clan had been plotting against him, but that he’d turned the tables on them and beat them at their own game. After breaking through to Imperial Sovereign, he actually killed Patriarch Lan. Although there were some suspicious elements to his story, nobody cared to dig too deeply into the truth. And that’s because Lu Lingzi did two things after he came back.

“The first was that he publicly took the pure Lan Clan blood he had acquired and fed it into his devil-eye. As of now, it seems very apparent that Lu Lingzi is the true successor of Grand Emperor Netherflame! Having become an Imperial Sovereign, he’s now at the peak of strength and power!

“The second thing Lu Lingzi did was notify everyone that, in three months, he would go to Grand Emperor Netherflame’s secluded meditation facilities to officially accept the complete legacy.

“Meanwhile, Lu Lingzi also suggested that all of his Imperial Sovereign fellow apprentices go with him. He also said he would take five chosen members of our species. And instead of taking the legacy only for himself, he would share the good fortune with everyone! That’s earned him the praise and approval of everyone in the Holy land. Even Grand Emperor Devilbird himself offered his approval.

“After all, Grand Emperor Netherflame’s secluded meditation facilities have been sealed, and the only person who can open it up is the true successor of the Grand Emperor, and someone who has Lan Clan blood. In other words, that’s Lu Lingzi. Of course, the other apprentices need to help as well. As you can well imagine, there have been a lot of things going on behind the scenes in our holy land since he made that announcement about the three months. Everybody wants to win one of those five spots.

“Now, I know you’re a smart person, Dong’er. You stayed out of the conflict between Lu Lingzi and the Lan Clan. That’s why he hasn’t even mentioned your name since he came back.”

Upon hearing all of that information, Erniu’s eyes glittered as he glanced at Xu Qing. Xu Qing’s facial expression didn’t change, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t affected by what he had just heard.

Both of them knew the truth. And this news... came with a lot of hidden implications.

That said, they weren’t alone, so they couldn’t exactly confer about the subject. And thus, the young man continued to ply Erniu with disgusting praise as they continued on their way. Three days later, the young man had escorted them to a city. This place was their ultimate destination.

The young man didn’t want to part ways with Yue Dong, but his jade slip kept vibrating with messages. Ultimately, he had to bid farewell and make his way toward the front lines of the war. Before leaving, he tenderly offered a few more gifts to Erniu. Erniu took them with a complicated expression on his face.

The young man kept looking over his shoulder as he walked away. When he was out of sight, Xu Qing turned to Erniu.

“What a romantic encounter that was, Eldest Brother.”

Erniu had an odd expression on his face as he sighed. “Well, shit,” he said. “Next life I’d better reincarnate as a woman! I got gifts the entire trip! It would be a big shame if we had to leave the holy land now....”

Upon seeing his Eldest Brother sigh like this, Xu Qing decided not to tease him any further. Instead, he shifted the conversation to Lu Lingzi.

Erniu’s eyes narrowed. “There’s something fishy going on with that Lu Lingzi. Who is he, really? Could my guess from before be accurate?”

Erniu looked at Xu Qing. Xu Qing looked back at him quietly as he contemplated the situation.

Shortly after, Erniu cleared his throat. “Regardless, this Lu Lingzi had better not even think of hogging the loot! And we need to think of a way to be there when the three-month time period is up. For now, though, I’m planning to take a trip to the eastern Devilbirds’ Immortal Skills Hall and help Yue Dong achieve her dream. What about you, little Ah Qing? Want to come along?”

Xu Qing shook his head and looked off into the distance. “I don’t need to go to the Immortal Skills Hall at the moment. I need to settle the issue of my identity first.”

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Meanwhile, not far from the Grand Emperor Netherflame dao altar, there was a huge mountain.

A month ago, that mountain didn’t exist. It had only risen up recently. In fact, it came into existence after Lu Lingzi returned as an Imperial Sovereign. It was the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain.

Inside a grand hall on that mountain was Lu Lingzi, clad in a golden robe as he sat cross-legged in meditation. His breathing was like heavenly thunder, shaking the hall and resonating through the mountain. A moment later, his eyes opened, and they were like dazzling heavenly bodies.

Frowning slightly, he looked at a jade slip in his hand. The jade slip was notifying him of matters relating to Yue Dong, and it caused his frown to deepen.

“I sent you so far away, but you somehow managed to end up here??”

*Deathblade’s Thoughts*

*This chapter is very nearly 1,000 characters longer than average.*

## Chapter 1035: Mysterious White Dust (1)

To the Devilbirds, whether they were from the east or the west, the Immortal Skills Halls were places of pure holiness. The grand immortal adept of every generation might not necessarily have

an Imperial Sovereign cultivation base, but in terms of status, was just as important as an Imperial Sovereign.

Nowadays, the decline of the eastern Devilbirds, as well as the death of their grand immortal adept, had caused the eastern Immortal Skills Hall to lose some of its glory. The immortal adepts there were constantly at odds as they tried to outdo the others and become the new grand immortal adept.

Although Yue Dong was the apprentice of the grand immortal adept, she wasn't the only person who qualified to be the successor. That was why she'd started working with the Lan Clan. If the crazy plan to get Grand Emperor Netherflame's corpse worked... then she wouldn't just qualify to take over the Immortal Skills Hall. She and the Lan Clan could theoretically seize control of all the eastern Devilbirds. But now... there were some dramatic developments.

Thankfully, Erniu was around. He was a virtuous person who liked to help others, and therefore, he wanted to see Yue Dong's plan through to the end. Erniu actually wasn't very surprised to hear that Xu Qing wasn't planning to join him.

"You're right," he said. "Settling your identity is the most important thing. You'll come back right away?"

Xu Qing shook his head. He had his own things to deal with. And similar to his Eldest Brother and the Immortal Skills Hall, this situation was something that had been bothering him for a long time. He had thought about the issue for a long time, but had never figured out a way to deal with it. But then... Sir Blood Dust showed up, and he got an idea.

"I'm not sure when I'll be back," he said. "That Sir Blood Dust has something of great interest to me, Eldest Brother. I'm going to go look more closely into the situation. Once I have the information I need, I'll track you down."

Of course, Erniu was now feeling very curious. "Something of great interest? What exactly?"

Xu Qing looked off into the distance. He could sense that the tracking mark he had put on Sir Blood Dust was already wearing off. Thankfully, he had also put one of Little Shadow's shadow eyes on him. That meant that he would have no trouble tracking down Sir Blood Dust. After confirming that he could sense Sir Blood Dust's location, Xu Qing's eyes glittered.

"Something karmaless," he said. With that, he took a step forward and then turned to leave.

"That's fine," Erniu said. "After all, given the level of your cultivation base, little Junior Brother, as long as you're careful, you should be fine. Besides... here among the eastern Devilbirds, we have Lu Lingzi to back us up, right?"

Licking his lips, Erniu turned in the direction of the Immortal Skills Hall and started moving.

In that manner, Qing and Niu split up to work on their own respective tasks.

A few hours later, Xu Qing flew through the air concealed in invisibility. Using his connection to the shadow eye, he was making his way through the lands of the eastern Devilbirds. As he got closer and closer to his quarry, his heart started to beat faster. The moment he encountered Sir

Blood Dust, he sensed something special about him. It was quite unexpected. That was why his heart was racing.

Right now, the biggest difficulty he was facing was his own cultivation base. He had died in the imperial capital of humankind, whereupon his Master resurrected him in a new body created from the flesh of the broken face. Although he had benefited greatly because of that, it had also created certain shackles. One of them was the fact that his soul and fleshly body were not fused.

The most urgent problem now was that his cultivation base was stuck! If he wanted to break out of the Void Returning level, then he needed all one hundred bits of godly authority in his sea of consciousness to be shining brightly. Right now, that was a problem.

He wanted to get stronger. He wanted to reach Smoldering God. Whether it was because of the threat posed by the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan, or the war that gripped Revered Ancient, he needed to get stronger. That was the only way to make true progress. What was more, Xu Qing wasn't interested in constantly relying on the help of his Master. Unfortunately, godly authority wasn't something he could get just by working hard.

Whether it was gaining enlightenment or seizing authority from other gods, they were things that weren't certain. When it came to improving his cultivation base, Xu Qing couldn't just accept uncertainty.

*This body is strong enough to keep me safe from anything under the Imperial Sovereign level. And it has limitless potential.... But it's also created some limitations for me. Godly authority... can improve my battle prowess. But each instance of getting some more requires a destined opportunity. My successes are because of godly authority. But my challenges are because of godly authority.*

He had thought a lot about how to deal with the situation, and had come up with some good ideas.

Back in South Phoenix, he had also consulted with Master Seventh, who had informed Xu Qing that when dealing with a path of unlimited potential, it was impossible for anyone to give completely accurate advice. He would need to do his own study and research. The only thing Master Seventh had been able to provide was the profound sun immortal light to fuse his soul and body.

In the last few months in the imperial capital, Xu Qing had been focused on Feng Lintao, but had also been spending time thinking about how to deal with his challenging situation. He had come up with a good idea, which was to make a clone that could practice cultivation separate from his true form. The goal would be to work toward a breakthrough.

Ultimately, he gave up on that idea, as he realized that using a clone for cultivation would be highly unlikely to work.

The main reason was that he simply had too many karmic connections. There was karma from the outer sea. Karma connecting to gods. Karma with Zi Qing. And most importantly... there was karma with the broken face of Eminent Desolation. Even if he did create a clone, all of that karma would be around, and it would cause problems for the clone. Because the clone couldn't escape from that karma, it would ultimately lead to the clone's destruction. The Grand Emperor's shears were sharp, but not sharp enough to sever karma like that.



*That whore was one of the scouts that got sent to Revered Ancient. After she arrived there, she must have come across some amazing destined opportunity! Killing her is going to require some clever planning.*

Right now, Sir Blood Dust could do nothing but focus on healing. As he did, he took out a jade slip. It was a mission jade slip that the Devilbird holy land had given out. It listed all sorts of available missions, as well as the battle credit that would come upon completing them.

*I need to keep racking up battle credit to get access to other pocket realms. Thankfully, there are a lot of humans out there, and there are plenty of weak ones that I can kill. The more I kill, the more battle credit I'll earn.*

Sir Blood Dust had no choice but to suppress the killing intent toward Yue Dong. He was fundamentally a patient person, otherwise he wouldn't have waited so long before suddenly making a lightning-like attack out of nowhere. Unfortunately, he knew that he wasn't strong enough right now. He needed to stockpile resources and get stronger before he sought revenge.

As he scanned the jade slip with divine will looking for an appropriate mission, he suddenly sensed fluctuations from outside the mansion grotto. They started very faint, but quickly grew so strong that the entire mountain was shaking violently. The spell formations were being attacked.

An instant later, the mansion grotto's main door cracked open.

The sudden development caused Sir Blood Dust's face to fall, and he extended his right hand, and a teleportation symbol appeared under it on the ground. All he had to do was touch that symbol, and he would be teleported away.

## Chapter 1035: Mysterious White Dust (part 2)

### Chapter 1035: Mysterious White Dust (part 2)

Unfortunately, Sir Blood Dust's hand was about three inches away from the ground when he suddenly stopped moving. There, in his shadow, was an eye.

It was Little Shadow. Although it didn't have complete control over Sir Blood Dust, it had enough control to stop his hand from moving.

Sir Blood Dust's heart lurched in his chest, and he instinctively roared in rage, all while trying to send his left hand out to touch the teleportation symbol on the ground.

That was when a cold voice echoed out from within his roar of rage.

"Found you."

To Sir Blood Dust's astonishment, Xu Qing had used some incomparably gruish method to appear right out from within the sound of the roar. In the blink of an eye, Xu Qing materialized, reached out, and grabbed Sir Blood Dust by the throat. He slammed him into the wall.

*RUMBLE!*

The mansion grotto shook. The mountain trembled. Sir Blood Dust's eyes went wide with astonishment. He wanted to fight back. But the hand latched onto his throat was causing a wild influx of mutagen to invade him. Scared witless, he instinctively tried to unleash some hidden trump cards. But then, to his terror, he realized... he couldn't even move. Now, countless eyes were visible within his shadow.

When Xu Qing attacked, Little Shadow had taken advantage of Sir Blood Dust's unstable mental state to possess him.

The terror in Sir Blood Dust's eyes grew more intense. This person in front of him was both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. Those two sensations mixed together, until something occurred to him. In his effort to earn a lot of battle credit, he had killed a lot of humans. And of course, he had scanned through all of the missions, including those that listed bounties for famous humans. The person in front of him... was a person whose image he had seen before in that list! He was a human who ruled over two regions! He was Imperial Tutor Xu Qing! Xu Qing was not only in the holy land in person, he was right inside of Sir Blood Dust's mansion grotto, attacking him....

This revelation struck Sir Blood Dust like a bolt of lightning. And as it did, he realized that this whole thing must be related to Yue Dong. There was no doubt about it: Sir Blood Dust was quick on his feet. Sadly for him, he still reacted too slowly.

Xu Qing's face was completely expressionless as he turned and left the mansion grotto with Sir Blood Dust in tow. He stayed invisible as he traveled for several hours. Eventually, he found a vast wilderness, where he was able to dig a cave under the ground. Once inside, he released his grip on Sir Blood Dust and sat down cross-legged. He said nothing.

Sir Blood Dust's eyes filled with despair and madness. Unfortunately, he couldn't even move. He could only watch as he dropped to his knees in front of Xu Qing.

The cave was completely silent.

Shortly after, Xu Qing imprinted a blank shadeheaven demonmoon pill with Sir Blood Dust's appearance. Then he used the authority of erasure to inspect Sir Blood Dust's fate threads. As Sir Blood Dust trembled, Xu Qing reached out, grabbed one thread in particular, and studied it closely. Just as before, Xu Qing could see some white dust on the thread. The bits of dust were illusory, and were apparently an integral part of the threads.

When Xu Qing tried to extract the dust from the thread, it quickly disappeared. He frowned.

This white dust was very important to him. He needed to identify the origin so that he could collect that dust. With enough, he could tap into its karmaless qualities, and thus make it possible to go forward with his idea of using a clone to further his cultivation.

Sometime later, the dao lineament in his left eye flared. It was the authority of the Six Thieves Deceive Life immortal skill.

Sir Blood Dust trembled inwardly. One reason was that he was now convinced that Xu Qing and Yue Dong were working together. The other reason was that he was shaken to the core by Xu Qing's authority. For someone to have two types of authority before even being an Imperial Sovereign was something that Sir Blood Dust couldn't even remember having happened before. It was unprecedented! Before he could reel in astonishment for long, the dao lineament in Xu Qing's eyes caused Sir Blood Dust to lose consciousness.

Of course, Xu Qing's research was only just beginning. He wanted to know exactly what that dust was.

The dao lineaments in his eyes ensured that Sir Blood Dust's fate threads weren't just fully visible. They were covered with color. That color included karma, and it included the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures. Xu Qing reached out to grab the threads and study them one by one.

In that manner, five days passed.

Xu Qing didn't rest that entire time. He was fully immersed in his study. Unfortunately, no matter what he tried, the white dust would always disappear after he extracted it. Nothing he did could prevent that.

Xu Qing's frown grew deeper and deeper.

*Don't tell me I'm pursuing the wrong idea...?*

As the dawn of the sixth day broke outside, Xu Qing suddenly reached out and snapped one of Sir Blood Dust's fingers off to study his flesh and blood. Not wasting even a drop of blood, he started studying every aspect of Sir Blood Dust's fleshly body. He started with a finger, then moved onto a hand. Then an arm. Ultimately, he even studied his five yin organs and six yang organs. He even looked into his major worlds.

Eventually, he found the white dust inside of Sir Blood Dust's flesh, which caused his eyes to light up. And yet, even the white dust in Sir Blood Dust's flesh and blood did the same thing. As soon as it was extracted, it vanished. It was as if Sir Blood Dust's body itself was the origin.

A few more days went by. Once the work on the fleshly body was done, Xu Qing force-fed Sir Blood Dust some medicinal pills to keep him alive.

*His fate threads have it. His flesh and blood has it. But his major worlds don't have it. What about his soul...?*

After that, he started studying his soul. One had to be very meticulous when studying the soul, as using slightly too much force could result in irreversible damage. As a result, Xu Qing had to slow down a bit.

About ten days later, he retracted his divine will. His frown was even deeper this time. He had thoroughly studied Sir Blood Dust's soul and found no trace of white dust.

*Very strange. In some ways, Sir Blood Dust seems like the origin. But in other ways, he doesn't.*

After some thought, Xu Qing waved his hand to release the godly authority of misfortune. As it covered Sir Blood Dust's fate threads, he also used Six Thieves Deceive Life. He paid very close attention to what happened next. A few days later, he ended the session of research and closed his eyes to think.

After days of observation, he had come to understand why the white dust seemed karmaless. It was actually the white dust devouring karma. The invasions of the misfortune and the Six Thieves Deceive Life were both devoured.

*I can't extract it.... In that case, I guess I only have two options. If either works, I can accept it.*

Xu Qing looked at Sir Blood Dust.

Sir Blood Dust was a mangled mess. He had flesh growing chaotically all over him, making him look horrifying. There were also chunks of gore scattered around. His expression was blank, and he was struggling to breathe!

However, Xu Qing was making sure that the flame of his life force kept burning.

When Xu Qing looked at him, Sir Blood Dust responded with numbness. After what he had gone through over the last month, he now just wanted to die.

Xu Qing reached out, grabbed Sir Blood Dust's soul, pulled it out, and sealed it off to the side. He was going with the first option. He would assimilate Sir Blood Dust's fleshly body, and use a secret magic from the Xeno-Immortal School to turn it into a clone for himself.

The difficulty lay in the fact that he and the clone would still be very similar. Dealing with the special qualities of the white dust was also going to be challenging. But if he succeeded, he would have a karmaless clone. And if that clone practiced cultivation, it could bypass the limitations that constrained his true form. With such thoughts in mind, Xu Qing performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing soul threads to fly out, pierce into the fleshly body, and start refining it.

Three days later, the humanoid form in front of Xu Qing collapsed into a pile of blood. The refining had failed.

*So it can't have the same origin as me.... Not even sending soul threads into the flesh can result in forming my soul. And that white dust is just too unusual. That's another reason for the failure.*

Xu Qing took a deep breath and massaged the bridge of his nose. Then he looked over at Sir Blood Dust's soul.

*I guess I only have one option left.*

Eyes flashing with determination, he started a soulsearch, despite knowing it could end up completely wiping Sir Blood Dust out of existence. He was hoping that would reveal the true origin of the white dust on the fate threads.

With Sir Blood Dust's soul in hand, he sent his god perception out. Sir Blood Dust's soul wailed as it was invaded. Bit by bit, memory fragments came and went as Xu Qing dug destructively through Sir Blood Dust's past. He saw Sir Blood Dust as a child. He watched him grow up. He saw the grudge form between him and Yue Dong. He also saw how he had earned battle credit by slaughtering numerous humans. Countless memory fragments rippled like water in front of Xu Qing.

In the end, Xu Qing found what he was looking for in a memory from three months ago. At that time, Sir Blood Dust used battle credit to gain entrance into the World Origin Pocket Realm, which was a very special location among the eastern Devilbirds. The place had strong world auras, as well as large amounts of natural and magical laws. As a result, it was a very useful place for Smoldering Gods trying to form their worlds.

It used to belong to the Lan Clan. But when the Lan Clan fell from power, it became the property of Lu Lingzi.

In the past, the pocket realm wasn't made available to the public. But after the war started, entrance could be purchased with battle credit. As a result, many Devilbird cultivators gained access.

In fact, that was how Sir Blood Dust managed to create his seventh major world. It was after emerging from the pocket realm that the white dust appeared in Sir Blood Dust's fate!

After close inspection to confirm that, Xu Qing destroyed Sir Blood Dust's soul. Then he opened his eyes.

*Something happened to Sir Blood Dust in a valley in that pocket realm. Unfortunately, he has no memories of what happened inside. But that's definitely where the white dust came from. The World Origin Pocket Realm.... It seems I need to take a trip there. If I can find that valley, then I can figure out exactly what happened to Sir Blood Dust....*

After thinking the matter over, he took out Sir Blood Dust's mission jade slip, which was how he was able to confirm that getting into the World Origin Pocket Realm required a large amount of battle credit.

The top mission on the list was the bounty on Feng Lintao. Xu Qing scanned the entire list with divine will. Eyes narrowing, he made a decision. With a blur, he vanished and reappeared outside the cave. Flying up into the sky, he transformed into Sir Blood Dust.

The Garmentfolks' special medicinal pill ensured that he looked exactly like Sir Blood Dust down to his aura. Thanks to what happened over the past month, Xu Qing knew everything there was to know about Sir Blood Dust. By adding in the effects of the Grand Emperor's needle, he was able to impersonate him with complete accuracy.

It was dawn, and the radiance of the morning light spread out as Xu Qing flicked his sleeve. Blood clouds formed around him as he shot over the horizon.

# Chapter 1036: Your Majesty, I Need Pocket Realm Entry

## Chapter 1036: Your Majesty, I Need Pocket Realm Entry

The eastern Devilbirds originally had nine Imperial Sovereign mountains.

After Grand Emperor Netherflame's tenth apprentice Lu Lingzi returned, the Lan Clan fell into decline. As a result, many of the resources previously controlled by the Lan Clan came to belong to Lu Lingzi.

In fact, the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain wasn't very far away from Lan Clan territory. The mountain towered high into the clouds, making its majesty visible from a great distance away. The pressure of an Imperial Sovereign pulsed out of it, weighing down on everything in its vicinity. It suppressed heaven and earth in all directions.

As a result of its presence, there was a massive vortex in the sky, which had been spinning endlessly for a couple of months now. It emanated loud rumbling sounds, and was filled with endless bolts of lightning.

Fifteen hundred kilometers away from the base of the mountain was a perimeter that stretched around the entire mountain, creating something like a forbidden region. On the other side of the perimeter, there were already large numbers of Devilbird cultivators gathered. There were well over ten thousand of them, and they seemed to be engaged in various types of meditation, all focused on the mountain itself.

From a high vantage point, the crowds were numerous as they covered the lands. Some of them were rogue cultivators who had previously been affiliated with Lan Clan organizations. Right now, they were hoping to become subordinates of this tenth Imperial Sovereign.

In the Devilbird holy land, whenever a new Imperial Sovereign showed up and created a mountain, things like this would happen. New Imperial Sovereigns didn't just get personally stronger. They would also expand their influence, and use their newfound power to recruit large numbers of followers.

As a result, streams of cultivators were arriving at the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain on a daily basis. Given the couple of months that had passed, the crowd was sizable. After all, being the subordinate of an Imperial Sovereign would make a cultivator completely different. And given that there was a war going on, who wouldn't want the added level of safety of being protected by an Imperial Sovereign?

However... up to this point, the new Imperial Sovereign Lu Lingzi hadn't actually recruited anyone. In fact, he hadn't even called his previous subordinates to any sort of meeting.

As of now, there was only one person who had entered the enormous mountain, and that was Lu Lingzi himself. There were so many cultivators at the foot of the mountain that they had created a

small city where people would trade goods and information while they waited to become disciples of the Imperial Sovereign.

As time passed, the city became an increasingly bustling place. However, none of the cultivators present dared to cross the perimeter into the forbidden region that surrounded the mountain.

When Xu Qing arrived looking like Sir Blood Dust, he looked at the bustling scene fifteen hundred kilometers away from the mountain. After taking in the city and all the local cultivators, he didn't hesitate for a moment. Flying at top speed, he headed toward the forbidden region. At first, few people noticed his presence. But when he zipped through the city and crossed the perimeter, many gazes shifted in his direction. Nothing happened beyond that.

In the two months that had passed, there had been other cultivators besides Xu Qing who approached the mountain in the hopes of getting an audience with the Imperial Sovereign. However, every single one had been ignored, and had eventually crossed back over the perimeter to wait. Therefore, nothing happened other than some people looking over at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing ignored the gazes. Face completely expressionless, he approached the mountain, then stopped and hovered in midair. His eyes glittered profoundly for a long moment before he took a deep breath. Looking very determined, he bowed formally, then spoke in a voice that boomed like thunder and attracted a lot of attention.

"Sir Blood Dust here, seeking an audience with the Imperial Sovereign!"

This was a bit of a test. If it worked, then maybe he could achieve his goal with words. If it didn't work, then he would have to try another angle. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. Even then, there was no response from the Imperial Sovereign mountain.

Many of the people who had turned to look at Xu Qing shifted their gazes away. There was a bit of discussion.

"Some people just don't get it."

"That's Sir Blood Dust, right? Does he really think his cultivation base and battle credit are enough to attract the attention of the Imperial Sovereign?"

"We're obviously all sitting around waiting. But he just has to go and offer greetings. And why is he talking so loud...? If I were the Imperial Sovereign, I definitely wouldn't want to be disturbed like that."

"If you want to become the subordinate of an Imperial Sovereign, you need to prove your sincerity! That's why the best tactic is to just wait patiently. Eventually, that will prove to the Imperial Sovereign that you really are sincere."

In the end, most people just shook their heads and turned their attention elsewhere. As far as they were concerned, it would only be a matter of time before Sir Blood Dust retreated in dejection.

Xu Qing turned a deaf ear to all the chatter. Looking just as calm as before, he stayed in place and maintained a deep bow. There, he waited.

This time, another incense stick's worth of time passed. At this point, hardly anyone was paying attention at all, and the city had gone back to its previous bustle.

But then... Xu Qing spoke again.

“Sir Blood Dust here, seeking an audience with the Imperial Sovereign!”

As the words echoed out, people once again looked over, and this time there were quite a few irritated expressions.

A buzz of discussion rose up again.

However, only an instant later, the cultivators present stopped talking, as something dramatic suddenly happened. The Imperial Sovereign mountain rumbled loudly! The entire thing started shaking back and forth! At the same time, the lightning in the vortex above began to increase in intensity, to the point where it was spilling out of the vortex. The sound of it was absolutely deafening.

Then, an enormous pair of eyes appeared in the vortex. The eyes were silver, and were incredibly cold as they looked down on the lands below.

Every single person looking on was shocked to the core, and, acting on pure instinct, ducked their heads and bowed.

A majestic will filled the area, its terrifying pressure causing the ground to quake. Countless cultivators struggled to breathe, all while reeling in shock. Then, Lu Lingzi's voice spoke coldly from within the Imperial Sovereign mountain.

“Enter.”

The word boomed louder than heavenly thunder, becoming an infinitude of sounds that slammed into the ears of those present and shaking them down to the soul.

As everyone trembled in astonishment, Xu Qing took a deep breath and strode forth. As everyone looked on, he flew to the Imperial Sovereign mountain. Shortly after, he disappeared into the mountain.

The cultivators in the area watched it play out, astonished, various emotions playing out on their faces, and their eyes burning with passion. It was a complete surprise to all of them that Sir Blood Dust had been summoned. And yet, the end result was that people started to get excited. After all, once a first person had been summoned, it meant that there would likely be a second person summoned after that. And that meant that the long wait would soon be paying off.

Meanwhile, the developments were very thought-provoking to Xu Qing, as his first test had provided a preliminary explanation to some of his questions. After reaching the mountain, he sped right toward the summit.

Before long, he caught sight of a hall. It wasn't fancy and extravagant. Instead, it seemed utilitarian. It rested at the very summit of the mountain, and its entrance was open. Upon getting

close, he saw that there was a person inside, located at the position of honor, resting cross-legged in meditation.

It was none other than Lu Lingzi.

Xu Qing ducked his head, stepped forward, and stopped just outside the entrance. There, he bowed at the waist. He didn't say a word.

A moment passed, whereupon Lu Lingzi opened his eyes. They didn't contain even the slightest hint of emotion.

"What do you want?" The voice seemed to thrum with natural laws, as if when this person spoke, their words would be enforced to the letter.

Reacting instantly, Xu Qing said, "Imperial Sovereign, I would like to request that you grant me entrance into the World Origin Pocket Realm."

Lu Lingzi's facial expression didn't change at all. Looking at Xu Qing, he said, "Present your battle credit."

Shaking his head, Xu Qing calmly said, "I have no battle credit."

He really didn't have any. After checking the mission jade slip, Xu Qing had identified all sorts of missions that were there for the taking. Unfortunately, the vast majority were related to the war. And most involved fighting and killing top experts among humankind. As for those missions that weren't related to the war, they all required significant investment, would take a lot of time, and didn't provide much battle credit as a reward.

Meanwhile, getting into the World Origin Pocket Realm required a vast amount of battle credit. In fact, it required so much battle credit that collecting it via missions would take months at the very least. Given all that, Xu Qing felt that, rather than go do missions, it made more sense to just go directly to Lu Lingzi and ask permission. That seemed a lot simpler.

After all, he and Erniu had analyzed the situation well enough to have some suspicions about Lu Lingzi's identity. If he really was Lu Lingzi, then the fact that he had become an Imperial Sovereign based on his own personhood indicated he wouldn't reveal his true karmic connections. In that case, it would have been very unlikely that he would summon Xu Qing into his presence just based on a simple request for an audience.

But if this person *wasn't* actually Lu Lingzi, then that meant... he was either the empress or someone very close to her.

And that gave Xu Qing the impression that he probably could gain entry to the pocket realm. That was what led to the current situation. As of right now, he still wasn't really sure if the Lu Lingzi in front of him was the same Lu Lingzi he had encountered before.

*Could he actually be the empress...?*

Because of that lack of clarity, he was taking things slowly.

A powerful will spread out, enveloping the entire Imperial Sovereign mountain. The vortex in the sky spun, shaking the mountain as a sealing barrier was created.

Upon hearing Xu Qing's response, Lu Lingzi thought for a moment, then said, "You have no battle credit to get into the pocket realm, yet you boldly demand entrance. You've got guts, Xu Qing. In fact, you've got more guts than your Elder Brother!"

Hearing his secret identity spoken out loud caused Xu Qing to blink a few times. And for him to be described as 'having guts' was very meaningful. He looked up at Lu Lingzi.

"Your Majesty...." After saying those two words, Xu Qing said nothing further.

A moment later, as the immense pressure continued to weigh down, Lu Lingzi spoke again.

"Where's your Elder Brother?"

Xu Qing blinked and then answered truthfully. "He went to the Immortal Skills Hall."

Lu Lingzi thought for a moment, then snorted coldly and waved a hand. A command medallion flew out to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing grabbed it. It was an entrance medallion to the World Origin Pocket Realm.

"Many thanks, Imperial Sovereign!" Xu Qing bowed, then turned to leave.

"Don't stir up too much trouble!" said Lu Lingzi.

Xu Qing stopped in place, nodded, then continued on his way. After he was gone, Lu Lingzi kneaded the bridge of his nose.

*At least Xu Qing knows how to mind his p's and q's. But that Elder Brother of his... is always getting up to mischief.*

## Chapter 1037: A Candle in a Snapshot

### Chapter 1037: A Candle in a Snapshot

Among the eastern Devilbirds, the World Origin Pocket Realm was immensely beneficial to Smoldering Gods in the making of new worlds. As a result, it was very famous. It was located in the north of the Lan Clan's ancestral lands, about 3,500 kilometers away in the World Origin Wilds.

From the outside, the wilds was a place of barren hills and wild rivers. It contained dangerous animals and toxic miasmas, and was surrounded by a powerful sealing magic that prevented cultivators from entering it casually.

Even an extremely powerful expert who tried to enter by force would find such efforts useless. Without an entry medallion created by Grand Emperor Netherflame of the Lan Clan, any cultivator

who wasn't at the Grand Emperor level wouldn't be able to see through to the true nature of the place. They would only see the barren hills and wild rivers.

However, with one of those special entry medallions, someone who entered the wilds would suddenly see something very different. Instead of the rugged terrain, dangerous animals, and toxic miasmas, they would see an enormous geographical basin. In the middle of that basin was a shockingly enormous object. It was some 30,000 meters tall, long and thin, and covered with massive amounts of magical symbols. Upon first glancing at this object, anyone who saw it would be shaken to the core. The reason was that it was a jade slip! Put most precisely, it was an ancient jade slip with a snapshot in it.[1][2]

No one knew who originally created it, but given how big it was, it was obviously someone terrifyingly powerful. Based on the records kept by the Devilbird holy land, the jade slip came from beyond the heavens during the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. It originally came to Devilbird lands, but was later borrowed by Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity.

Some years after that, the Grand Emperors of the Devilbirds earned enough battle credit to get the jade slip back from Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. From that point on, it became a holy relic of the Devilbirds.

When the broken face came and the Devilbirds left with Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity, they built their holy land beyond the heavens. After various twists and turns, the jade slip became the sole property of Grand Emperor Netherflame. That was how it eventually came to belong to the Lan Clan.

The unique and unusual thing about it was the snapshot stored inside. With an entry medallion from the Lan Clan, one could enter the jade slip, passing from reality into illusory as they stepped into the world of the snapshot.

As for the details of the snapshot.... Some people said it depicted the creation of worlds.

For years, the Lan Clan controlled the pocket realm, and thus, any outsider who wanted to gain entrance would have to pay a considerable price. And ultimately, it came down to whether the Lan Clan felt like letting them in. If the Lan Clan wasn't willing, then you couldn't get inside no matter how much you offered to pay.

At the moment, Xu Qing was flying through the air to the border of the barren hills and wild rivers. As he neared, he slowed to a stop and hovered in midair. There were virtually no signs of life; there definitely wasn't anyone guarding the border. After all, few people could gain entrance, and given the odd nature of the area, there wasn't really a need for anyone to stand guard.

A few breaths of time passed, whereupon Xu Qing's eyes gleamed. Taking out the entrance medallion the empress had given him, he unhesitatingly walked into the wilds. It was like walking through a sheet of water. The hills, rivers, animals, and miasmas all vanished. Then Xu Qing saw the enormous basin and the shocking jade slip.

*So, I need to enter the snapshot....*

Even just looking at the jade slip, Xu Qing could sense an ancient aura coming off it. His gaze drifted to the base of the jade slip.

*About thirty percent of it is under the ground... the portion visible above accounts for seventy percent. Just what kind of entity could create a jade slip this big? And what sort of being would be able to leave a snapshot of the creation of worlds?*

Xu Qing knew some of the details of the pocket realm from Sir Blood Dust's memories. Although he had a bit of experience going into places like this, it was obviously his first time coming to this specific location.

After confirming that the area was generally safe, including everything around the jade slip, he hefted the entry medallion and proceeded inside. He didn't slow down at all, and the moment he made contact with the huge thing, he vanished. It wasn't that he entered the jade slip. Rather, it was more like he had simply been erased. By some gruish means, he had disappeared from the world!

And when he reappeared... he was inside the snapshot. What he saw in front of him caused waves of shock that shattered any sense of calm within him.

"Is that...?" he murmured in a choked voice.

Xu Qing was a person who had experienced many things in life, and seen quite a bit, so normally he wouldn't react like this. But the scene in front of him was just stupefying.

It was a massive void! And in the depths of that void was a gargantuan candle. It was bright red, and it was currently burning. As it burned, the candle's flame illuminated the surroundings, creating something like a glowing halo that filled the void and flickered with unstable, glimmering light. Astonishingly, there were countless planets and innumerable worlds visible, forming out of the dust that surrounded them.[3]

It was literally impossible to count them. In the area toward the edge of the halo of light, the planets and worlds formed out of the dust, but then collapsed and turned back into dust. As the process went on, infinite natural and magical laws were born, only to be destroyed and sent back into the dust. The same thing happened over and over again.

Even just at first glance, Xu Qing saw what had to be hundreds of thousands of worlds to come to existence, and then be destroyed. But that was only what was happening at the periphery. Closer toward the red candle, the planets and worlds formed more slowly, and it also took longer for them to be destroyed.

In fact, Xu Qing was even able to see some planets and worlds that were very close to the candle and seemed almost totally complete.

*What am I looking at...?*

Xu Qing wasn't sure if he was actually looking at worlds being created. But he was certain that this snapshot contained a very strong world aura.

Natural laws. Magical laws. Essence. Such things were visible everywhere.

*But it's all illusory....*

Though it was definitely an illusion, and though he was inside that illusion, he knew that this was clearly a place where Smoldering God cultivators could seek unprecedented levels of enlightenment.

*This place must also house immense danger.*

Xu Qing sent out his god perception before carefully proceeding. Based on Sir Blood Dust's memories, the valley where he had experienced those transformations to his fate was located somewhere here, in one of the planets located in the halo cast by the candle.

For all Xu Qing knew, that specific planet might have already ended its life cycle in the months that had passed. It might have collapsed and turned back into dust.

Not wanting to waste any time, he shot forward. As he neared the halo, he sensed heat. It came from the burning red candle, and within it were the embryonic forms of innumerable natural and magical laws. As he moved forward, he carefully avoided the collapsing worlds and focused on his destination.

About an hour passed, at which point he caught sight of the same planet from Sir Blood Dust's memories. It was in the process of collapsing. However, in that specific area, time moved slowly, and thus, it was only about half-collapsed. Although it was clearly a dangerous place, there was reason for hope.

Xu Qing breathed a sigh of relief and was just about to proceed when his expression turned grim. Then his right hand shot out to his side and clenched down. A cold sensation passed through his palm. His hand clamped down onto absolutely nothing.

The two dao lineaments in his eyes flickered as he looked around. Based on Sir Blood Dust's memories, he knew that there was a dangerous type of entity that lurked in the World Origin Pocket Realm called a grieve.[4]

Unfortunately, Sir Blood Dust didn't know what they looked like or how many there were. All he knew was that, though you couldn't see them, if you got close to them, you would sense some coldness within the heat of this place. That was what Xu Qing had just sensed.

Though Sir Blood Dust didn't know what they looked like, he did know where they came from. In short, grieves were the shades of cultivators of the past. They were a representation of another of the dangers of this pocket realm. You could easily get absorbed. If you stayed too long in the snapshot, or if you got too close to the red candle, there was a strong chance you would be absorbed.

After that happened to a cultivator, it was as if they were erased and turned into something else impossible to see, and would remain stuck in the snapshot, unable to escape. Though most cultivators knew about that risk before coming in, over time, there were people who, for various reasons, ended up being absorbed and stuck inside. After they were erased, a Grand Emperor would be able to tell if they had become a soul or something else. But Sir Blood Dust had no way of understanding.

Xu Qing looked around coldly. Then, rumbling sounds echoed out as a blood aura spread around him. Thanks to the unique nature of his body, he was confident that he wouldn't be tainted by the grieves. With that, he continued on his way, getting closer and closer to the collapsing planet.

Soon, he stepped onto its surface. The moment he did, all sensations of heat disappeared. Instead, endless cold surrounded him. Although he didn't see anything in the vicinity, he could sense that there were countless grieves surrounding him!

Astonishingly, this planet was chock full of grieves!

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Outside of the World Origin Pocket Realm, beyond the area controlled by the eastern Devilbirds, were the lands of the western Devilbirds. There, the enormous dao altar shaped like a wing was glowing with dazzling light.

High atop the dao altar was an octagonal platform where a figure was seated cross-legged. This person was mostly a blur, like an outline, with no facial features visible. However, despite just being an outline, they pulsed with fluctuations that contained something indescribably terrible. Anyone who came into the presence of this person would tremble and not dare to look at them.

At the moment, one of the western Devilbird's Imperial Sovereigns was kneeling in front of the platform in just that manner.

Unable to stop his heart from pounding, he quietly said, "Grand Emperor, we've searched the holy land from east to west. We've looked just about everywhere, with the only exception being the secluded meditation facilities of Grand Emperor Netherflame. Unfortunately, we were not able to find that which you seek."

Grand Emperor Devilbird said nothing in response.

The kneeling Imperial Sovereign waited for a moment, then slowly got to his feet and respectfully withdrew.

Sometime later the silence of the platform was broken as Grand Emperor Devilbird murmured, "Does it actually exist?"

As his words echoed out, the sound of clinking chains could be heard on the platform. Then, a black-cloaked figure appeared out of nowhere. He was bound with chains, and his fleshly body was in a state of decay. And yet the figure didn't seem to be in any discomfort at all.

"As I previously said, the Mask of Wishes is intelligent. And it's never been found when looked for. It can only be encountered randomly. If it doesn't want to be found by you, then given the level of your cultivation base, you wouldn't be able to see it even if it was right in front of you. Considering how long you've looked for it unsuccessfully, Grand Emperor Devilbird, I think that indicates... you are not meant to find it." [5]

1. Jade slips are so ubiquitous in xianxia that I'm sure most of you know what they look like. That said, who doesn't love some cool pictures? And I don't think I've shared any pictures of jade slips so far in this translation. Jade slips are fancier versions of the more common bamboo slips.

Whether jade or bamboo, they are long, thin slips that would be bound together to form a scroll. Here is an [image collection](#) of actual jade slips and jade scrolls. As you can see, there is actually quite a variety in the possible sizes and shapes. ❹

2. The reason I'm using the seemingly anachronistic term 'snapshot' is because the author used a seemingly anachronistic word in Chinese that means... snapshot. If the author does anachronistic things in Chinese, I will do the same in the translation. ❺

3. In reality, instead of the more common word for planet, the author uses the very nebulous term that I usually translate as 'heavenly body.' This term can cover everything from stars and moons to planets and asteroids. Given how this scene plays out, I'm going with the 'planet' interpretation for ease of translation and reading. What's more, generally speaking, the term I'm rendering as 'planet' tends to be applied (at least by Er Gen) to huge spherical objects, whereas 'world' could refer to things like land masses (i.e. Flat Earth type worlds). ❻

4. There is more to come about what exactly the "grieves" are. The Chinese is a word that basically just means "fantastic/bizarre." However, similar to both the grues and ghastrs, the author has turned this word into the name of a specific entity. What's more, it contains a character that is shared with grues and ghastrs. Because of that, I wanted to have a word that starts with G and has a similar feel to the grues and ghastrs. ❼

5. There are different words/characters in Chinese that can mean mask or face depending on the context. In this paragraph, it uses the same character that I render as 'face' when translating 'broken face.' In other words, without context, you could also render this Face of Wishes. However, context makes it clear that the object referred to in this paragraph is a mask. There is a bit more to this situation linguistically that I will explain in a footnote in chapter 1038. ❽

## Chapter 1038: A Face Next to the Red Candle

In the World Origin Pocket Realm, Xu Qing felt immense coldness building on the collapsing planet that was located roughly in the midpoint of the halo cast by the red candle.

Only moments ago, there had been immense heat surrounding him. But now, there was frost on the ground, and the cold was getting more intense. Within that coldness was a boundless killing intent, rushing toward Xu Qing from all directions.

Eyes glinting, he lifted his foot and then stomped it onto the ground. The frosty ground trembled, and cracks spread out from where Xu Qing had stomped down. They spread quickly, making the ground look like a spiderweb or a shattered mirror. The air flowed chaotically around him, forming into a tempest. Mud splattered everywhere as the tempest grew in size, picking up countless bits of frost as well.

Xu Qing tapped into the power of the tempest to leap up into the air to start moving.

However, the killing intent of the invisible grieves had been stoked by what just happened, and they were converging within the tempest. Cracking sounds echoed out from the wind, which froze,

turning into a huge ice column that connected to the ground. The freezing extended rapidly toward Xu Qing, as if he were being chased.

Xu Qing frowned. According to Sir Blood Dust's memories, he had originally come to this place to avoid other dangers. It had mostly been an accident, and there hadn't been anything particularly dangerous on the surface of the planet.

Things had gone very smoothly when he just entered that one large valley. But now things were different.

*Is it that something around here changed recently? Or is it... my presence that's causing things to happen?*

As Xu Qing accelerated, the frigid coldness behind him grew more intense. The lands behind him were being frozen, and even the wind was becoming solid. Some of the frozen gusts of wind fell to the ground. Some converged into curved shapes like claws that connected to the sky. In fact, even the dome of heaven seemed like it was on the verge of being frozen.

Apparently, it was killing intent from the grieves, and it came from the sky, the land, the wind, the void. In fact, it came from everywhere as it closed in on Xu Qing.

*I'm really in a passive position at the moment.*

He passed a lake, and as it froze solid, he stopped midair to survey his surroundings. After confirming there were no cultivators present, he unleashed his godsource, causing boundless golden light to spread out from him. The godly authorities of sound and the violet moon became a deadly force that swept in all directions. Wherever it passed, the areas that had been frozen solid exploded. The ice in the sky became violet as a violet moon rose within the snapshot, and the color violet filled the collapsing planet. Massive amounts of xeno-immortal soul threads shot out from Xu Qing, like a flooding river that replaced the tempest, becoming a vortex that shredded everything in its path.

Even a five- or six-world Smoldering God who encountered force like this would be shocked. But here... even though the power of Xu Qing's godly authority was destroying the heavens and crushing the earth...

The frigid and freezing aura didn't go away. Though it was temporarily rebuffed, it swept around and then converged on Xu Qing yet again.

In fact, the fluctuations rolling out seemed to be attracting more grieves, who raced from all directions toward the planet. Though the grieves weren't visible, the frigid cold coming from the starry sky made Xu Qing realize something.

*They can't be destroyed?*

Xu Qing's eyes gleamed. Instead of using godly authority, he took a deep breath. Then, within his sea of consciousness, a sun rose, casting out profound sun immortal light. As it swept forth from Xu Qing, it created boundless light and heat in the surroundings.

The result... was middling at best. Although it kept Xu Qing safe temporarily, it was clear that the invisible grieves were still coming for him.

*If things keep going like this, then even if I find that valley, I won't be able to focus on finding the source of that white dust I found on Sir Blood Dust.*

After the successive clashes with the grieves, Xu Qing had come to some realizations. Being absorbed by this place involved losing one's fleshly body and being turned into a grieve by the red candle. When that happened, one gained the attribute of indestructibility.

However, that attribute was relative. After all, Xu Qing had encountered a lot of beings in his life and none of them, not even gods, could be considered eternally indestructible. Not even True Gods. Otherwise, why else would Yu Liuchen have targeted a True God?

*In other words, it doesn't matter if you're talking about being undying or indestructible, both can only happen under certain circumstances. In that case, what are the circumstances that allow these grieves to be undying and indestructible?*

A few breaths of time passed as Xu Qing kept moving. Then he suddenly looked over his shoulder, and his eyes shone with an aggressive light.

*Now I see it! The grieves are undying and indestructible when they're invisible! You can't see them, therefore you can't kill them! In other words, if you want to kill them, you need to be able to see them first!*

Almost at the same moment that Xu Qing realized that, he felt some emotional fluctuations from Little Shadow.

"Milord... is correct... I can fuse... and thus see...."

Xu Qing frowned. Little Shadow's fluctuations had come at a very opportune moment. It was almost as if the shadow had been waiting on purpose.

"Why didn't you say something earlier?" Xu Qing said in a cold voice.

The shadow nervously stammered, "M-milord... I... couldn't... this place... image candle... limitations... unable say...."

Xu Qing knew what it was trying to convey. The so-called 'image candle' in this place imposed limitations that the shadow wasn't able to explain. Because of that, Xu Qing needed to react before it could say anything. At some other time, Xu Qing would want to look further into the situation with the shadow. But right now there wasn't time. RANoBës

Suppressing his curiosity, he quickly gave some orders to Little Shadow. Little Shadow's aura surged as it spread out over Xu Qing.

Many years ago, Xu Qing and the shadow had created the Shadow Fusion Secret Magic, which allowed him to fuse with the shadow in moments of crisis. The downside was that most divine abilities didn't work in that state. However, it provided a massive boost to fleshly body power. As

Xu Qing's cultivation base grew, he found fewer reasons to fuse with Little Shadow. In fact, this was the first time in a very long time that he used the Shadow Fusion Secret Magic.[1]

In the blink of an eye, the shadow became like a black cloak that covered Xu Qing. Something like a black cape flapped behind him, and as his violet hair rippled, terrifying fleshly body power pulsed off of him. Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. Winds screamed.

Even more terrifying were his eyes, which were pitch black. Now he could look out at the world using shadow eyes. It was as if a veil had been removed from the world around him, allowing him to see what was really there!

The dome of heaven was empty. The starry sky was a void. Everything was jade.

The dust, the planets, and everything else formed a painting. Even the terrain features and lands were part of it. The only thing that looked the same as before was the red candle, which burned its greenish flame as normal.

What was more... the previously invisible grieves... were now completely visible! What was even more astonishing was that they were black shadows being cast by the candle flame! They came in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some looked humanoid. Others looked like animals. Sometimes they were made of strange shapes, or even just threads. Fantastic oddities were visible everywhere. And all of them were pitch black, as if they were substructurally nothing more than shadows!

Over the countless years that had passed, the cultivators who had been absorbed by this pocket realm ended up losing their fleshly bodies and leaving behind only... their shadows. In reality, this pocket realm was really just a painting made of shadows!

That discovery caused his heart to leap in his chest. He had long wondered about the true origin of Little Shadow. And today... he had found a clue.

He turned to look at the distant red candle. He looked at the countless shadows in the area, looming over him.

Then Xu Qing's profound sun immortal light erupted, causing light and heat to spread out. Screams rang out everywhere. It was almost like a special divine ability. Even being fused with Little Shadow, he was able to send out the immortal light.

Before, he couldn't kill these shadows. But as the immortal light shone, they screamed and vanished like smoke in the wind.

The heat levels started rising.

Xu Qing flew into motion, sending immortal light out around him. He passed the painting of the lake and flew into the painting of a mountain. He destroyed the shadows he passed. Then, after enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, he spotted a huge valley.

Just like the lake and the mountain... the valley was a painting.

Although it looked very real, it wasn't possible to enter it. He stood at the edge of the painting and mulled over the situation. Immortal light once again flared, and he sent it into the valley, where it

swept back and forth. After doing that a few times in a row, the blackness retreated from his eyes as he unfused with Little Shadow.

His view of the world returned to normal. The valley was no longer a painting. Instead, it looked like an ordinary valley. With the blackness in his eyes, he couldn't see the tangible.

After studying the valley for a long moment, he walked inside. Keeping his god perception out, he began searching. He wanted to find the place where that white dust originated.

Unfortunately... after about two hours passed, he flew out of the valley. Hovering above in midair, he frowned. The valley was deep, but not very big. In the two hours that had passed, he had thoroughly searched the place with god perception and hadn't found a single thing.

There was no indication of any sort of white dust there, nor any evidence that there had been in the past. He even wondered if he had come to the wrong place.

*Is this not the place? But Sir Blood Dust's memories indicate that this very valley is where that dust became attached to his fate.*

After a moment, he flew high up into the air and studied the area from above. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

He flew higher, until he left the planet. From that vantage point, he studied it, only to find nothing.

"In that case...."

He once again fused with Little Shadow. When his eyes became black he hovered high above the planet and looked down.

This time, his eyes went wide. Using shadow eyes, he now saw a painting of a planet... in which the valley was a big mouth. The mountain was a nose. The two lakes were eyes. The painting was not of a planet. It was of a face! [2]

1. He created the Shadow Fusion Secret Magic in chapter 344. ㊦

2. As I mentioned in the footnote in the previous chapter, there are different words/characters for 'face' in Chinese. In the last chapter, the 'Mask of Wishes' has one of those characters that could be rendered as 'face' depending on the context. A different word is used in this paragraph. In other words, the planet/face here has a totally different set of characters from the broken face or from masks. I'm not saying this to spoil anything or give wink-wink-nudge-nudge clues. I'm just pointing out something that's obvious in Chinese but not in English. If we later found out that the planet/face was actually a mask, it wouldn't be a surprise. Or if we later found out it's somehow connected to the broken face, it also wouldn't be a surprise. But based on the characters alone, there is no reason to assume that there are any such connections. And incidentally (and completely not related to this chapter, but it just occurred to me), though context (and also official art) makes it clear that the broken face in the sky is indeed a face, if it later turned out to be a mask, that also wouldn't be a surprise. Again, this is not a spoiler or a clue, just something linguistically that is obvious in Chinese but not necessarily English. ㊦

# Chapter 1039: Ninth Star Ring

Xu Qing's heart was racing.

Naturally, the scene playing out in front of him was *not* something from Sir Blood Dust's memories. His search had ultimately led him to find a face made of a planet, and that led him to realize something....

This definitely had to be the origin of the white dust he'd found in Sir Blood Dust's soul!

Although he didn't know what exactly that white dust was, he didn't hesitate at all to lift his right hand, then drop it down. As a result, a majestic hand materialized in front of him. Then the hand stretched forward to grab the face. The nearer the hand got, the larger it became. By the time it reached the collapsing planet, the hand was actually bigger than the planet.

However, just as the hand was about to close around the face... something unexpected happened! It was impossible to say whether it was a coincidence or not. However, the collapsing star apparently passed a tipping point, and suddenly exploded. Rubble showered out in all directions.

The face was among the things that broke apart. The mountain that was the nose was leveled. The eyes that were lakes were wiped out. The mouth made by the valley... crumbled.

The huge face no longer existed!

A destructive shock wave blasted out from the remains of the planet, spreading out with terrifying force. The hand that Xu Qing had summoned bore the brunt of the destructive shock wave. A terrifying, deafening rumbling sound echoed out, joined by an aura of eradication, as Xu Qing's hand stood up to the force for a moment before shattering.

Xu Qing himself fell back, shooting 300,000 meters to avoid the deadly force.

When he managed to look back... the planet was now nothing but dust. And that dust was white. It was exactly the same kind of dust that had been present on Sir Blood Dust's fate threads.

Shaken, Xu Qing immediately made attempts to collect it. Unfortunately, the moment the white dust appeared, it started fading away. Nothing Xu Qing tried was effective. That made sense considering that he had tried many ways to collect the dust from Sir Blood Dust's fate threads, only to meet failure in every attempt.

Yet he wasn't willing to just give up. That was especially true considering that the white dust had not fused with any fate threads, and thus existed in a different form. Therefore, after Xu Qing tried a host of different collection methods, he found that by combining godsource and his two types of authority and using that to bolster a jade bottle, he was able to collect a small amount.

Afterward, he looked down at the jade bottle in his hands, and his mind raced.

All of a sudden, he realized he knew exactly where that white dust in Sir Blood Dust had come from. Earlier, he had noticed other planets and worlds collapsing, but never had any white dust

appeared. Yet when this planet exploded, it *did* appear. The difference between the two situations was obvious.

*The white dust shows up with the destruction of a planet or world that resembles a face! Unfortunately, even though I went all out, I was only able to collect a small amount. It disappeared too quickly. I hardly have any....*

Then Xu Qing checked the jade bottle and found that, despite the bottle being bolstered by godsource and authority, the white dust inside the bottle was still disappearing. The process was going slow. But at the very most, it would be completely gone in a day.

*One day....*

Xu Qing frowned. There wasn't any time to lose. His cautious nature ensured that he wasn't going to simply fuse the white dust with his own fate threads without doing some experimentation and research first.

*When it comes down to it, what's most important here isn't the white dust. It's the face....*

He looked around.

*Is there a second face around here?*

Xu Qing thought for a moment, then sent some divine will out to Little Shadow. Instantly, Little Shadow fused with Xu Qing, causing Xu Qing's eyes to turn pitch black. His plan was to use those shadow eyes to search through the pocket realm in the hopes of finding a second face.

Xu Qing didn't waste any time. Now that the pocket realm looked like a painting again, he immediately started his search.

Time passed.

The World Origin Pocket Realm wasn't a static painting. Instead, it was constantly moving. Most importantly, as Xu Qing searched, the heat, light, and danger of the red candle grew more intense.

Two days later, he had no choice but to leave the area of light and heat. Once outside, he looked back grimly.

*Two days, and I only managed to search about a third of it. And most of those areas were close to the periphery. If I want to search more deeply, it would take more than ten days for sure. And the closer I get to the red candle, the more danger there is of being absorbed. This isn't going to work.*

After pondering the situation for a while, he made a decision. He still had a trump card to use.

"In that case...." He closed his eyes, and godsource rumbled. Then, a seed of godsource in his void soil glittered with golden light. The light grew increasingly intense, illuminating all of his void soil. Then it spread out from inside of him, eventually converging into a golden thread that wrapped around Xu Qing's finger. ㄖA⊞BÈs

Seeing that thread caused his eyes to shine with anticipation. That golden thread was the manifestation of the godly authority he had acquired from that Northfate King cultivator surnamed Long. It was the godly authority of good luck!

He squeezed it, and the thread of good luck burst into flames. Nothing happened.

Xu Qing looked around and confirmed that nothing unusual had played out. That said, this was his first time unleashing this type of godly authority, so it could be considered an experiment. A moment passed. He took a deep breath. Then he charged into the area of heat and light cast by the red candle, to start the search anew.

This time... after enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, Xu Qing sensed something different.

He saw traces of natural and magical laws. He knew that it was because of natural and magical laws that the World Origin Pocket Realm was so beneficial to Smoldering God cultivators. There were a vast amount of worlds and planets here, and they were collapsing and reforming constantly. All of that could be used as a reference point for Smoldering God cultivators seeking to form new worlds. It could be used as the basis to seek enlightenment.

And though all planets and worlds had some of the same fundamental natural and magical laws, in most cases, such laws differed greatly from place to place. Some could be considered suitable, others, not so much. The needs of Smoldering God cultivators differed based on the details of their worlds. And they also had to pay attention to the life cycles of the worlds and planets.

The most ideal situation was to observe laws from the moment they appeared until the moment they vanished. Only by witnessing all of its transformations and variations could one gain enlightenment of that variety of natural law.

However, time within the pocket realm was limited, so another big factor at play was luck. Though Xu Qing's focus was on finding another face, the fact remained that he also got to observe natural and magical laws within the worlds being destroyed and born anew.

Of course, such observations were fleeting, like *viewing a flower while speeding by on horseback*, and were generally incomplete.

But then... something very gruish happened. A complete thread of magical law unexpectedly appeared in front of Xu Qing, as if it were taking the initiative to reveal all of his transformations.

And it didn't just happen once....

As Xu Qing proceeded on his way, it happened over and over again. Many natural and magical laws would suddenly reveal themselves like the spreading tail of a peacock. They almost seemed to be trying to outdo one another! Any outsider who observed this happening would find it completely unbelievable.

Even more ridiculous, and shocking even to Xu Qing, was what happened to the collapsing planets. There were some that, after he looked at them, started collapsing more slowly. Either that, or they started revealing collapsing natural and magical laws. Because of that, it made his observations much more comprehensive.

The shadows in the pocket realm also seemed to be affected. When they noticed Xu Qing, they would instinctively charge toward him. But when they got near, they would get distracted by other things, and rush off to those instead.

Most astonishing of all was that the collapsing planets and the fleeing shadows seemed to be trying to shield Xu Qing from the light and heat of the red candle.... Because of that, everything went very smoothly for him. In fact, it was only after a few hours of searching that Xu Qing actually found that second face.

Xu Qing tried to suppress his astonishment at the results of the godly authority of good luck. Stopping in place, he turned to look in the direction of a collapsing planet. In the middle of that planet was a continent that was only about half-intact thanks to the way the planet was falling apart.

On that continent was a mountain and some lakes that made a face. Thanks to the collapse of the planet, the continent couldn't stay in one piece. And even if it had been in one piece, the cloud cover would have made it difficult to spot the face. Nevertheless, Xu Qing spotted it.

Unfortunately, the moment he laid eyes on it, the planet vanished as the mountain and lakes crumbled into nothing. The face disappeared from sight.

A shock wave spread out, within which it was just barely possible to see the outline of a face, racing off in the opposite direction. Xu Qing blurred into motion as he started chasing it.

The face moved with shocking speed. Unfortunately, he wasn't quite fast enough. After giving chase for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the outline of the face disappeared.

Three breaths of time passed, whereupon Xu Qing appeared in the spot the face had disappeared from. After scouring the area, his gaze locked onto a spatial rift. His eyes narrowed. Rather than continuing with an aimless search, he decided to enter that rift.

The moment he did, a mind-blowing scene appeared in front of him. Inside of that rift was a world of mirages. There was no red fire. Instead... there was another snapshot! The jade slip of the World Origin Pocket Realm didn't just have a single snapshot. There was a second level with another snapshot!

Underneath the red candle flame, Xu Qing found a second snapshot. Astonishingly, it depicted a star chart! It was a map containing thirty-six different star rings![1]

Every single star ring was made up of countless planets and planetary systems. They were incomparably dazzling, and amazing in a way that defied description.

One of those star rings was blurry, but clear enough to see what was inside. It was the fifth of the star rings! And in the middle of it was an old man seated cross-legged. It was only a symbol, but Xu Qing instantly recognized what it represented. That old man... was the very same old man he and his Eldest Brother had encountered in the outer sea!

What was most shocking of all to Xu Qing was the ninth of the star rings. In the very middle of that star ring was the symbol of a broken face! The moment he looked at it, he knew what it was. That

was... the Living God Eminent Desolation! And that meant that it was also the location of the Revered Ancient mainland!

Inside of the ninth of the star rings, surrounding the Revered Ancient mainland... there were other terrifying symbols! In the east of the star ring, there was an enormous sleeping beast. In the north of the star ring, there was a flowing golden river. In the south of the star ring, there was a black pagoda. In the west of the star ring, there was a paper person seated cross-legged.

1. We first learned about the thirty-six star rings in chapter . ❷

## Chapter 1040: My Wish Is....

The First Star Ring was triangular, but other than that, nothing about it was visible. It was as if it was covered by an infinitely powerful cage that couldn't be penetrated! The Second Star Ring much clearer. However, the symbol within it was only a vague outline. The same was true for the Third and Fourth Star Rings.

The Fifth Star Ring was different. The symbol of the old man there was extremely clear.

The other star rings had their own terrifying symbols. Some were clear to see, others were outlines. Some were large and some were small.

The mere sight of them all left Xu Qing feeling shaken. After being born again by means of the flesh of Eminent Desolation, he had become vaguely aware of the thirty-six star rings. When he went with Yu Liuchen to the outer sea, and was devoured by the gigantic fish Timeruins, he had met that old man who said he hailed from the Fifth Star Ring.

Xu Qing's conversation with that old man had expanded his understanding of the wider world he lived in. That was when he came to learn that the universe he lived in was only one of the thirty-six star rings.

However, he learned little more than that. He had only been given surface-level information, not actual images. Nor had he been told which star ring he was in.

Therefore, when this star chart depicting all of the thirty-six star rings appeared in front of him, he was stricken to the core by astonishment, causing his sea of consciousness to tremble. He now knew which star ring he was in. The Ninth Star Ring!

What was more, the Ninth Star Ring had its own powerful forces within it, indicated by the terrifying symbols in the east, west, south and north. Xu Qing wasn't sure if it was a misconception or not, but it seemed like the huge beast, the golden river, the black pagoda, and the paper person were all facing the broken face. It was as if they were being tugged in that direction.

In terms of which symbols were the most clear among the thirty-six star rings, it could objectively be said that the broken face was second to none. There was no doubt about it. The other symbols in the Ninth Star Ring couldn't quite compare, and the same could be said of the old man from the Fifth Star Ring. In fact, it was true of all of the symbols in all the other star rings.

As for the First Star Ring, it was so blurry that it wasn't possible to make any determination about it at all. Was something there actually more terrifying than the broken face? There was no way to know.

Regardless, as Xu Qing took in the star chart, he felt like his mind was being ripped apart, causing his understanding of the world to expand dramatically. The world lay in front of him. The starry sky was there in his gaze. The star rings were unboundedly majestic.

Compared to them, the Revered Ancient mainland might as well be a grain of sand on a beach. It was completely insignificant. However, because of the presence of Eminent Desolation, that grain of sand... was immeasurably majestic.

After a very long moment passed, Xu Qing inhaled deeply and forced himself into a state of calm.

*The broken face is a half-Living God.... That's why Revered Ancient is immeasurably majestic compared to everything else. In that case, what about the symbols in the four cardinal directions of the Ninth Star Ring. How strong are they? God Lords? God Paragons?*

[1]

*I guess the latter is the most likely possibility. So did the broken face originally come from the Ninth Star Ring, or from another star ring? And why are the symbols in the east, west, south and north being drawn toward the broken face...?*

The huge beast was unfamiliar to Xu Qing. Nor had he ever seen anything like that golden river. However, he had seen something before that resembled the black pagoda.

*It reminds me of that dilapidated pagoda at the bottom of the Forbidden Sea, which later became part of my dreadnaught. The Sageheaven Pagoda.... I wonder if there's any connection between the two. As for that paper person....*

Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he thought about the day that Grand Emperor Swordsage perished, and the person named Master Righteous Veil![2]

*Master Righteous Veil's methods are somehow related to paper. So could Master Righteous Veil be connected to that paper person somehow?*

Eventually, Xu Qing had to suppress all the thoughts bubbling up inside of him. Everything he was seeing was just too monumental, and he needed more time to process it. Obviously, now wasn't the time or place for that.

Glancing around, Xu Qing scanned the area with god perception. Then he looked off in a certain direction. He had found no trace of the face he had been chasing.

However, this star chart was so precious that it could almost be considered priceless. Xu Qing committed the entire thing to memory, then blurred into motion and widened his search. His instincts told him not to get close to the star chart. If the candle of the first level of the jade slip had such terrifying powers of absorption, then it was a given that he needed to be careful in the second level. It was entirely plausible that this level would have something else that had powers of absorption.

Two hours passed. As Xu Qing continued his search, a vague sense of danger started to build within him. It got stronger and stronger. Eventually, he was shaking with fear. But that just confirmed to Xu Qing that his previous speculation was correct.

*I can't stay here for very long.*

He was disappointed to have lost track of that second face, and knew that once he returned to the first level with the candle, he most likely would never find it. In other words, he had failed to achieve his objective in coming here. But Xu Qing also knew that fortune could be a fickle thing.

He had seen one of those faces twice. He had searched twice. And he had failed twice. That seemed to indicate... that those faces had wills of their own, and they didn't want to be found.

What a pity. Sighing, Xu Qing rubbed the jade bottle in his bag of holding. I hope the white dust I did manage to get will be enough to use for research. ʃAŃòBÊŞ

Without any further hesitation, he shot back toward the spatial rift.

*I can't stay for too long inside the World Origin Pocket Realm. Better be safe than sorry. I should leave now.*

With that, he became a bright beam of light that arrived an instant later at the rift itself. He had left a slip of divine will in the spot where the rift existed so that he could find it easily. All he had to do was pass through the rift, and he would be back in the level of the candle flame.

However, right when he was just about to go through the rift, he suddenly sensed an aura behind him that was familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. The moment he sensed it, his cultivation base erupted. Two types of authority flared, and he spun in place to look out into the void.

Some distance away, he saw ripples spreading out. The moment he spotted them, he could see that there was something right in the middle of the ripples.

It was a mask! And it looked exactly like the face that Xu Qing had personally seen twice. This time, however, it had materialized in the form of a mask. From the look of it, this was its true form. It was facing Xu Qing, as if inspecting him. At the same time, it was swaying back and forth like grass in the wind, as if it were just waiting to speed off into the distance.

Xu Qing's guard went up and he refrained from taking action. He just waited in front of the rift, watching.

*When I went looking for it, it hid from me. But when I gave up, it appeared.*

An incense stick's worth of time passed. Neither party moved an inch. They just inspected each other. The mask had stopped swaying back and forth. Apparently, the fact that Xu Qing held back from taking action caused it to lower its guard.

Eventually, Xu Qing narrowed his eyes and began to devise a plan about how to get the mask. Almost as if it had sensed his thoughts, the mask blurred as if it was about to disappear.

Xu Qing frowned and cast aside any thoughts of making a move on the mask, and instead focused on the concept of *not* searching for it.... In fact, he even went so far as to abandon any sort of desire for the mask.

The moment he did that, the mask went from blurry to clear again. It looked at Xu Qing for a moment. And then its lips moved as it spoke in an emotionless voice.

“What is your wish?”

Xu Qing’s sense of vigilance grew. Considering he had no idea what this mask was, there was no way he was going to reply to it. He had seen many gruish things in his life, and as a result, he knew that there were certain things that were best left unsaid. As Xu Qing thought about that, the mask seemed to decide that, since he wasn’t responding, it would leave, and it started to blur again.

Eyes flashing, Xu Qing suddenly said, “I wish for....”

When those three words left his mouth, the mask became crystal clear again. As it looked at him, he backed into the rift. He vanished. When he reappeared, he was no longer on the level with the star chart. He was back on the level with the red candle.

Heat and light battered against him. Ignoring that, he looked at the rift to see if the mask would follow him. Before long... ripples pulsed out of the rift, followed a moment later by the mask.

It looked at Xu Qing. It seemed to be waiting for him to finish explaining his wish.

Eyes narrowing, Xu Qing shot off into the distance, all while keeping an eye on the mask.

The mask seemed to hesitate briefly before chasing after him. Perhaps it was because of what he had said. Perhaps because he had not actually stated his wish, some karma had developed.

The mask didn’t flee. It kept following him. It lasted for about half an incense stick’s worth of time. At that point, Xu Qing suddenly reversed momentum, shooting backward toward the mask. And thus, before the mask could successfully blur away, he grabbed it. There it rested, looking at him, apparently waiting for him to finish stating the contents of his wish.

No expression could be seen on Xu Qing’s face as he casually put the mask into his sleeve. He didn’t feel comfortable putting it into his bag of holding, as it was a living thing. And sealing it might be taken as a malicious act that could break the equilibrium he had created. What was more, based on the little test he had just carried out, he got the feeling that the mask would stick with him until he finished stating his wish. And thus, his sleeve seemed like the most suitable storage place.

As for what the mask was, and the karma of the wish, and even the white dust, Xu Qing decided that it would be best to try to learn more about them only after he left the World Origin Pocket Realm. Seeing that he had accomplished his main goal, and that staying in this place meant risking absorption, he took out his World Origin Pocket Realm entrance medallion and triggered the exit function.

Unfortunately, the moment he did, the distant red candle flared brightly, and the light seemed to focus direction on him. Whether it was because of that light or because of some other reason... the medallion didn’t do anything!

Xu Qing looked at the red candle off in the distance.

*Is the candle preventing me from leaving because I have the mask? Or was it something else that caused it to start shining more brightly...? Maybe it's all just a coincidence.*

He tried to use the medallion again, and again, the candle flared. Nothing happened. Something malicious seemed to be going on, and it caused Xu Qing's expression to turn grim.

1. God Lords and God Paragons were explained in chapter 901. <sup>㉔</sup>

2. Grand Emperor Swordsage perished in chapter 961. Because of the way the chapter is structured, it might not have been obvious that the paper person was Master Righteous Veil. But that detail is there to see if you go back to the chapter. Master Righteous Veil was mentioned in chapter 927 and . I originally rendered his name as Master Deluo, but eventually consulted the author about it, after which I settled on Righteous Veil. For more information about that, check the footnote in chapter 927. <sup>㉕</sup>

## Chapter 1041: Pressing Forward

*It's not letting me go?*

Keeping his eye on the distant red candle, Xu Qing backed up a bit. Then, skirting the halo of light surrounding the candle, he flew in the direction of the rift leading to the second level. Upon nearing the area, he found... that the rift was gone.

*Not only is it not letting me leave, but also, the rift to the second level vanished. But why...?*

Looking grim, he pondered the situation, eventually coming up with three possibilities.

*First, it could be related to the mask. Maybe it's the karma I developed with the mask. Or maybe the mask is incapable of leaving the pocket dimension. Perhaps the power of the mask itself is preventing me from leaving until I complete my wish.*

*Second, it could be related to the candle. I do have a special body, so maybe it has malicious intentions directed at me. Maybe it wants me to stay so it can absorb me.*

*Third, maybe it's that godly authority of luck from before! Although I have a bit of control over that godly authority, in the end, it's not complete. Maybe it evolved in some unexpected way. Or maybe the luck causes misfortune later on.*

Xu Qing checked his godly authority of misfortune to see if it was any more active than before. Unfortunately, all he had were speculations that couldn't be proven or disproven.

*I suppose it's also possible that it's a combination of all three possibilities. In that case, the way to deal with this situation is....*

As Xu Qing frowned in thought, an icy will suddenly gathered around him. Instantly, he shot backward. Loud cracking sounds rang out from the spot he had just occupied, as that entire area froze solid.

Xu Qing's eyes turned pitch black as he used the Shadow Fusion Secret Magic. In an instant, a host of grieves became visible to him, surging maliciously toward him from all directions. From the way they were acting, it seemed as if they were being controlled by some external force.

A moment later, a huge sun rose within Xu Qing, and the profound sun immortal light shone out. Beams of immortal light stabbed out in all directions, shattering the ice, and causing countless shadows to howl in grief. In the blink of an eye, more than half of the grieves around Xu Qing were gone.

He blurred into motion. However, the remaining shadows were still racing toward him.

*How can there be so many? It doesn't seem possible!*

Xu Qing fled while simultaneously emitting immortal light. At the moment, he was in quite a passive position, and all the while, the flame of the red candle sent its light pulsing out. With every pulse of light, the surrounding painting of stars transformed. And when the candle light touched Xu Qing, his soul started sizzling.

*These shadows aren't just cultivators from the Devilbird holy lands that died here! The World Origin Pocket Realm is extremely old. Older than the holy land. Before it came to the Revered Ancient mainland, it definitely passed through other worlds. It stands to reason... that that's why it accumulated so many of these shadows!*

Xu Qing's eyes glittered with killing intent. He could tell at a glance that these shadows were trying to kill him. Therefore, since Xu Qing *could* see them, he could kill them, not only with immortal light, but with other methods. Rumbling sounds echoed out as masses of xeno-immortal soul threads shot out from him, accompanied by godly authority. Wherever they passed, shadows exploded.

Unfortunately, the sense of crisis within Xu Qing didn't lessen at all. Instead, it grew more intense. And that was because the flame of the red candle was causing his soul to feel more and more like it was burning. At the same time, the star painting that was the World Origin Pocket Realm was changing rapidly. It was almost as if painted eyes were opening and staring at him with boundless greed.

The sense of crisis they imparted to Xu Qing continued to grow. In addition to burning, his soul was starting to crack and crumble. It was as if the painted eyes were exerting a terrifying force onto his soul, to try to drag it out of him.

There was more. What caused Xu Qing's heart to sink even further was the sensation that his soul was transforming from something formless into something with a form.

And it was the form of a painting! He was currently transforming into a painting! Put precisely, it was a canvas made from a fleshly body with a design painted on it that resembled a soul.

*Being fused with Little Shadow makes it possible to see all these other shadows. That's why I can attack them. However... there is balance in all things. Because I can see them, the red candle can also see me... and that's why I'm being absorbed so quickly. But if I exit this state, then I won't be able to see the shadows, and I won't be able to wipe them out!*

It was like a deadly paradox.

Looking very grim, Xu Qing unfused with Little Shadow. As his eyes ceased to be pitch black, he also ceased to feel the sensation of his soul being ripped out of him. Unfortunately, because he couldn't see the grieves around him, and thus couldn't fight back against them, he had no choice but to just run away and try to find a way to escape the pocket realm.

Sadly, the red candle ensured that every attempt he made met with failure. Whenever he activated the medallion, it failed to work.

Eventually, despite not being fused with Little Shadow, he could see the signs that he was being absorbed by the red candle. His fleshly body seemed fine. But his soul was gradually being affected. In fact, even his thoughts were being influenced, as if they were starting to corrode.

Beyond that, the fate lineaments from Xu Qing's incarnated form of Sir Blood Dust were unexpectedly being melted by the gruish candle. As a result, he couldn't maintain the form. His disguise, and everything he had done to connect himself to the real Sir Blood Dust, were being undone.

Of course, *when it rains, it pours*. Either that, or the third possibility Xu Qing had considered was coming true. After all of the luck he had experienced, he started to see signs of very familiar misfortune...

A cultivator appeared in front of him! This was the first living person Xu Qing had encountered since coming to the pocket realm.

It was a three-world Smoldering God cultivator. Apparently, he hadn't been here for very long, and was in the middle of seeking enlightenment. However, the dramatic things that were going on caused him to emerge from his enlightenment and look around suspiciously. He quickly caught sight of Xu Qing. The Devilbird cultivator's jaw dropped, and his expression became one of utter incredulity.

"Xu Qing?"

Given how utterly famous Xu Qing was among humankind, now that his disguise was gone, he was recognized instantly. And it made complete sense that, as soon as the cultivator recognized him, he took out his medallion and activated it to leave. The medallion immediately caused a vortex to appear.

It looked like he was about to make his escape. But then Xu Qing's eyes glinted with cold light, and he shot forward with a burst of speed. Rumbling sounds accompanied his movement. Unfortunately, as he neared the vortex, the red candle pulsed with light, and the vortex was wiped out of existence. The Devilbird cultivator's teleportation portal had been severed.

Xu Qing was still stuck.

It was hard to say if the misfortune was striking Xu Qing or the other cultivator. Maybe it was hitting both of them at the same time. After all, Xu Qing did command the godly authority of misfortune....

Xu Qing didn't have time to break down the exact reason right now. Seeing that the other cultivator's teleportation had been unsuccessful caused a grimace to appear on Xu Qing's face.

As for the Devilbird cultivator, he was backing away in astonishment. However, before he could get more than thirty meters away, a tremor passed through him, and his eyes went black. It was as if something else was controlling him. Suddenly looking at Xu Qing with deep greed, he shot forward and began a self-detonation.

A rumbling boom echoed out. A moment later, Xu Qing was fleeing the area.

The detonation of a three-world Smoldering God couldn't harm his fleshly body. But it would have an effect on his soul, which was currently in the middle of being absorbed. Thankfully, after that, he didn't encounter any other cultivators seeking enlightenment. After all, getting into the World Origin Pocket Realm required a huge amount of battle credit, so it wasn't common for cultivators to come in.

Unfortunately, Xu Qing still hadn't come up with a plan to get away. More grieves were chasing after him. The absorption effects were getting more severe.

Eventually, Xu Qing could sense very clearly that the entire pocket realm was pulsing with malicious intentions. In fact, as he went along, there were planets and worlds that, despite clearly not being about to detonate, would be influenced by the flame, and would explode.

There were even empty spots with nothing in them, where planets would appear out of nowhere and then explode. The destructive forces unleashed by such detonations were impossible for Xu Qing to defend against. Most ridiculous of all was that the red candle seemed to be losing patience. Every pulse of the flame would cause explosions.

The candle was like a volcano, sending intense light throughout the World Origin Pocket Realm, which melted everything. From the look of it, everything inside the pocket realm was going to end up melted.

Planets. Worlds. Dust.... The red candle was burning with such intensity, that the candle itself was starting to disappear.

*It wants to exterminate me. It doesn't want any trace of me left alive. My only options are to somehow get the empress to realize that something unusual is going on, or to last until the candle burns itself out.*

*In the case of the former, I'm in a passive position. In the case of the latter, well, I have no idea how long that will take. Besides, what if the candle just resets after it burns out? After all, this could all be because of the karma of the mask! Most importantly of all is that I really can't afford to wait around.*

After trying many options, none of which worked, Xu Qing's eyes erupted with killing intent. There was only one option left. Stopping in place, he turned to look at the burning candle with determination filling his gaze. Going forward, everything pointed to disaster.

"Since you won't let me leave, and want to absorb me..."

Xu Qing's eyes filled with ferocity and a crazy look. And then he shot toward the core of the World Origin Pocket Realm, which was none other than the red candle.

This final option was going to be extremely dangerous. Maybe it wouldn't work. After all, the three possibilities he had considered all ended with him being absorbed. Whether it was the karma of the mask or the influence of the candle, he couldn't leave this place.

The greedy candle wanted to absorb him. The godly authority of good luck was followed by misfortune.

"... well, I'll absorb you!"

His eyes were completely bloodshot as he shot toward the flickering candle flame, followed by countless shadows. He was like a shooting star, or perhaps a moth flying toward the flame. Either way, he was... pressing forward!

## Chapter 1042: Shattering Paramount God Authority

Xu Qing moved with stupefying speed, flitting through the light cast by the red candle. He was like a meteor shattering the void and shaking the cosmos. As he neared, he was moving so fast his entire body started glowing red. Boundless light and heat battered his face.

In the blink of an eye, he was completely enveloped. Countless grieves charged in his directions, all while planets and worlds exploded to block his path. From the look of it, everything in the entire pocket realm was trying to stop him.

It didn't seem to make sense! If this candle really wanted to absorb him, why was it blocking his path? After all, he was literally acting like a moth rushing toward the flame. It should have welcomed him. Yet, not only was it very clear that he was being blocked, but also, as Xu Qing sped forward, the effects grew even more pronounced. Planets blew up constantly. And the candle's flame danced more violently.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered, and without any hesitation, he sent his divine will out. An instant later, he and Little Shadow fused, causing his eyes to turn pitch black. As a result, all of the explosions transformed into a painting. That allowed him to avoid their effects.

Also, the previously invisible grieves were now visible en masse to Xu Qing. He could sense their anxiety and madness. They were trying to block his path, all while ganging up on him from behind.

Seeing all that, Xu Qing just accelerated. He tapped into his cultivation base, godly authority, and cultivator authority. The sun rose within him, and regardless of how red his fleshly body glowed, or his soul burned, he viciously charged forward.

You don't want me to go forward? Then I'm gonna go forward!

All of a sudden, the shadows surrounding him began dissipating. As the candle flame flickered, Xu Qing reached a point only 3,000 meters away from the candle itself! At that point, his fleshly body was doing well, but his soul was having trouble. Countless flames seeped through the cracks in his skin, converging in his sea of consciousness and burning his soul.

The effects of absorption and melting spread dramatically. In that moment of crisis, a crazy look flashed in Xu Qing's eyes. Then, his soul flickered, transforming into millions upon millions of soul threads that swept through his sea of consciousness, becoming a vortex that fought back against the candle flames.

Relying on that, he continued onward. He was now only 1,500 meters away.

Soul threads were being wiped out of existence with every moment that passed, either turning into ash that disappeared, or becoming grieves. Yet Xu Qing was only accelerating. Screaming onward, he reached 900 meters. Then 600 meters.... About ninety percent of his soul threads had disappeared. With only a small portion left, he finally bridged the gap.

He was now right above the red candle, directly over its flame. There, he settled down cross-legged, closed his eyes, and then dropped into the fire. He was planning to use his own fleshly body to extinguish the flame!

The flame flickered dramatically, almost as if it had a will of its own, and had been caught completely by surprise by this action. It simply couldn't understand why someone would rush headlong right into death.

The flame of the red candle burned wildly, forcing Xu Qing to a halt. Then it burned many times hotter than before, causing the flames to spread out and completely cover him. His fleshly body dealt with the onslaught. But the flames seeped into him, filling his sea of consciousness and spreading out over his void soil. What remaining xeno-immortal soul threads he had left were being rapidly wiped out.

But then, Xu Qing's eyes opened, and he looked down at the red candle.

"I don't know if you have a connection to the mask. But I know you have your own will. That's why I mentioned absorbing you. I was hoping you would let me approach you. And though I wasn't lying..." his eyes glittered. "... do the two of you really think I was only thinking about a wish?"

Xu Qing had benefited greatly on this trip into the World Origin Pocket Realm.

First, he encountered the star chart of the thirty-six star rings. The majestic map had really opened his eyes about the world he lived in.

Next, he found the true origin of the white dust he'd found on Sir Blood Dust. It came from the Mask of Wishes!

For unknown reasons, the candle maliciously prevented him from leaving. And yet, Xu Qing still wasn't inclined to use that wish. And that was because... he had a speculation that had been turning around in his mind for a while now.

Now, things had been made clear. When analyzing previous events from every possible angle, the only explanation seemed to be pointing to the wish as the only way out. Or at least, that seemed to be what the red candle was forcing him to do! That was why Xu Qing was even less inclined to do it.

Before fully studying the mask, he didn't want to casually use it. After all, it was a gruish thing, and based on Xu Qing's understanding, there was nothing in the world that came easily and didn't have consequences. That was especially true when it came to things like wishes. A wish would definitely come with a cost. And it made sense that, the greater the wish, the greater the price to be paid.

That was especially true considering that the mask had a certain level of consciousness. It wasn't inanimate. And therefore, it was highly likely it could resort to schemes and trickery.

All of those things, including the price to be paid for using the mask, were unknowns.

Perhaps the price to be paid for the wish was longevity. Maybe it would come with some sort of tribulation. Maybe you would have to give up a person or object that you cared deeply about. Maybe you would lose memories or even your soul. All of those things were within the realm of possibility. Therefore, he wanted to know the precise details of the price to be paid.

If he made a wish, and was then forced to pay the price no matter what, it could lead to very dire consequences. That was why he had just put the mask away without stating his wish. Logically speaking, if he wanted to leave this place without making the wish, there was only one option.

And that was to charge right into the source of all the danger, which was the candle itself! He would use his fleshly body to extinguish the flame! He would use death to seek life. He would make an opportunity in the moment of most extreme danger. Of course, doing that required coming to the candle itself.

When Xu Qing spoke the word 'absorb' out loud, he was hoping to convince the candle to let him get near it. There was another reason for his decision. He believed in the strength of his fleshly body!

In the star chart depicting the thirty-six star rings, the Ninth Star Ring featured Eminent Desolation, which exerted a force of attraction on the symbols to the east, west, south and north. That alone went to show how terrifying the broken face was. Considering that his flesh and blood had been used to make Xu Qing's fleshly body, it could definitely stand up to the flame of this candle.

The only weakness in the plan was his own soul! His soul *couldn't* stand up to the flame. But Xu Qing had already made his decision!

"We're going to see which will be extinguished first. My soul, my fleshly body, or your flame!"

Even as the words left his mouth, and as the flames burned in his sea of consciousness, Xu Qing unhesitatingly activated all of the one hundred faint godly authority lineaments in his void soil. Those lineaments came from the flesh and blood of the broken face, and Xu Qing had not yet gained enlightenment of them all. Although they increased the upper limits he could reach in terms of strength and power, they also created an obstacle that he had to break through. Therefore, if he could burn them away, it would be a good way to achieve a level of balance.

Xu Qing was partly correct in this line of thinking. But he was also partly incorrect!

The nearly one hundred lineaments of godly authority really could be ignited and used to fight back against the candle flame. However, they were not true godly authority. They were just illusory sealing marks that were similar to snapshots. No matter how they burned, such sealing marks were fundamentally impossible to erase. At the very most, any impurities within them would be removed. As a result, the flames did not achieve the result Xu Qing had anticipated.

Although that was disheartening, he had a backup plan!

“Godly authority of good luck!”

Without any hesitation, he sacrificed the godly authority of good luck by throwing it into the flames. The godly authority ignited, sending out massive amounts of godliness, which fought back against the candle fire and protected Xu Qing’s soul.

It was a crazy plan!

It could well be said that, whether in ancient times or modern, it was a very rare thing to burn godly authority. For one thing, no god would be willing to give up godly authority. Furthermore, any flame that could actually burn godly authority would be extremely precious, and running into it would require a destined opportunity.

Thanks to burning the godly authority of good luck, Xu Qing was able to buy some time. Rumbling sounds echoed out as his fleshly body came into a sitting position atop the candle flame.

The flame flickered wildly as it sank down. It wanted to immolate this fleshly body, but it couldn’t. All it could do was sink down under its weight. That said, the candle still fought back just as hard as before, by sending more fire into Xu Qing’s sea of consciousness.

Xu Qing’s sea of consciousness was full of towering flames. The godly authority of good luck continued to burn until about ninety-nine percent of it was gone. Only a scrap remained. That scrap glittered with golden light; apparently, it wasn’t possible to completely wipe it out.

Upon seeing this, Xu Qing’s thoughts raced. However, there wasn’t time for contemplation. Next, he tossed out the godly authority of misfortune as a sacrifice, causing it to spread out and resist the flames. Rumbling sounds filled his sea of consciousness as more flames entered it, adding to the conflagration. The godly authority of misfortune rapidly disappeared until there was only a scrap left!

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing sacrificed his next portion of godly authority. That was the violet moon! The godly authority of the violet moon surrounded him and fought against the candle flames.

Xu Qing's fleshly body had now completely sunk down into the flame of the red candle. Now, the wick was right underneath him! As the candle flickered violently, the godly authority of the violet moon in Xu Qing's sea of consciousness dissipated rapidly. In the end, it ended up just like the previous two types of godly authority. It was only a golden thread!

Xu Qing gritted his teeth as he prepared to sacrifice more godly authority. But then something gruish happened to the candle that completely surpassed anything Xu Qing had predicted would happen.

Luck. Misfortune. Violet moon.... The three golden threads of godly authority suddenly spun into motion and began to interweave with each other. They didn't fuse. It was more like a braid, and it emanated dazzling golden light.

As a result, the candle flame was halted.

A terrifying aura erupted from the interwoven threads of three types of godly authority. The aura seemed to exist on a higher level than space-time, as if it could control all living beings. Yet it didn't seem complete. Despite being incomplete, the aura it emanated was immeasurably terrifying, and surpassed any and all godly authorities that Xu Qing had ever encountered.

Before Xu Qing could perceive any details about it, the aura began to dissipate as surely as the night queen flower that only blooms for an instant. They had only formed because of a freak combination of factors, and could not fuse permanently. Because they weren't complete, they were apparently going to unravel.[1]

Before they could, the shaken Xu Qing pulled them back into his sea of consciousness, and the candle flame there, so that they could sustain the force of the flame instead of his soul. The fire raged. Outside, the candle was just on the verge of being extinguished. At that point, the candle went all out, sending flames shooting out madly into Xu Qing's sea of consciousness. This effort surpassed anything from before.

As they burned, the three portions of godly authority that had been just about to unravel... suddenly started fusing together.

1. The 'queen of the night,' which I'm rendering in a slightly nonstandard way as 'night queen flower,' is a species of cactus that blooms in the night and wilts before dawn. More information [here](#). 🌵

## Chapter 1043: A Red Candle on the Back

Although Xu Qing only had a limited understanding of godly authority, he did have significant experience with it, whether because of his own godly authority, or by means of interacting with other gods.

For instance, he knew that godly authority and essence were different. Godly authority was much more ancient, and it was an authority that was unique to gods. They could influence all things. They could affect any living being. And they were spread throughout the thirty-six star rings in the starry sky. That was because this was a universe of gods.

Simultaneously, godly authority was divided into two levels. The first level was the type that was split between those who qualified to use it. The other was the type that was unique to an individual. When it came to the former, it led to a situation in which various gods were forced to either cooperate or compete over it. Only by devouring all other gods with the same type of godly authority could the second level be reached. Anyone who succeeded at that would be the sole possessor of that type of godly authority.

Based on Xu Qing's earlier understanding, the rare individuals who reached that level were the True Gods. Furthermore, based on Xu Qing's previous understanding, godly authority wasn't classified as being weak or strong. Rather, it came down to the level of control one had over it. And also... the range! Range was a very important factor when it came to godly authority.

However, just now, that previous understanding within Xu Qing was shaken. And that was because those three types of godly authority had weaved together to form a unique godly authority that emanated a terrifying aura that surpassed anything he had ever encountered. And it was enough for him to be able to easily distinguish the difference between weak and strong.

Xu Qing wasn't sure what this new type of godly authority was. The best he could do was make an educated guess based on the characteristics of good luck, misfortune, and the violet moon.

Of course, there wasn't time right now to delve into the details. As the candle flame erupted, his fleshly body sank down further toward the wick, pushing the candle ever closer to being extinguished....

Within Xu Qing's sea of consciousness, the red candle's flame was fighting back ferociously, and the flames were going absolutely wild.

This fire had no choice but to try to incinerate those three strands of godly authority. After all, those three types of godly authority had weaved together to make an unfamiliar godly authority that had surrounded his soul protectively. It was resisting the fire.

Despite that, the intensity of the heat was still harmful to Xu Qing's soul. His soul threads were disappearing rapidly. And when their number dropped to 10,000... his clothing was completely burned out of existence! His body, bright red from the heat, landed onto the candle wick.

*RUMBLE!*

The moment he landed on the wick, a heaven-rending, earth-crushing boom swept through the World Origin Pocket Realm, causing everything to shake violently.

The candle flame was extinguished!

When it happened, the fire in Xu Qing's sea of consciousness suddenly disappeared. His void soil, pockmarked with severe damage, and the unfamiliar godly authority formed from three strands of other godly authorities, then experienced a dramatic transformation.

Before, they had been unable to fuse, but thanks to the heat of the fire, they now appeared to be ten percent fused. A majestic aura of godly authority rose up from them, filling Xu Qing's entire sea of consciousness.

Meanwhile, the extinguishing of the fire caused external transformations as well. As the last bits of light flowed out, the planets outside vanished. Some that were visible to the naked eye simply collapsed. Others, visible to the shadow eye as paintings, went away as if they had been erased. Simultaneously, all of the grieves faded away like smoke in the wind. It was as if the entire illusory world had become a thing of the past once the candle flame went away.

Everything sank into complete darkness. It was as if the entire World Origin Pocket Realm were vanishing into nothing.

Sometime later, Xu Qing, who was still in a cross-legged position, slowly opened his eyes. They were bloodshot and full of exhaustion. His soul was so weak that he felt like his head was spinning. He was surrounded by darkness. He couldn't see anything in the distance, nor anything near him. There was no light, and even using the eyes of a god would reveal nothing but a void.

There was no trace of the candle beneath him. However, the sensation of having just barely survived a deadly crisis filled Xu Qing.

*When the candle flame disappeared, the snapshot vanished....*

He reached into his sleeve, felt the mask there, and then relaxed a bit.[1]

Xu Qing was not interested in staying in this place any longer than necessary. For all he knew, the candle might reappear soon, and everything might go back to exactly the way it had been before. He quickly took out the pocket realm medallion to leave.

But then, his expression flickered, and he looked over his shoulder. Other than the darkness, there was nothing out there behind him.

But Xu Qing was a vigilant person. And just now, he had sensed... something that indicated the candle had reappeared.

“Wait. No!”

He reached behind himself to touch his back, and as he did, his fingernails scraped against something unfamiliar. His heart lurched. The red candle actually hadn't disappeared! For some unknown reason, the candle had been imprinted onto his back. To Xu Qing, it felt almost like a tattoo that filled his entire back. Thankfully, after feeling around a bit, he could confirm that the candle on his back was extinguished.

He frowned. Then, mind abuzz with countless thoughts, he pushed down on the medallion. Unfortunately... there was no response from it.

Previously, there had at least been a reaction from the medallion. The problem had been the candle interfering. But right now, it was as if there wasn't even a connection between the medallion and the World Origin Pocket Realm.

“World Origin Pocket Realm...” he murmured. He pushed down on the medallion again.

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Outside of the World Origin Pocket Realm, some astonishing things happened when the candle was extinguished.

First, the massive jade slip that contained the World Origin Pocket Realm, which usually shone with dazzling light, suddenly went dim. At the same time, the lands around it, which were usually lush and verdant, dried up so badly that the ground cracked. In fact, ravines spread out through the entire basin, and when they reached the mountains at the end, the mountains crumbled. It was as if the spirit energy had been sucked away.

As for the sealed area that housed the jade slip, it disappeared. As of now, any cultivator, even those who didn't have entrance medallions, could look in and see the jade slip.

The Devilbirds who had gathered in the area to practice cultivation in the strong spirit energy were shocked to the core as they looked inside.

"The spirit energy here just vanished...."

"The sealing mark protecting the World Origin Pocket Realm just disappeared!"

"What just happened?"

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On the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain, 'Lu Lingzi' opened 'his' eyes in the hall at the top of the mountain. A frown appeared. Then, 'he' surreptitiously sent some divine will toward the location of the World Origin Pocket Realm to lock the area down. In the blink of an eye, the heaven and earth surrounding the World Origin Pocket Realm went still.

The divine will then entered the jade slip itself. And then, the empress, who despite being an extremely valiant person, was stricken with astonishment. It was only natural that shē had gone into the World Origin Pocket Realm, so shē knew a good deal about it.

But now, scanning the place with divine will revealed nothing but pitch black. The red candle was gone. The planets had vanished. Everything was a void.

However, there in the spot where the red candle had existed was Xu Qing, hovering cross-legged, clutching the medallion and trying one thing after another to get it to work.

The empress was taken aback. Then a moment passed, and hēr voice echoed into the void.

"What are you doing?"

Xu Qing went still. Inside, he was feeling very pleased. Looking out into the void, he said, "Well met, Your Majesty! Some strange things happened here earlier, so I tried to use this medallion to leave. Unfortunately, the medallion... just didn't work."

Xu Qing got to his feet, clasped hands, and bowed. He was well aware that the empress' arrival meant that he had a way to get free now.

The empress didn't respond to his words. It was only when Xu Qing was starting to formulate some more words that he heard a sigh.

"You didn't listen to a thing I said, did you?" the empress said. "After you're out of here, come see me immediately!"

At the same time, a majestic force swept through the void, swirled around Xu Qing, and turned into a huge vortex. A gravitational force sprang into being, dragging Xu Qing into the vortex. Then he and the vortex both disappeared.

After Xu Qing was gone, the empress appeared in blurry form. It was only a divine will clone. After looking around for a while, shē shook hēr head.

*I used to think the Eldest Brother was the only one I had to worry about. I never could have guessed that Xu Qing's just as bad.*

The empress took a step forward and vanished. Upon reappearing in the outside world above the jade slip, shē pushed hēr hand down. Instantly, the jade slip lit up again. The sealing barrier once again sprang into being. Everything looked exactly as it had looked before. However, if anyone was able to enter and look inside the jade slip, they would find... that the World Origin Pocket Realm wasn't there.

Of course, the empress couldn't let that state of affairs continue to exist. Therefore, it wasn't long before a dharmic decree was issued from the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain. The World Origin Pocket Realm had run short of spirit energy, and would need a hundred years to recover. During that time, no one would be permitted entry. The World Origin Pocket Realm was now the property of the tenth Imperial Sovereign, and thus, Lu Lingzi's dharmic decree would be honored.

It was a time of war, and though the World Origin Pocket Realm had been listed as a reward, the fact that Lu Lingzi was a new Imperial Sovereign meant that no one would bicker over such a dharmic decree. Imperial Sovereigns naturally had special privileges.

Of course, in order to truly cover up what really happened to the World Origin Pocket Realm would require further work on the part of the empress.

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Xu Qing appeared on a plain about 50 kilometers away from the World Origin Pocket Realm. He looked nervous. As soon as he materialized, he once again assumed the form of Sir Blood Dust, then looked over his shoulder in the direction of the World Origin Pocket Realm.

At the moment, he wasn't really sure how much he had benefited. He had the mask, but apparently, had also ended up with that gruish candle imprinted on his back. He had also made things more difficult for the empress, which he already regretted. That was his personality. He was the type of person who knew whom to show gratitude to, and whom to feel resentment against. And he didn't like being in the debt of others.

After a moment he took a deep breath.

*I need to go help the empress in whatever way I can. At the very least, I do whatever shē asks me to do.*

With that, he shot off in the direction of the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain.

Along the way, he focused on the unfamiliar godly authority within him. Good luck was easy to understand based on its own name. It was the same with misfortune.

As for the godly authority of the violet moon, it involved violet moonlight shining down on living things, looking for flaws in their life force, and upon finding them, invading them with taboo poison.

*It's command of fortune, and also command of the flaws in life force. When thēy combine, thēy become a godly authority....*

As Xu Qing raced along, he suddenly lurched to a stop. Hovering in midair, he struggled to control his breathing, all while his eyes shone with a bizarre light. All of a sudden, one word was echoing in his mind.

*Is this... fate?*<sup>[2]</sup>

1. His clothes were destroyed earlier, but apparently they are back now. ❹

2. This footnote gets into some nitty gritty stuff that most readers probably won't care about. There is a bit of wordplay going on here, the type that often frustrates me. In this case we have a term (fate) that is actually made of two Chinese characters. The author has used this term for multiple series and thousands of chapters without doing a wordplay explanation (at least, not that I remember). Then, all of a sudden, he throws in some wordplay. Well, it is what it is. In this case, 'fate' is made up of two characters. Both of them can be interpreted in different ways. The first one could mean life, but also can mean fate/destiny/command as well as other things. The second character can mean even more things, but among them are fortune/fate/luck. So in the paragraph above we have multiple levels of wordplay, in which Xu Qing mentions command, life, fortune, etc. Long story short, all of his thought process revolves around the two characters that I normally render as 'fate.' That's why his conclusion in Chinese seems to make more sense than it does in English. Of course, all of this is further complicated by the fact that there are a host of Chinese words and characters that all mean fate/fortune/destiny, etc. The next chapter will have more information about the wordplay explanation of 'fate' as used here. And incidentally, later wordplay makes it very clear that the correct interpretations are the ones I've picked (life and fortune), although the 'fortune' one is more open to translator preference. ❺

## Chapter 1044: Life and Fate!

Xu Qing's eyes glittered, and his heart pounded. He was reeling mentally.

Although he couldn't be totally sure of the level of this godly authority... the fact that it was a combination of three other types of godly authority was a clear indication of the personhood involved.

*But is it fate or not?*

He lifted his right hand, and the unfamiliar godly authority that resembled fate glittered brightly, then vanished from within him. When it reappeared, it was in the middle of his palm. And it took the shape... of a carving knife![1]

He could actually feel it, as if it were a corporeal object, yet at the same time, it seemed illusory. The moment it appeared, the air around it seemed to become sticky, as if it had been affected by the knife.

Xu Qing got the sensation that this knife could cut anything, whether that be the land, the sky, the grass, or the mountains.

One swipe of this knife could alter a trajectory. And the new trajectory would be completely outside of the scope of the original trajectory. It was a vague feeling, so vague, in fact, that Xu Qing couldn't mentally grasp the totality of it. It was as if there were a veil covering the substructure of this godly authority, making it impossible for him to fully grasp it.

However, there was one thing he was certain of.

*It seems highly likely that this is the godly authority of fate. However, it's a bit different from fate as I currently understand it....*

Xu Qing was reeling so much he simply couldn't maintain a state of calm. That was because, when he thought back to everything he had experienced, and everything he understood, he realized that he had encountered a person who seemed to have abilities that were similar to a godly authority that affected fate.

And that person was the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan! Zi Qing could command fate!

Xu Qing took a deep breath as he thought back to what he had seen Zi Qing accomplish. Everything was there in his memories.

*Zi Qing used the broken face of Eminent Desolation to effect a resurrection of himself. Does that mean his godly authority is somehow connected to the broken face? As for me... my fleshly body comes from the flesh and blood of Eminent Desolation. And now, due to a freak combination of factors, I've acquired something akin to authority over fate.*

*Is there some sort of karma at play here? What's more, Zi Qing's fate magic also relates to time. In that case... what does my godly authority do?*

A moment later, he cleared his mind. He knew that he didn't understand this new godly authority well enough. And if he wanted to understand it, he needed to learn more about it.

Instead of blindly groping on his own, it made more sense to ask for help. And since his Master wasn't around, the best person to ask was the empress. The empress was a god, and an Altar God at that. Asking the empress about godly authority might even yield better results than asking for information from his Master.

With that thought in mind, Xu Qing looked up, then blurred into motion toward the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain. Along the way, he didn't spend time thinking about the godly authority that seemed to relate to fate. Instead, he nourished his soul and observed his other godly authorities.

*Sound. Taboo poison....*

After some observation, he was certain that this godly authority of fate was definitely very strong. Next, he focused on his back tattoo of the candle, as well as the mask.

Thus, time passed. Two days.

Given how fast he was moving, he was now only about an hour away from the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain. By now, he had reached some conclusions about the candle.

*The candle has thoroughly fused with my fleshly body. It's as if it changed carriers. Before, the carrier was the snapshot jade slip. But now it's my fleshly body. Maybe the way to shift carriers is to extinguish it. Even though it's extinguished, I get the sensation that it could be lit again. However, I need to make some special preparations beforehand. And I need more time to ascertain the details.*

What was more, his study up to this point seemed to indicate that the tattoo wasn't going to harm him.

*And then there's the mask.*

Xu Qing pulled the mask out and looked at it. It was looking back at him, seemingly still waiting for him to state his wish.

*It's made from an unknown substance. It does have intelligence of its own, but not much. If I don't make a wish, it will just keep following me around. I still don't know what price needs to be paid for the wish. But given how intent it is on following me around, that price must be significant.*

In reality, the reason he started making a wish wasn't because he actually had a wish he wanted granted. He had another purpose. From the very beginning, he'd had only one purpose in mind. And that was... to acquire a way to avoid karma. That white dust had been the focus from the beginning.

Xu Qing looked up, and authority glittered in his eyes as he looked at his own fate threads. The threads connected to things in all directions, and they were dazzling to say the least. There were also a few of them that were completely terrifying. However, as of now, Xu Qing realized that upon some of those fate threads, he could see... white dust. The white dust had appeared without fanfare, and was on the very edges of his fate threads.

*Could it be that merely contacting the mask caused the white dust to appear in my fate?*

After some thought, he looked away from the mask. That was when, prompted by a sudden impulse, he thought about his godly authority that was apparently related to fate.

*If I could take that godly authority and put it into my fate threads, what would happen?*

The moment the thought occurred to him, it rapidly became the only thing he could think about. And the desire to test it out caused his eyes to shine with determination.

*I guess I'll test it out!*

Without the slightest hesitation, he waved his right hand, causing what seemed to be the godly authority of fate to fly out and form a carving knife in front of him. Then he sent it flying toward his fate threads. It entered the threads, and then Xu Qing carefully restrained the knife so that it didn't cut anything. He just kept it there, motionless.

When the carving knife entered his fate, it hovered... until something unbelievable happened. A black stream of light emerged from the carving knife, covering Xu Qing's fate threads. Next, the white dust vibrated, then floated up, separating from the fate threads until it hovered in the air, completely alone.

The sensation that filled Xu Qing next rocked him to the core. His expression flickered, something that rarely happened, and his jaw nearly dropped.

When the light from the carving knife covered his fate threads, the sensation he experienced was like bursting out of water and suddenly being able to breathe.

His soul felt unbounded and free. And his body felt far more unrestrained than before. In fact, he had the strong feeling and perception that, previously, he had been living in a state of asphyxiation. It was like he had been stuck in the mud, bound and restrained.

Without having experienced the current sensation, though, he would never have been able to realize that his past state had been one of asphyxiation and restraint. Clarity was only possible through comparison between the two! It seemed as if, only as of this moment was he able to control his own fate.

Xu Qing struggled to control his breathing. The comparison between these two states was completely unexpected. At the same time, a new type of perception filled him.

*Is this the sensation of being able to control fate?*

At the same instant in which Xu Qing gained control of his fate, far away in the Revered Ancient mainland, other entities sensed what was happening.

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In Revered Ancient, there was a region full of dark mist, where the mutagen levels surpassed all other areas. Terrifying howls rang out everywhere, echoing back and forth so that there was never silence.

Within the boundless black haze, there was an imperial palace that was so massive it was like a city. A deathly silence filled the grand hall of the imperial palace.

An unusually handsome man sat on the imperial throne. His forehead was currently resting on his hand, and his eyes were closed. A moment later, his eyes opened, and he looked up into the sky. He frowned.

“You’re cutting ties?” he murmured. A moment later, his expression softened, and he smiled faintly. “How amusing, lil’ bro.”

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Waves rolled across the surface of the depths of the outer sea. Black threads rose up, converging in midair to form Yu Liuchen, who hovered there cross-legged. Hē was currently absorbing what hē had acquired recently.

Normally speaking, hē shouldn’t have woken up before the absorption process was complete. But now, an indescribable feeling had filled hīm, something hē had never experienced before. Having been woken up, hē looked up into the sky.

*A character from one of my stories just disappeared....*

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In the Devilbird holy land, at the summit of the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain, the empress in Lu Lingzi form opened hēr eyes. Shē looked down the mountain, hēr expression quizzical. About an hour later, a voice rang up from that area.

“Sir Blood Dust here, seeking an audience with the Imperial Sovereign!”

After some thought, shē reached down and made a grasping gesture. A moment later, Xu Qing appeared in front of hēr in the grand hall. He immediately bowed at the waist and opened his mouth to speak.

Before he could, the empress’ voice echoed out. “My clone was present in that pocket realm but didn’t see any clues about what was going on. It was only when the godly authority was used that I sensed it.... Xu Qing, you have a new type of godly authority. Its name is... fate!”

Xu Qing looked up at the empress.

The empress had answered the very question he came to ask. Clearly, shē had a much deeper understanding of godly authority than he did.

Taking a deep breath, he respectfully said, “Your Majesty, could you explain a bit more?”

The empress looked down at him for a moment.

“Fate, predestination, luck. All refer to the trajectory of constants and variables among living things in the world. They are also paramount godly authorities in the cultivation system of gods.

“However, life and fortune are two completely different concepts.

“Life is a constant, and it relates to a specific trajectory. It fundamentally contains various paths.

“During the battle in which I reached godly ascension, you personally witnessed the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan control the fate of another. In the hands of Zi Qing, the fate of others takes the

form of a book. By means of fate, hē can see the past, and can thus deduce the future. The future contains infinite possibilities, and yet fundamentally speaking, they *all* exist. What hē does is take one future, extract it, and use it to replace all the others. By doing so, hē can transform and influence the fate of another person.”

Up to this point, Xu Qing felt like he mostly understood what was being said, and it felt like everything was becoming clear. At the same time, he was reeling mentally. He could still picture the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan taking action, and remembered the power of his godly authority.

“Do you mean,” he murmured, “that the trajectories of the countless futures that Zi Qing can perceive are all real? They’re all constants? At the same time, they are all part of the ‘life’ that exists in the godly authority of fate?”

The empress nodded. “Meanwhile, fortune acts as the variable. It refers to the lineaments that exist outside the constants. Put more precisely, they are other paths that might be hewn out. They are paths that didn’t previously exist. But by the mixture of good luck and misfortune, they are created, and they surpass the range of what is set. That is what is meant by variables. Your godly authority relates to the fortune within fate. The variables!”

Xu Qing took a deep breath as his train of thought grew clearer. “Your Majesty, do you mean that my godly authority of fate uses good luck and misfortune to tamper with someone’s destiny? It creates a new fate that’s outside of the constants?”

The empress nodded. “Your understanding is correct. You and Zi Qing both have a godly authority of fate, and though they both have the same origin, they go in different directions. Yet both can be described in the same way.

“Anything and everything is possible. When talking about constants, there are infinite trajectories, any one of which could become manifest. When talking about variables, it’s only natural that it’s possible to create a new path to replace the original.”

Xu Qing closed his eyes to digest what the empress had just told him. After a while, he opened his eyes, and they shone with bright clarity.

“In other words, the Crown Prince of Violet and Cyan has a godly authority of fate that resembles a book. The reason is that it deals with fate that has already been written. Zi Qing can flip through that book and find one page that hē finds suitable.

“In contrast, my godly authority of fate resembles a carving knife.... And its function isn’t to flip through a book. Rather, it functions to carve a new trajectory of fate to become a new page.”

1. The ‘carving knife’ here could also be rendered as ‘burin,’ ‘graver,’ or ‘engraving knife.’ If you do an image search, you will see that all these types of knives are basically the same thing. I would call it a hobby knife or craft knife. I watch a lot of YouTube hobby and crafting channels, and this is the type of knife you see people use when doing fine detail work to cut or carve small things. If you’re not familiar with this type of knife, here is a small image gallery. I don’t think the author envisions it as being a modern hobby knife, though. I think he just envisions a small knife with a delicate blade that could be used for carving things, thus, I’m going with ‘carving knife’ as the translation choice. Also, in a really weird coincidence, right before posting this chapter, a

Youtuber I subscribe to released a video in which he used a hobby knife to carve a knife from wood. 🗡️

## Chapter 1045: Crazy Orders

As Xu Qing's voice echoed within the grand hall of the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain, the empress looked up at him.

"It's a paramount godly authority," the empress said, "especially the variables of fortune. Not even I can see that clearly. All I can tell you is that the godly authority of the broken face Eminent Desolation is, put precisely, fate.

"When it comes to you and Zi Qing, one of you has a body made from Eminent Desolation's flesh and blood. The other gained a new life as a family member of Eminent Desolation. At the same time, thanks to your Master's saber strike, you were able to seize some of the destiny aura of the Sovereign Kingdom of Violet and Cyan. As a result, the return of the sovereign kingdom wasn't complete.

"And thus, in this life, you and Zi Qing are yet again closely related. All of it is because of the entanglements of fate. And all of it will come together at some point in the future. This discussion of constants and variables is also a debate between life and fortune. Or you could say that it's a battle of fate between you and Zi Qing."

The empress looked away from Xu Qing and into the sky, her eyes glistening... as if she could already see that day. Those eyes quickly returned to normal.

Xu Qing didn't say anything. When he saw the empress' eyes go back to normal, he decided not to ask any further questions. Regardless of anything, whatever the empress could see would fall into the realm of constants. She could not see variables. Since Xu Qing himself had some control over fate, then when it came to the future, he would have to use his carving knife to make changes on his own behalf. After all, it could be used on his own life as well as others.

Looking very calm, Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed deeply to the empress. "Thank you, Your Majesty, for dispelling my confusion. By the way, is there anything else I can assist you with here in the Devilbird holy land? If there is, I will do everything in my power to be of benefit."

The empress gave a slight nod. "Previously, I would have said no."

Xu Qing blinked a few times. The implications of the empress' words were evident.

"However," the empress continued, "considering that you have a tendency to get restless, you'll stick by my side going forward.

"Three days from now, I'll be taking a trip as Lu Lingzi to the western Devilbirds. The plan is to offer formal greetings to Grand Emperor Devilbird and discuss the particulars of opening the secluded meditation facilities of Grand Emperor Netherflame. When the time comes, I want you to accompany me. For now, you can rest and recuperate outside of the hall. Your soul is obviously very weak, and it needs to recover."

The empress waved a hand, sending a pill bottle and a jade slip flying over to him.

He caught them. Senses alone told him there was a medicinal pill in the bottle, and it was clearly something designed to nourish and replenish the soul. The jade slip served the same function. Feeling deeply appreciative, he bowed again, and then left the hall.

Outside, he took a deep breath, sat down cross-legged, and then consumed the pill. The pill entered his mouth and turned into streams of warmth that flowed into his sea of consciousness to bolster his soul. It was an extraordinary pill. When the effects reached his sea of consciousness, they became like rain falling onto withered plants and vegetation. Xu Qing's dim and feeble soul immediately began to recover.

Three days passed.

Thanks to the medicinal pill, Xu Qing's soul had recovered by about fifty percent. Although he wasn't back to the same condition as before, his battle prowess hadn't been affected very much. With a bit more recovery time, and the help of the jade slip, it wouldn't take more than a month for him to be fully recovered.

After those three days passed, the empress emerged from the hall and floated up into the air.

Xu Qing rose and followed.

At the foot of the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain, the gathered Devilbird cultivators looked up into the evening sky and bowed respectfully. The Imperial Sovereign was rising into the air. It was the first time 'Lu Lingzi' had made a public appearance after establishing the Imperial Sovereign mountain. Of course, everyone quickly noticed Xu Qing, and all of them were shaken. Some of them knew Sir Blood Dust, and quite a few of the people present had seen him go into the mountain before. That alone had been a shock.

But what was happening now was different. 'Sir Blood Dust' was following 'Lu Lingzi.' That meant that he had become an official attendant!

Going forward, 'Sir Blood Dust' would have a status and position that were completely different than before. In the future, even if he left the mountain alone, all of the gathered cultivators would bow worshipfully to him. Mixed emotions, including feelings of defiance, rose up in the hearts of many. But in the end, they suppressed such emotions. They didn't dare to reveal how they truly felt. They only dared to reveal... respect.

As everyone bowed, Xu Qing followed the empress over the horizon.

The empress didn't move at a high rate of speed. Yet every step shē took caused heaven and earth to blur, and sent visible Imperial Sovereign fluctuations rolling out in all directions. The empress' actions were immediately noticed by the other Imperial Sovereigns among the eastern Devilbirds, and many gazes locked onto hēr.

Xu Qing instinctively retracted his aura. However, when he realized the empress didn't seem worried at all, he felt more at ease. After all, shē was a peak Altar God. Clearly, shē was fully confident in going to see Grand Emperor Devilbird. Given that, he didn't need to overthink things.

Having reached this point in his train of thought, he looked up, and this time, he seemed very relaxed.

As the Imperial Sovereigns looked on, the empress took Xu Qing over the horizon. With only a few paces, they left the territory of the eastern Devilbirds and entered the lands of the western Devilbirds.

The moment they arrived, the gazes of even more Imperial Sovereigns locked onto them. In an instant, the lands began to tremble, and the air distorted. Traces of natural and magical laws glittered, as well as domineering streams of divine will. There wasn't any ounce of courtesy being shown to the empress.

The empress' face was completely expressionless as shē proceeded on hēr way. Xu Qing's face was similarly blank as he kept his head bowed and followed hēr.

The western Devilbirds had more Imperial Sovereign mountains than the east did. They had twenty-one. But Xu Qing could sense from the gazes that they didn't care about him very much at all. After merely glancing at him, they focused solely on the empress.

Xu Qing felt hardly any pressure at all. He was just a mere attendant. However, it was still clear to him that these gazes were not packed with good intentions. In fact, they were scornfully offering a warning to this new Imperial Sovereign from the east. That scorn contained deeper implications, of course, and thus, it didn't just come from the Imperial Sovereigns.

It also came from Grand Emperor Devilbird. It didn't seem to make any difference that the empress came to respectfully offer greetings.

After arriving at Grand Emperor Devilbird's dao altar, the empress stated hēr purpose in coming. This Grand Emperor also had an apprentice present, who was a middle-aged cultivator that had also just recently become an Imperial Sovereign. He was the one who responded to the empress' self-introduction. It came in the form of an order.

"Wait a moment!" The new Imperial Sovereign looked imperiously at the empress and coldly continued, "Lu Lingzi, you and I clashed years ago, and neither of us came out on top. Now that you've experienced a breakthrough, why don't we settle things once and for all!"

His words boomed like thunder, and came with immense pressure.

The empress' expression hadn't changed at all the entire time. Nor had shē even glanced at Grand Emperor Devilbird's apprentice. Turning to Xu Qing, shē calmly said, "Sir Blood Dust."

"Here, sir!" Xu Qing bowed at the waist.

"Go swap pointers with all of the Smoldering God subordinates of the western Imperial Sovereign. While you're at it, don't besmirch the name of the eastern Devilbirds." [1]

Those words caused all of the local Imperial Sovereigns to look at Xu Qing. Even the Imperial Sovereign who had voiced the order of the Grand Emperor looked over at him.

Xu Qing's gaze hardened. He could tell what the empress wanted. Shē wanted him to make a scene. However, his most deadly abilities related to godly authority and cultivator authority. Therefore, the biggest problem was going to be not revealing the truth about his assets.

The empress had given orders, though, and there was no time to sit around contemplating matters. Without the slightest hesitation, he let loose a somber and desolate aura and said, "Your orders shall be followed!"

Then he blurred into motion and shot over the horizon.

The empress closed her eyes and said nothing further.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was scrambling to make a plan. On the one hand, he was wondering what the empress might have done to make sure his true identity wasn't revealed. At the same time, he was pouring through Sir Blood Dust's memories to find information about the western Devilbirds.

*The western Devilbirds have twenty-one Imperial Sovereign mountains. The strongest is the second. After that come the first, the third, and the seventeenth. The empress said to swap pointers. In that case, the most suitable first challenge will be...*

Xu Qing looked north. That was where the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain was located.

*That direction. As for how the empress is planning to keep my identity a secret, the most likely explanation....*

Xu Qing rubbed the jade slip the empress had given him. He had assumed that jade slip was to nourish his soul. But now that he thought about it, it seemed highly likely that it was a special item that the empress had prepared for him to keep his true identity a secret.

Convinced that this assessment was correct, he unhesitatingly shot toward the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain. He accelerated to top speed, causing a sonic boom to echo out. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he caught sight of the towering mountain up ahead.

As he closed in, he spoke in a thunderous voice that slammed into the mountain.

"I am Sir Blood Dust, subordinate of the tenth Imperial Sovereign of the eastern Devilbirds. I hereby challenge the Smoldering Gods of the western Devilbirds' seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain!"

The response to his words was a cold snort that echoed out from the seventeenth mountain.

"Chen Fei, you go crush this kid!"[2]

Obviously, the local Imperial Sovereigns had all heard what the empress said to Xu Qing earlier. Since Lu Lingzi wasn't personally making challenges, but was sending a subordinate out as a champion... then all they had to do was crush the subordinate, and Lu Lingzi would have no way to get out of fighting.

Even as the cold snort still echoed in the air, someone flew out from the mountain. It was a burly middle-aged cultivator whose cultivation base fluctuations were that of a seven-world Smoldering

God. He glittered with dazzling light as he flew out, clasped hands respectfully to the mountain, then turned to look sharply at Xu Qing. Then he advanced at top speed. Seven major worlds erupted with power, creating a terrifying pressure.

At the same time, Xu Qing casually lifted his right hand, extended it in the direction of this Chen Fei, and then closed his fingers into a fist. His sound authority swept out.

The sound around Chen Fei became a deadly attack that swept him up. It was like a huge sphere around him in which all the sound waves became deadly ripples. Chen Fei's face fell and his heart started pounding. However, what he saw wasn't a sound attack. Instead, it was a host of shocking blood-red sealing marks. The blood seals pulsed with a gory sensation, as well as extraordinary power. And they made him feel very uneasy. In the blink of an eye, he lost the initiative.

At that moment of crisis, his seven major worlds surged with light, and at the same time, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Astonishingly, within his seven worlds, seven gruish statues appeared, each different from the other. Then all of them burst into motion, emerging from the worlds to attack Xu Qing with deadly force.

Xu Qing's face was completely expressionless as he looked at the seven statues. Then, astonishingly, he vanished into the sound, only to reappear right behind Chen Fei.

Two types of authority glittered in his eyes. Looking at Chen Fei's karma threads, he stirred the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures. Karma clamped down onto life, and the emotions went wild. It was a mental attack.

Next came the profound sun immortal light in the form of a huge sun rising above his sea of consciousness. It cast boundless light and heat that surrounded Chen Fei and then crushed down on him.

Rumbling booms rose into the sky as the authority of sound caused Chen Fei to lose any chance of fighting back. He staggered, and before he could even make a move, found that he was seriously injured by the profound sun immortal light. An instant later, he slammed into the ground below.

Xu Qing raced after him, clenching his hand into a fist that he slammed into Chen Fei's chest, worsening his injuries.

All of this takes a bit of time to describe, but actually happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off a piece of flint.

What was more, when Xu Qing unleashed his godly authority and cultivator authority, the jade slip the empress had given him surreptitiously worked behind the scenes to disguise the true nature of what he was doing. His authority of sound became blood sealing marks. His cultivator authority became a daoist magic. The sun of immortal light became a secret technique.

The fact that the fight ended so quickly caused the cultivators who had been watching the fight to feel shaken to the core. All of them were struck speechless.

Thinking back to what the empress had asked of him, Xu Qing hovered in the air looking down at Chen Fei.

“You... are too weak.” Then he launched a kick that sent Chen Fei flying back to the Imperial Sovereign mountain. “Are there any other Smoldering Gods in this mountain who want to fight?”

Chen Fei wanted to speak up. He had other assets at his disposal, and was convinced that his defeat was the result of some minor slip-up. However, his injuries from his fall were so severe that when he opened his mouth to speak, blood sprayed out.

At the same time, a grim voice spoke from the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain. “I’d hoped to avoid looking like a bully. But since you asked for this, Sir Blood Dust... I suppose I have no choice other than to crush you.”

An aura far more terrifying than Chen Fei’s erupted from the mountain, accompanied by an old man. He had scarlet hair, and pulsed with a nine-world aura. That aura came from the worlds that floated behind him. It was an energy that made this old man feel very much like an actual god.

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered slightly. He actually wasn’t confident at all in his ability to defeat a nine-world Smoldering God. Looking at the cultivator, he shook his head.

“You’re not a match for me either. But since you’re the one who brought up bullying, I’ll just stand here and let you unleash three moves on me. If you can hurt me, then you win.”

Xu Qing landed on the ground, clasped his hands behind his back, and looked at the old man.

1. Presumably most readers of wuxia and xianxia know this, but just in case there are some out there who don’t, whenever you hear something like “swap pointers” or “exchange advice” or something like that in a context like this, it’s usually referring to going out and challenging people to fight. Because the two parties are “swapping pointers,” it’s obviously not supposed to be a duel to the death, but rather, a quasi-friendly match, almost like sparring, to see who is stronger or better. Of course, it could be that the person issuing such challenges has ulterior motives and will push things beyond the level of a friendly match. But the presupposition is that it’s not a death duel. ㊦

2. Chen Fei: Minor spoilers, but probably no surprise, that this character isn’t really important. However, what is interesting is that he bears the exact same name as a minor character from *A Will Eternal*, someone who first appeared in chapter 12 of that novel. No, they’re not supposed to be the same character. Just the same name. What’s more, the characters are the same exact characters as the first two from the character Chen Feiyuan of this novel. ㊦

*Deathblade’s Thoughts*

*This chapter was 1,000 characters longer than normal.*

## Chapter 1046: The SOB Gets Famous

There wasn’t much Xu Qing could do. Normally speaking, he wasn’t the type of person who would act in this manner. But right now... he was acting on orders from the empress. The empress had hinted to him that he should make a big scene, and considering how much shē had helped him, he couldn’t refuse. Therefore, all he could do was do his best to act and speak in the way his Eldest

Brother would. That was what led to his words from earlier, as well as his current prideful attitude.

All onlookers couldn't help but think of him as being lofty and unyielding. It could even be considered arrogant!

He stood at the foot of the Imperial Sovereign mountain, his hands clasped behind his back, looking completely and utterly domineering. This was all despite being up against an almighty nine-world Smoldering God expert.

An instant later, the cultivators in the mountain angrily flew up into the air and stared down at him.

Given the pressure weighing down on him, Xu Qing kept his guard up in every respect. However, he didn't reveal that on his face. In fact, he actually closed his eyes.

The nine-world Smoldering God barked an angry laugh. "Excellent. Excellent!"

Xu Qing's dramatic words and behavior caused the old man's eyes to glitter coldly. It wasn't that he had never encountered brash people like this in his life. He had. And all of them had ended up as corpses.

Seeing that Xu Qing had gone so far as to close his eyes, the nine-world Smoldering God lifted his right hand, then dropped it. Instantly, the dome of heaven changed colors, the lands rumbled, and a screaming wind kicked up. The moment his hand dropped, a huge hand appeared behind him, so large it filled the sky. And then it moved forward, passing through the man and... rumbling directly toward Xu Qing.

The palm strike contained the power of a nine-world Smoldering God, fully unleashed. It was a destructive power that could destroy the heavens and extinguish the earth, something that was capable of shattering natural and magical laws. Even the air shattered.

It headed right toward Xu Qing. The wild winds kicked up Xu Qing's hair and robes, yet his closed eyes didn't even flutter. As the palm descended, heaven and earth trembled.

Then, as everyone watched on intently, black fire erupted around Xu Qing, which rapidly spread out beneath his feet to form a black lotus. As it bloomed, countless flower petals of fire spread out, with Xu Qing being at the very center. That lotus of black fire created a perfect defensive barrier around him.

The massive palm hit it. Deafening rumbling sounds echoed out. The black lotus continued to burn, and its flower rotated gently, like a dance. Inside, Xu Qing's hair didn't even stir. However, his eyes finally opened.

"You get two more moves," he said coolly.

Up above, the old man's eyes hardened. All of the cultivators on the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain were visibly surprised. It wasn't just any ordinary person that could withstand an attack from a nine-world Smoldering God. The only type of person who could was someone incredibly strong.

That was especially true considering... that some of the more knowledgeable among them realized that this black lotus was something familiar to them. It was something they had read about.

Before long, someone realized what it was, and they cried out, “That’s the Netherlotus technique! It’s a secret defensive magic used by Grand Emperor Netherflame of the eastern Devilbirds!”

As that voice reached the ears of everyone else, people began to think back to ancient records they had read, and the various stories they contained about Grand Emperor Netherflame.

“Sir Blood Dust actually knows *that* secret magic!”

“No wonder Imperial Sovereign Lu Lingzi brought him along!”

“And now it makes sense why Sir Blood Dust is acting so brazen!”

As the crowd reacted, Xu Qing stood in place, his eyes closed. Up in midair, the nine-world Smoldering God frowned. He had heard of the Netherlotus, and knew that it was a secret magic that provided astonishing levels of defense. Eyes narrowing, he suddenly threw both hands out and performed an incantation gesture. Instantly, nine major worlds appeared behind him, scintillating brilliantly as massive mountains rose up within them.

There were nine mountain peaks, all of them transforming from illusory to corporeal. Emerging from their respective worlds, they became like a string of beads that influenced the surrounding magical laws, and caused thunder and lightning to go wild. The old man pointed out with each of his index fingers, and the nine mountain peaks screamed toward Xu Qing.

However, before that second attack could land, the old man touched his forehead with his right hand, whereupon his nine major worlds rumbled again. From within, countless magical and natural laws emerged, all of which were daos the old man had gained enlightenment of in his life.

When they were in the open, he shouted, “Use daos to make the tip!”

The daos converged, transforming into the tip of an enormous spear!

The man continued speaking in a growl. “Use worlds to make the haft!”

The nine major worlds lined up in a row, and from a distance, they looked like the haft of a spear!

“Use burning magics to form the tassel!” he roared. Countless magical techniques erupted, creating a multicolored glow that surrounded the spear haft like a tassel.

Finally, the old man’s eyes glittered with killing intent as he shoved his hands out. The massive spear then shot through the air toward Xu Qing. The old man was planning to unleash his second daoist technique and his third divine ability at the same time. He was hoping to use that method to break through the legendary Netherlotus.

Countless spectators watched as the nine mountains slammed into Xu Qing. They looked enormous, but they shrank down as they neared him, ultimately turning into nine enormous swords that slammed into the lotus of netherflame. It was mountain-toppling force and sea-draining momentum.

Xu Qing shivered. At the same time, the Netherlotus flickered, and the flames danced. However, not even the nine mountain peaks turned into razor-sharp swords could do a thing to Xu Qing. The Netherlotus' flames burst upward, and the nine mountain-swords went from being corporeal to illusory. Then they disappeared.

However, that was when the terrifying spear pierced through the air toward Xu Qing's head. The tip of the spear glowed brightly, becoming an apex manifestation of explosive strength. Intense rumbling sounds became like an attack of its own.

In the face of this attack, Xu Qing couldn't just stand in place. He fell back. As he did so, the terrifying spear advanced like a boulder crushing a drinking glass.

Xu Qing's eyes widened, and he prepared to lift his hand to defend himself. Unfortunately, the spear was too fast. Before he could move his hand, it stabbed into his chest. The spear tip shoved him back farther.

30 meters. 300 meters. 1,500 meters. After each retreat came another retreat. The spear tip seemed unstoppable, and yet, it couldn't actually penetrate Xu Qing's fleshly body. After falling back a full 3,000 meters, the spear's momentum died down, and Xu Qing came to a halt.

Then, the spear tip in his chest vibrated and emitted cracking sounds. After that, it started shattering. It started from the tip, spreading backward into the haft, until the entire spear... collapsed into pieces.

The power of the spear was that of a peak Smoldering God. However, it was not at the level of an Imperial Sovereign.

As the wind blew across the lands, Xu Qing said, "It's over."

Silence reigned.

The nine-world Smoldering God looked down at Xu Qing with a complicated expression. A moment passed, and then he shook his head, turned, and went back to the mountain.

Xu Qing advanced. Quickly crossing back 3,000 meters, he reached the foot of the Imperial Sovereign mountain. There, he stepped onto the staircase, where he sat down cross-legged and looked up the mountain.

Thinking back to how his Eldest Brother would usually act, he said, "I'm going to sit here for the next three days. If anyone under an Imperial Sovereign can break my defenses without using an Imperial Sovereign treasure, then I'll admit defeat."

No one on the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain said a thing. If a nine-world Smoldering God couldn't break Xu Qing's defenses, then the only thing other Smoldering Gods could feel was helplessness. Attacking him again would be pointless.

There was more than one nine-world Smoldering God on this mountain. But given what had just played out, it didn't seem like 'Sir Blood Dust' could inflict dangerous injuries. But his defenses were just too extreme. If they could take a page from 'Sir Blood Dust's' book, and just sit there waiting to be attacked, maybe they could come out on top. But 'Sir Blood Dust' was already doing

that, which put them in a no-win situation. Anyone with a higher cultivation base than Sir Blood Dust would be forced to admit their inferiority, and nobody wanted to do that....

Considering the cultivation base disparity, it was obvious that Sir Blood Dust couldn't break *their* defenses. That made sense. But they would have to rely on sneaky tricks to achieve victory... which would be the same thing as losing. The loss of face would be too severe.

Most importantly, this only seemed like a contest between cultivators. The reality was that it was a struggle between the Imperial Sovereigns of the eastern and western Devilbirds.

The Imperial Sovereign mountain remained silent.

Three days passed.

The western Devilbirds were really riled up by now.

Xu Qing opened his eyes and stood. Then, as all the cultivators on the mountain looked on, he left without a word for the sixteenth Imperial Sovereign mountain.

When he arrived at the sixteenth mountain, the cultivators there glared at him antagonistically. Xu Qing, meanwhile, just sat down on the staircase.

“You know how this is going to work. I'm going to sit here for the next three days. If anyone under an Imperial Sovereign can break my defenses without using an Imperial Sovereign treasure, then I'll admit defeat.”

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Three days later he shook his head and left. During that time, quite a few cultivators had attacked him. All of them met defeat. In the end, they chose to imitate the seventeenth mountain and just bite their tongue.

Xu Qing went to the fifteenth mountain, sat down, and made the same challenge. He continued in that manner, spending three days at each mountain. About half a month later, he reached the tenth Imperial Sovereign mountain. By that point, people throughout the western Devilbird lands had heard of Sir Blood Dust.

Everyone knew his name. He was the focus of all attention.

At the same time, news finally got back to the eastern Devilbirds. The cultivators there were very excited, and many of them crossed the border into western Devilbird lands to watch things play out.

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In the lands of the eastern Devilbirds, in the Immortal Skills Hall, 'Yue Dong' sat cross-legged in a hall. The reek of blood was just barely detectable from outside. Before long, footsteps echoed out, and Yue Dong's beautiful eyes focused on the outside.

A young man in a fancy robe appeared there, his face full of emotion. He held a severed head in his hands.

After reaching Yue Dong, he softly said, “Dong’er, this scuzzball dared to call your identity into question. I got rid of him for you. Don’t worry. With me around, nobody among the eastern Devilbirds will dare harm you.

“However... something unexpected happened. Do you remember that Sir Blood Dust? I guess it’s my fault that you failed to kill that son of a bitch. I interrupted just at the wrong time. Ai.

“Who could have guessed that the little bitch would actually stumble into a destined opportunity! He became an attendant of the tenth Imperial Sovereign! And he went to the western Devilbird lands, where the beeotch is actually making a name for himself! Argh! But, don’t worry. I’ll definitely help you kill the bitchy son of a bitch!”

The young man seemed very sincere.

As for Yue Dong, she blinked a few times in surprise. She had already received help to seize power in the Immortal Skills Hall, and thus, had started studying the important immortal skills. As a result, she was completely ignorant of events among the western Devilbirds. Upon hearing the news, Yue Dong’s heart started pounding.

*Little Ah Qing actually started rolling with the empress? And he’s gotten famous already?*

Upon thinking about his little Junior Brother eclipsing him, Erniu took a deep breath. All of a sudden he felt a lot of pressure, and at the same time, quite a bit of humiliation.

*Hold on, you’re hogging things already? I can’t believe the two of them teamed up and left me behind!*

## Chapter 1047: It’s So Cool Under the Tiger’s Skin

Xu Qing had no way of knowing how forlorn Erniu felt. For the past half a month, he had been dutifully carrying out the empress’ orders. He had challenged all of the Smoldering Gods among the western Devilbirds. Of course, his challenges didn’t involve fighting them. They involved defending against them.

As that half of a month went by, word spread far and wide about Sir Blood Dust being able to use the Netherlotus secret magic of Grand Emperor Netherflame. As a result, Sir Blood Dust became well and truly famous in the Devilbird holy land.

Some people were a bit suspicious about how he acquired Grand Emperor Netherflame’s secret magic. But then they considered that he was Lu Lingzi’s attendant, and the only person Lu Lingzi had brought to the western Devilbirds. Given that, it seemed obvious that the secret magic must have been given to him by Lu Lingzi.

Xu Qing continued with his challenges. He went from the ninth Imperial Sovereign mountain to the eighth. Then he proceeded toward the seventh.

There were a lot of cultivators gathered by the seventh mountain, most of them western Devilbirds, although there was also a contingent from the east. When Xu Qing arrived, it caused quite a commotion. Some people denounced him, others welcomed him joyously. Either way, there was quite a buzz. Of course, that made quite a contrast to the mountain itself, which was dead silent.

Everyone watched as Xu Qing approached the mountain itself. He said the same thing as before, then sat down cross-legged at the bottom of the staircase, his defenses active as he waited for someone to meet his challenge. This time, things went differently than from before.

Given all the public discussion about the matter, there were some Smoldering Gods who, whether of their own volition or because they were following veiled suggestions, finally chose to break the rules and do something. The time had come to end this outright humiliation of the western Devilbirds.

Almost exactly as Xu Qing sat down, a cold snort echoed out from the seventh Imperial Sovereign mountain.

“Enough of your arrogance, Sir Blood Dust!”

A figure appeared, shooting from the top of the mountain down toward Xu Qing. He looked like a young man, and he had seven major worlds glittering radiantly around him. They created a mountain-toppling, sea-draining pressure that could crush anything in its path, and it was weighing down right on Xu Qing.

The young man didn’t hesitate for a moment. Eyes glittering coldly, he lifted his right hand and pushed it toward Xu Qing. A huge palm formed in front of him, filling the sky. It also descended toward Xu Qing. Although this was a Smoldering God palm attack, it was actually very different from the palm attack that the other Smoldering God cultivator had used on Xu Qing some time back. It was much more clearly visible, with obvious palm prints on it. There wasn’t anything about it that could be said to be blurry. And most importantly, it had natural and magical laws that were exponentially more terrifying than any Xu Qing had encountered.

Most astonishing... was that it contained fluctuations of authority! They were gruish fluctuations, and though they were clearly coming from the seven-world young man, if you looked closely, you would realize that the true origin was the palm. Astonishingly, visible on the palm was a diaphanous glove.

It was... an Imperial Sovereign treasure! What was more, it pulsed with power that surpassed that of an Imperial Sovereign!

A Smoldering God would obviously have to pay a high price to get such a treasure. Yet right now, the seven-world young man’s eyes shone with determination as he seemingly threw caution to the wind and unleashed all of the power of his cultivation base to activate the glove.

The illusory palm erupted with a terrifying aura, crushing everything around it as it bore down on Xu Qing. He slowly opened his eyes and looked at the incoming palm. Inside of him, The Emperor's Sword vibrated. With a thought, he could send it out to slash the palm apart.

But he didn't do that. He had been prepared all along for something like this to happen. He had actually planned for the enemy to break the rules of the challenge at some point. There was no need for him to do a thing. He would be able to handle anyone under an Imperial Sovereign. Besides, Xu Qing was convinced... that the empress actually *wanted* someone to attack him with Imperial Sovereign power. The challenges he had been making were really just the introduction to the main event.

The empress had come to the western Devilbirds to see Grand Emperor Devilbird. However, the Grand Emperor was taking his time agreeing to the meeting, and obviously, was using the opportunity to probe for information.

Maybe the Grand Emperor would make the empress wait for a day. Maybe a month. Maybe indefinitely. That was why the empress hadn't chosen to accept challenges from other Imperial Sovereigns, but rather, gave the responsibility to Xu Qing. That was because... the empress didn't like being in a passive position. Shē liked having the initiative. How to make a move. When to make a move. The methods and rationale behind making a move. Shē liked to be in control of such things. All of this was for the purpose of getting Grand Emperor Devilbird to issue orders for a meeting.

Xu Qing could pick up on all of these clues. And the western Devilbirds weren't fools, so they likely could reach the same conclusion as him. Therefore, after this cultivator appeared with an Imperial Sovereign treasure, it wasn't necessarily possible to tell immediately whether he had ill intentions or not. There was the distinct possibility... that an Imperial Sovereign was actually behind this. Perhaps that Imperial Sovereign was actually helping the empress, by providing a reason for her to take the initiative.

When the hand with the Imperial Sovereign glove was only about 300 meters away from Xu Qing, the palm shivered and lurched to a halt in midair. Then, just as Xu Qing had predicted would happen, Lu Lingzi appeared right beneath that palm. With a slight wave of his hand, he completely dispelled the power of the attack.

Everything went silent. Xu Qing stood and bowed to Lu Lingzi. The seven-world young man was inwardly relieved, and quickly inclined his head and bowed.

The gaze of Lu Lingzi looked at the Imperial Sovereign mountain ahead, and though he didn't say anything, a great pressure began to build up in the area.

All of a sudden, a majestic figure materialized atop the mountain. It was an old woman with cold eyes that were currently fixed on Lu Lingzi. The ground trembled.

Two types of Imperial Sovereign power pulsed from those auras and gazes. And when they clashed, the air shattered, causing rifts to open up everywhere, and sending screaming winds out into a huge vortex. Innumerable bits of rubble floated up into the air, and the Imperial Sovereign mountain rocked back and forth.

The confrontation immediately attracted the attention of the other Imperial Sovereigns in the west. Numerous streams of divine will surged into the area, further increasing the space-time chaos. Threads of natural and magical laws appeared and shattered constantly. A stifling sensation weighed down on all of the cultivators present, who were shaken to the core.

Then, the empress spoke with Lu Lingzi's voice. "Sir Blood Dust, produce the command medallion I gave you."

Xu Qing immediately complied and held the medallion overhead. The empress waved a hand, causing the medallion to release a bit of Imperial Sovereign aura. Everyone could immediately sense that the medallion contained the might of an Imperial Sovereign.

"Did you ever use that medallion when exchanging pointers with the western Devilbirds?" shē asked.

Xu Qing didn't hesitate to respond, "Never."

"Did you kill anyone when exchanging pointers?" shē continued.

Xu Qing shook his head. "I just tried to quickly determine who would achieve victory and who would be defeated. I never put anyone in danger."

The empress' gaze shifted to the seventh Imperial Sovereign mountain. Sounding very cold, shē said, "This competition between western and eastern Devilbirds was merely an exchange of pointers between members of the same species. Just as our ancient teachings assert, there must be fairness and balance in all things.

"Sir Blood Dust had an Imperial Sovereign treasure, but never used it. Exchanging pointers is about determining victory or defeat. It's not about a duel to the death. With the exception of the first fight, Sir Blood Dust never even made a move on anyone.

"However, the western Devilbirds secretly prepared an Imperial Sovereign treasure to use. Had I not personally interfered, it's entirely likely Sir Blood Dust would have lost his life. What's the meaning of this? Why did you possibly treat a fellow member of your species in such a ruthless way?"

The streams of divine will from the other Imperial Sovereigns seemed to go still. Lu Lingzi's words had really caused the atmosphere to become tense. That was when a calm voice drifted down.

"Come to my dao altar to see me, Lu Lingzi."

The chaos in space-time was quelled. The collapsing natural and magical laws went back to normal. The tense atmosphere faded away. All of the Imperial Sovereigns revealed themselves as shadowy projections and quickly bowed to the wing-shaped dao altar off in the distance.

The words that had just been spoken came from Grand Emperor Devilbird.

The empress looked up with a very calm expression, then took a step forward. Shē had achieved her objective.

The Imperial Sovereigns all exchanged glances, then dissipated. The old woman who had come out from the seventh Imperial Sovereign mountain also disappeared. The only person left behind was the young man who had attacked Xu Qing. He clasped hands, bowed to Xu Qing, then turned and left.

Xu Qing remained behind at the foot of the mountain. He had done his job and didn't need to make any more challenges.

*So now what...?*

A thought occurred to him.

*I'm here in the lands of the western Devilbirds, and have the empress backing me up. I caused a bit of a stir just now. Given how things have played out, I suppose... there's a certain location I ought to explore.*

He hadn't forgotten the information his Eldest Brother had given him about the two Immortal Skills Halls in the Devilbird holy land.

*Five Dogs Six Thieves....*

He had already mastered Six Thieves Deceive Life, which came from the eastern Devilbirds. As for Five Dogs Cleave Immortals, it came from the western Devilbirds. Normally speaking, studying it in detail would be extremely difficult. But now....

*Given how famous the empress has become, and considering the reputation I've built in the last half month, I might as well go take a look!*

After making some plans to ensure that he didn't slip up and reveal his true identity, he flew up into the air. As the numerous cultivators in the area looked on, he flew off into the distance.

He was heading... in the direction of the western Devilbirds' Immortal Skills Hall! It wasn't very far from the seventh Imperial Sovereign mountain, and was located in a lake called Immortal Cleaving. The lake was pitch black, while the Immortal Skills Hall was crafted from pure white stone. It was exquisitely constructed, and cast flowing light in all directions. The contrast it created with the lake made for a very grisly sense of peace.

At the moment, there were a few hundred cultivators seated on the surface of the lake. They included men and women, old and young. All of them wore white clothing and had their eyes closed as they practiced cultivation. The fluctuations of an immortal skill were very prominent.

When Xu Qing arrived, he realized immediately that these people were the immortal adepts of the western Devilbirds!

His arrival did not attract any notice. After looking around, he focused on the pure white Immortal Skills Hall in the middle of the lake. Clasping hands, he bowed.

"I am Sir Blood Dust," he said, "here representing an Imperial Sovereign to take a look at Five Dogs Cleave Immortals!"

# Chapter 1048: Gruish Immortal Skill

## Chapter 1048: Gruish Immortal Skill

Atop the black lake were the white-robed immortal adepts, seated cross-legged as they pursued enlightenment. None moved, and none reacted at all to Xu Qing's arrival. The white Immortal Skills Hall was just as still and silent.

Xu Qing hefted his Imperial Sovereign command medallion as he hovered in midair for about three breaths of time. Then, his face completely calm, he said, "Before being summoned to meet Grand Emperor Devilbird, my Imperial Sovereign emphasized to me that, since he sadly couldn't come in person, I should represent him to visit the Immortal Skills Hall. My task is to commit to memory everything that I can study, so that I can explain the details to him later.

"If the Immortal Skills Hall doesn't mind, then I, Sir Blood Dust, will seek enlightenment on my own. As for the Imperial Sovereign, he will come back at a later date."

Having said that, Xu Qing kept his gaze fixed on the Immortal Skills Hall. He knew that he couldn't just casually barge into a place like this. If calling on the name of Lu Lingzi didn't get him inside, then he would have to think of some other strategy to gain entrance. After all, him coming here was a clear case of *taking action when borrowing a tiger's skin*.

What was more, Lu Lingzi had made his reasons for coming very clear at the seventh Imperial Sovereign mountain. It was that event, plus the fact that Lu Lingzi had seized the initiative, which resulted in him being summoned by the Grand Emperor. As a result, all of the top experts among the western Devilbirds had a fairly good understanding of this new Imperial Sovereign.

Therefore, it was no surprise that, after a long moment passed... the main entrance of the Immortal Skills Hall slowly opened. A young man and woman walked out, both of them clad in long, white robes. In the lead was the man, who was quite handsome. He was followed by the woman, who was very beautiful. The moment they appeared, the immortal adepts all opened their eyes and bowed their heads respectfully.

Xu Qing looked at them.

The young man looked up at Xu Qing.

"Normally speaking, no one may seek enlightenment of immortal skills other than immortal adepts. But since you're here on the orders of an Imperial Sovereign, we will give you a special, one-time authorization. That said, anyone who seeks to learn immortal skills must first experience five deadly tribulations. You might live through them, or you might die.

"Pick a spot anywhere on Immortal Cleaving Lake, sink down beneath the water, and wait for the five tribulations. That will be your chance to study the immortal skill."

The young man stopped speaking and stared coldly at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he looked down at Immortal Cleaving Lake.

“What’s wrong,” the young man asked coolly. “Scared?”

Xu Qing studied his surroundings. Then, a moment later, he shot down to the lake, settled onto the surface, then sank beneath the water.

When he was gone, the surrounding immortal adepts exchanged glances. Some of them shook their heads. Some of them sneered.

“This Sir Blood Dust must be feeling suicidal.”

“It’s impossible to say how many people have been buried at the bottom of the lake after failing to pass the five tribulations. Even if he somehow manages to stay alive, he won’t succeed at the task.”

With that, everyone looked away and paid no further heed to what was happening. Although Sir Blood Dust had become very famous lately, the people here were more concerned with gaining enlightenment of their immortal skill.

As for the young man who had come out of the Immortal Skills Hall, he continued to sneer. In contrast, the young woman seemed apprehensive.

“Elder Brother, our Master went wandering and hasn’t returned. And that new Imperial Sovereign from the eastern Devilbirds has really taken the spotlight lately. What’s more, this Sir Blood Dust is an extraordinary individual who made a name for himself in the last half a month. Someone like that, with a background like he has, should really just be allowed to study our immortal skill. Is there really a need to make him go through such a dangerous trial? [1]

“Immortal Cleaving Lake contains the Five Dogs Heavenly World. People who go in there rarely come out alive, and even if they do, they don’t ever succeed at gaining enlightenment. After all... gaining enlightenment of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals requires a special ceremony.” She sighed.

The young man’s eyes were just as cold as before. “I warned him of the danger. Everyone here bore witness. He went in despite knowing all that. I didn’t force him. If he wants to court death, it has nothing to do with me.”

With that, he flicked his sleeve and walked back into the Immortal Skills Hall.

The young woman looked at the surface of the lake and shook her head. She knew that it was pointless to say anything further, and thus, she simply went back to the Immortal Skills Hall.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was under the surface of Immortal Cleaving Lake. So far, he hadn’t noticed anything unusual. The water was pitch black, but it didn’t contain mutagen. Instead, there was something lively about it. However, it restricted divine will, making it impossible for someone to use divine will to see the whole lake at one time.

After taking a moment to check his surroundings, Xu Qing sent his divine will out to search the area. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, his gaze hardened.

By means of divine will, he had noticed that there were a host of corpses on the bottom of the lake.... The more he looked around, the more corpses he saw. In the end, he came to the conclusion that there were several thousand of them. They included the bodies of men and women, old and

young. All had their eyes open, and those eyes were pure white. So was their skin and hair. As for the looks on their faces, they were gruish expressions that were strange mixtures of crying and laughter.

What was more, Xu Qing realized that there was a huge magical symbol on the bottom of the lake. It was white, and it took up more than half of the lake. It pulsed with an ancient sensation, and what was most strange of all was the fact that... the corpses were part of it.

Xu Qing looked at it for a while. Then he approached cautiously. As he got close, he examined it with divine will, taking in the entire thing a few times over. He did not gain any enlightenment from doing so. After about ten breaths of time passed, his eyes shone with determination.

Continuing to get even closer, he ultimately stepped onto the symbol. When he did, he shivered mentally. Feeling like he was sinking, he watched as his vision blurred. When it cleared again, he wasn't on the lake floor.

He was in the sky! It was blue and full of fluffy white clouds. Down beneath him, there was no land. Instead, there was a 300-meter wide white thread that snaked off into the distance. It looked almost like a white hair that was countless times larger than normal.

Xu Qing didn't blindly take action. Instead, he sent his divine will out to examine the white thread. It didn't take much observation for him to realize that the white thread was actually made up of magical symbols. Each of them looked exactly alike. It was the very same magical symbol from the bottom of the lake.

*This has to relate to the 'five tribulations' that the young man was talking about. He obviously didn't have good intentions. However... I'm here, so I shouldn't let some malicious intentions get in my way.*

He didn't immediately start walking along the white thread. Instead, he looked at it, all while the authority of Six Thieves Deceive Life glittered in his eyes.

*It is not possible to live eternally thanks to the six thieves that deceive life. The eyes deceive sight. The ears deceive hearing. The nose deceives smelling. The mouth deceives taste. The body deceives labor. The mind deceives thought. Thus, all is lost.*

His dao lineament stirred as the Six Thieves immortal skill arose within him. Threads of the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures spread out around him.

*Six Thieves and Five Dogs. Together as one....*

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he started walking along the white thread. Thanks to the Six Thieves authority, he could sense everything around him clearly. Meanwhile, the information his Eldest Brother had given him about Five Dogs Cleave Immortals swirled in his mind.

*The five dogs are stinginess, greed, foolishness, depravity, and austerity.*

*The inability to abandon things. That is called stinginess. Having insatiable desire. That is called greed. Renouncing the rules of life. That is called foolishness. Arguing without understanding the*

*facts. That is called depravity. Renouncing the three paths of hell before attaining lifelessness. That is called austerity.*

*As for the seven banes and eight evils, Yue Dong and her Junior Sister didn't really understand them.*

*This particular immortal skill can be summed up in this way... the stingy dog cleaves to a place and loses treasure; the greedy dog cleaves to a place and is bound; the foolish dog cleaves to a place and falls into death; the depraved dog cleaves to a place and falls into hell; the austere dog cleaves to a place and forever loses the body.*

He thought while sensing, while advancing. However, at a certain point, he stopped walking. The threads of the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures around him were vibrating violently, almost as if to block his path. Except... there was nothing in front of him. A moment later, those threads went back to normal.

Keeping his guard up, he looked around. Yet no matter how he studied his surroundings, he couldn't find anything out of the ordinary. After confirming that there was nothing blocking his path, he frowned and then kept moving. After taking only three steps, his expression darkened.

*No. Six Thieves Deceive Life creates threads of the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures. I can't be experiencing this sensation for no reason. So what's the problem here...?*

His frown deepened, and he put more thought into the situation. However, nothing occurred to him. Unfortunately, the uneasy sensation wouldn't go away. Instead of continuing on his way, he stayed put and thought back to everything he had done up to this point.

That was when he realized that the strange reaction from the threads of the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures actually came when he thought about the information his Eldest Brother had given him.

He immediately thought back to those same things. A moment later, his gaze sharpened.

*There's something wrong with those memories of mine....*

There was something strange about them, yet he couldn't put his finger on exactly what it was. Therefore, it was without any hesitation that he opened the eye of Hellfei! That eye could penetrate illusory obstacles!

The moment he opened the eye, he realized what was going on. In his memories, Yue Dong had a Junior Sister. But the real Yue Dong *didn't* have a Junior Sister![2]

Lan Yao wasn't actually Yue Dong's Junior Sister!

However, that Junior Sister obscured Xu Qing's sensations, merging with them and becoming part of his memories. In fact, she even pierced all of the memory images he had of Yue Dong. When he thought back to meeting Feng Lintao, Lan Yao, and Yue Dong for the first time, his memories contained a clear image of a fourth person. Yue Dong's Junior Sister. Later, when he and his Eldest Brother captured Yue Dong, they also took her Junior Sister captive. However, because of the soulsearch, Yue Dong's Junior Sister ended up dying.

That memory caused Xu Qing's pupils to constrict. He was sure that this memory was real. And yet, Hellfei's eye was telling him something else. It was telling him that the memory came from somewhere else!

*In that case, who exactly put a memory of Yue Dong's Junior Sister into me?*

His expression became even more grim as he realized that, even though Hellfei's eye was telling him that the memory was false, he actually couldn't get rid of it. Eyes flashing coldly, he activated the godly authority of fate within him.

It turned into a carving knife that could pierce fate. And with that knife, he slashed at the memory of Yue Dong's Junior Sister. A loud crunching sound rang out. The image of the Junior Sister shattered.

And yet, Xu Qing's heart only continued to sink. And that was because, the moment the image of Yue Dong's Junior Sister shattered, that memory became a withered white hair that connected to half of his other memories. It seemed to just spread through countless other memories. It was a very gruish sight and sensation.

It was like looking at a completed painting, only to look closer and find that a bunch of white hairs had been dropped into it. That was when one of the descriptions of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals echoed in his mind.

*The inability to abandon things. That is called stinginess... the stingy dog cleaves to a place and loses treasure.*

These white hairs were like a door being opened in a sealed secret chamber.

The door was circular. When it opened, white light spilled out. It was like a white eyeball.

The stingy dog... cleaves to a place!

1. The 'wandering' being done by the Master isn't just random wandering. The specific word in Chinese is the word used to describe the type of wandering that monks would do for religious purposes. 游

2. Erniu originally described the Five Dogs skill in [chapter 1033](#). In that chapter, the wording is slightly different, and there is no mention of the Junior Sister. 游

## Chapter 1049: A Grateful Heart

Living beings can be viewed as a collective, but can also be viewed as individuals. The same can be said of both mortals and cultivators.

Take, for example, mortals. Mortals had souls in their bodies, as well as physical meridians that formed a self-contained network designed to keep out harmful outside influences. That, in turn, helped to prevent illnesses and other mortal dangers.

Cultivators were similar. They had bodies bolstered by spirit energy, and the cycles and operations of their bodies were governed by various natural rules. Depending on the cultivation base and life level of a cultivator, their cycles and operations would reach increasing levels of perfection. After reaching a certain point, it would be virtually impossible for another person to find weaknesses to exploit, and the cultivator's defenses would be able to resist all outside forces. The only way to kill a cultivator like that was to be far stronger than them, and wipe them out quickly and decisively. But a cultivator with a similar cultivation base would need some special method to defeat them.

That was one of the reasons why immortal skills had been created to begin with. Generally speaking, immortal skills were designed to be gruish and extraordinary. They were supposed to be used to get past an opponent's defenses with the goal of killing them decisively.

Meanwhile, human nature was complicated and incorporeal. And that meant that it was one of the main targets that many immortal skills would hone in on as a weakness.

That was the case with Six Thieves Deceive Life. It contained the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures expressed as forms of will. That will would form an attractant that could reverse cyclical patterns, penetrate defenses, and allow for killing blows. As for Five Dogs Cleave Immortals, it actually emphasized the will of temperament.

The word cleave could be used in the sense of 'cleaving to' a place. For instance, the soul would cleave to the body that it inhabited. That was why this technique was most commonly thought to be a possession magic.

However, there was another meaning to it. After all, it was also possible to cleave *from* something. And that meaning was the opposite of possession: letting go.[1]

Unfortunately, most people couldn't let go of things easily. That was the origin of the saying used to describe the immortal skill.

The concept of cleaving *from* external things was what made it possible to bypass the defenses of an opponent. When that loophole was present, the immortal skill could be used.

As for the memories of Yue Dong's Junior Sister, that was the extraordinary aspect of this immortal skill. Using that aspect, it was possible to conceal something that wouldn't easily be detected. The point was to deceive the subject. And when that thought wasn't detected, it would have time to grow and mature. It was like opening the door of a room that had previously been locked. It involved five breaths of time, and that was the true meaning of 'the stingy dog cleaves to a place.'

Overall, the immortal skill relied on that gruishness to unleash the will of the Five Dogs to surpass the traditional extraordinary ability and turn it into something very deadly. Of course, when talking about 'opening the door' it referred to maliciously invading the enemy.

As for the white eye, it was a manifestation of the greedy will of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals.

*Having insatiable desire. That is called greed. The greedy dog cleaves to a place and is bound.*

A will of greed could restrict the heart and mind. It could bind the body.

The door opened and the white eye appeared. It looked at Xu Qing. At that moment, Xu Qing's mind reeled, and he became vaguely aware that four breaths of time were about to pass. A gruish sealing symbol appeared, starting on the inside and moving outside. The white eye was sealing Xu Qing in place. During those four breaths of time, the sealing mark formed. And if it could not be broken during that time....

*Renouncing the rules of life. That is called foolishness. The foolish dog cleaves to a place and falls into death.*

A white vortex appeared in the middle of Xu Qing's sea of consciousness, without any sound accompanying it. It appeared beneath the white eye, and as it spun, it exerted a force of separation. What was being separated were his fleshly body and soul. After the third breath of time passed, a white mouth appeared in the place of the vortex, which opened wide with boundless evil.

This was....

*Arguing without understanding the facts. That is called depravity. The depraved dog cleaves to a place and falls into hell.*

The white mouth viciously took a bite. It took a bite of his soul! Finally, something appeared around the eye, the vortex, and the mouth. It was the fifth will of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals. It was a white face.

Because of the contrast it provided, the immortal skill of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals was completed in Xu Qing's sea of consciousness. It became... a complete face. It had white hair, and a facial expression... that was smiling, yet not smiling. Crying, yet not crying. It was gruish to the extreme. It began to fuse with Xu Qing's fleshly body.

*Renouncing the three paths of hell before attaining lifelessness. That is called austerity. The austere dog cleaves to a place and forever loses the body.*

Xu Qing's view of the world began to dim. Outside, at the bottom of Immortal Cleaving Lake, a new corpse appeared on the huge white magical symbol made of corpses.

It was none other than Xu Qing. His hair was white, as was his skin. His eyes were also opened, and they glowed with white light. He was now one with the other surrounding corpses. His facial expression resembled theirs as well.

But a moment later, something dramatic happened. Outside of Xu Qing there appeared a host of threads of the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures. The threads pulsed with the immortal skill fluctuations of Six Thieves Deceive Life. Xu Qing had prepared them in advance, and they had now been stimulated to congregate around him.

When they arrived, some of them pierced into Xu Qing's fleshly body, while others went toward the white face. Yet others circled around him, moving round and round until they formed something like a cocoon around him. The cocoon was itself a sealing mark.

As for the white face inside Xu Qing, it was now incapable of emerging into the open.

This was Xu Qing's plan. He wanted to personally experience Five Dogs Cleave Immortals. And though it was astoundingly gruish, he was now feeling fairly confident. And the reason for that confidence was Six Thieves Deceive Life. After all, Five Dogs Cleave Immortals and Six Thieves Deceive Life were fundamentally part of the same immortal skill.

In that manner, time passed.

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Everything at the bottom of Immortal Cleaving Lake was still. Then, all of a sudden, the lake water seemed to stop moving. Two hours passed. That was when cracking sounds came out of the cocoon. They started out faint. But soon they became louder and more frequent. At the same time, the cocoon started to split open. The effects continued until the cocoon exploded.

Xu Qing was revealed. His hair was no longer white. It was back to its usual color. It was the same with his eyes, although they did contain traces of lingering fear.

"This is Five Dogs Cleave Immortals," he murmured.

*This skill is far more gruish than Six Thieves Deceive Life.... Wait, no. That's just because Yue Dong is fundamentally weak, which allowed me to vanquish her version of Six Thieves Deceive Life. The origin of the immortal skill is this sealing mark....*

Xu Qing looked down at the white sealing mark beneath his feet. He could sense that the sealing mark was extremely ancient. In fact, if his speculations were correct, it probably came from the time of Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity. In fact, there was even the possibility that this seal was the original sealing mark of the immortal skill of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals.

*If I hadn't gained control of Six Thieves Deceive Life first, and turned it into a dao lineament of authority completely belonging to me, then it would have been difficult to awaken just now.*

He looked at all the corpses around him. Now he realized that these were the bodies of people who had failed to gain enlightenment.

*This immortal skill....*

Xu Qing shifted his attention to his own right hand. The scattered remnants of the cocoon threads were gathering there, where they were forming into a faint symbol. The symbol actually looked exactly like the white symbol at the bottom of Immortal Cleaving Lake. And as he watched, the symbol turned into something that resembled a mask.

By means of Six Thieves Deceive Life, he would later be able to extract the mask and use the ultimate origin of the immortal skill to force it to work for him.

Xu Qing sent his divine will into the mask and experienced the same thing he had just experienced with Five Dogs Cleave Immortals. Ultimately he was able to break through the inner qualities of the immortal skill.

*The stingy dog preserves a memory within the memories of the person using it. Because of how deeply it's hidden, it's hard to pick up on any clues about what it really is. If five breaths of time pass, and the user hasn't erased it, the greedy dog will appear.*

*The greedy dog is a sealing mark that prevents the user from escaping. The sealing mark takes four breaths of time to form. If it isn't erased before then, the sealing is complete, and the foolish dog appears.*

*The power of the foolish dog is the vortex. It serves to separate the soul and body of the user, find a weakness, and then magnify it. If it isn't wiped out within three breaths of time, the depraved dog arrives.*

*The depraved dog devours the soul, and if it isn't destroyed within two breaths of time, the austere dog appears.*

*The austere dog merges with the body, and if it isn't killed within one breath of time, then... the immortal skill of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals is a success.*

*If the immortal skill is complete, it unleashes astonishing killing power. To some extent, it uses one's own body to kill one's own self! That's why there is no differentiation between strong and weak. The technique is extremely harmful to the soul. However, there's still something I don't understand...*

*Cleaving immortals. Cleaving immortals. Which is the true meaning?*

*Is it cleaving from the immortal? Casting it aside? Or does it mean cleaving to the immortal?*

Xu Qing got the feeling that the two words 'immortal' and 'cleaving' were key to accessing another, more important level of the immortal skill. Because he hadn't fully mastered the immortal skill, he had no way to gain full enlightenment.

Xu Qing felt a bit of regret. However, he also knew that the immortal skill was amazing. Although it wasn't possible to completely master it in a short time, he did have the right foundation. And it was all because of the synergy with the Six Thieves immortal skill.

*It's the foundation that brings the qualifications. As long as I'm qualified, then I have the chance to completely master it.*

Xu Qing suppressed his regret, looked up, and shot toward the surface of the lake. After he was gone, the sealing mark at the bottom of the lake faded. It was no longer complete.

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Outside in the Immortal Skills Hall, there was a secret chamber that was a restricted area. Inside of it was a black stone, upon which was an ancient symbol that looked exactly like the one at the bottom of the lake. That was the true Immortal Cleaving symbol.

Even that symbol was now dimmer, as though part of it had been taken away. Unfortunately, the grand immortal adept of the western Devilbirds was wandering now, and until he returned, it wouldn't be possible for anyone to discover what had happened.

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The immortal adepts of Immortal Cleaving Lake were still seated cross-legged seeking enlightenment. It had only been about four hours since Xu Qing sank down into the lake. Because of that, not many of the immortal adepts noticed when Xu Qing emerged from the surface of the lake. Those who did notice were dumbstruck. However, after recovering from their initial shock, their conclusion was that he must not have actually attempted to seek enlightenment. They assumed he had come up to the surface out of fear, and thus, they scorned him.

Xu Qing ignored all of that. Looking at the Immortal Skills Hall, he considered the lessons his Master had taught him. It was important for a person to show gratitude. Therefore, he clasped hands to the Immortal Skills Hall and bowed. That way, he could be free from debt from the subject, and would feel comfortable fighting and killing them later if necessary.[2]

With that, he turned and left.

The young man in the Immortal Skills Hall saw what happened and sneered.

*He showed up acting all high and mighty, but when he left, he bowed. Switching from arrogance to deference like that is something I've seen a lot of. There's always somebody who thinks they're some sort of chosen. Omnipotent. But after experiencing the torment of our immortal skill, they turn chicken. This Sir Blood Dust is a real coward. He was obviously scared away. Well, good riddance!*

1. This is the wordplay I mentioned several chapters ago when this immortal skill was introduced. In Chinese, the character I'm rendering as 'cleave' has multiple meanings. I'm using 'cleave' because I can basically impart the same concept as in Chinese while using an English word that has two opposite meanings depending on the context. For those of you who aren't very familiar with the word 'cleave,' it works as I've described it in the translation. To 'cleave *to*' something means to stick close to it, while to 'cleave *from*' or cleave one thing 'away*from*' another means to separate from it. Incidentally, one of the characters used in the technique name is also used in the word commonly used in xianxia for "possession." Sadly, I could not come up with one word in English that has all three meanings. ㄟ

2. Xu Qing is referring to what Master Seventh taught him in chapter 304. Search for "clean conscience" on that page, and you'll get to the exact passage. This lesson was mentioned a few times in subsequent chapters. ㄟ

## Chapter 1050: Sir Westdevil

As Xu Qing emerged from Immortal Cleaving Lake, powerful fluctuations rolled out from the border of western Devilbird territory, where the wartime teleportation portals had been set up. There were quite a few portals there, and they had been set up in a specific way to lead to various parts of the Revered Ancient mainland. During this wartime period, they were like the front door of the Devilbird holy land. Because of that, this area was normally kept under tight guard by certain organizations from the western Devilbirds.

At the moment, a group of over a hundred cultivators from the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain were respectfully waiting at the seventeenth teleportation portal.

In the lead position was a young boy clad in a daoist robe. Remaining completely silent, he stood there looking at the seventeenth portal and the fluctuations rolling out from it. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the aura of a teleportation grew stronger. Scintillating light shone everywhere as a burly figure took shape. Even as a mere outline, this figure pulsed with a fiendish and bloody aura that caused everyone present to shiver. The faint odor of blood and gore filled the area.

After a moment, the light faded away, and the figure became clear. Astonishingly, a young man stood there, clad in a pitch-black suit of battle armor. His face had two horrendous scars on it that formed the shape of a cross. The way the flesh was bunched up around the scars was appalling.

One might think the scars would make this young man seem simply ugly. But the reality was that there was something unique about his facial features that made him seem somber and desolate. It created quite a contrast with his bright red hair, and it also made it seem like he was the source of the reek of blood that filled the area. His armor bore the evidence of combat, making it clear that he was a veteran of many, many battles.

The moment he appeared, the people from the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain, led by the boy, dropped to their knees to kowtow.

“Well met, Your Majesty!”

This new arrival was the third apprentice of the Imperial Sovereign from the seventeenth mountain. Though he was ranked third, that didn’t reflect how strong he was, nor did it indicate his potential. In reality, he wasn’t just the most famous individual from the seventeenth Imperial Sovereign mountain. He was actually famous among all the western Devilbirds. In fact, he was even famous in the lands of the eastern Devilbirds.

He was Sir Westdevil!

The reason for his fame was that, based on his natural aptitude, he had once received praise from Grand Emperor Devilbird.

When in Void Returning, he could fight low-level Smoldering Gods. After breaking through to Smoldering God, he seized authority, thus becoming the second Smoldering God in the past thousand years among the western Devilbirds who had authority.

His authority was unique and terrifying. It focused on annihilation!

Now that he was a seven-world Smoldering God, he could dominate anyone up to a nine-world Smoldering God, and if he went all out, he could unleash power similar to that of an Imperial Sovereign. During the war with humankind, the strength and slaughter he unleashed earned him incredible battle credit. In fact, on the official hit list issued by humankind, he was listed with two other chosen Devilbirds as the top targets after the Imperial Sovereigns.

He had been at the front lines this entire time, until he received secret communication from one of his fellow apprentices. He had returned immediately.

As the reek of gore spread, and his somber aura grew stronger, Sir Westdevil strode off the teleportation portal with a cold expression on his face. He stopped in front of the kowtowing disciples.

“Where is he?” Sir Westdevil asked coolly.

The gathered crowd all shivered inwardly. Being from the same mountain, they were all very familiar with his proclivity for slaughter. In fact, one could say it was almost like an addictive hobby for him.

Ruthlessness was second nature to him. He was one of the most famous chosen among all Devilbird chosen. Grand Emperor Devilbird had approved of him. He had an Imperial Sovereign as his Master. People like him could well be said to wield absolute power in their domain.

Everyone kept their heads bowed.

Even the boy in the lead, who was an attendant of the Grand Emperor, didn’t dare to act negligently. Sounding very respectful, he said, “That Sir Blood Dust went to Immortal Cleaving Lake, where he stayed for four hours before heading east. He’s currently resting at Mount Heaven’s East.”

Sir Westdevil nodded. Eyes flashing coldly, he took a step forward. An instant later, he was up in the sky. Locking onto a specific location, he waved his hand, causing masses of black clouds to cover him. Then he flew away at top speed.

Wherever he went, rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth. Wreathed in black clouds as he was, he seemed like a heaven-devil.

He had come back from the front lines for one reason.... Sir Blood Dust. He was aware that Sir Blood Dust had issued a challenge to his own mountain, and that no one had been able to rise to the challenge. Therefore, Sir Westdevil was determined to take Sir Blood Dust’s head off his shoulders and mount it on a stake where he had sat at the bottom of the seventeenth mountain.

Sir Westdevil was completely ambivalent about killing fellow members of his own species, or causing friction between east and west.

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As Sir Westdevil shot through the dome of heaven toward Mount Heaven’s East, Xu Qing really was resting right there on the mountain.

He had completed all his goals in the lands of the western Devilbirds. The empress had already earned an audience with Grand Emperor Devilbird, therefore, he didn’t need to go around issuing any more challenges. He had also accomplished everything he wanted to accomplish at the Immortal Skills Hall.

What he needed to do now was just wait until the empress finished dealing with the Grand Emperor. Then he would just join the empress on the return trip to the eastern Devilbirds.

*By the time we leave the western Devilbirds, it will almost be time to open Grand Emperor Netherflame’s secluded meditation facilities.*

During this entire time, Xu Qing had been thinking a lot about what the empress was really up to. It obviously had something to do with Grand Emperor Netherflame. There were many details and

secrets that Xu Qing couldn't understand. He simply lacked too much information. Therefore, it didn't make sense to spend too much time analyzing the situation.

However, there was one thing he hadn't forgotten. Grand Emperor Netherflame's secluded meditation facilities contained a destined opportunity that could significantly boost one's cultivation base.

*And there's Yue Dong's original plan.... Furthermore, I wonder how Eldest Brother has been making out. I'm sure he's made significant gains at the eastern Devilbirds' Immortal Skills Hall.*

After thinking about such things for a time, he stowed such thoughts and focused on the items he most needed to learn more about.

First on the list was the Mask of Wishes. In recent days, when he had the chance, he had studied the mask a few times. He was still holding back from making a wish. However, his investigation had revealed a few pertinent details.

*This wish item seems to be some sort of godly authority! In terms of personhood, it's terrifyingly advanced. I can keep it as a trump card, but unless I have absolutely no choice at all, I won't finish stating a wish. As for the white dust, I have a bit more than before, but it's still not enough....*

Next, Xu Qing moved on to his godly authority of fate.

*There's nothing indicating that this type of godly authority can only be used in one way. Quite the opposite. I can collect it with my soul, use it to bolster divine abilities, and even do other tests. As for its ability to carve fate, there is a backlash contained within it. Carving fate involves replacing the previous trajectory, so any obstacles that pop up are things I have to personally deal with.*

Xu Qing lifted his right hand, causing the godly authority of fate to manifest as a carving knife. He studied it for a short time before putting it away and focusing instead on his back. There on his back was a totem tattoo of an extinguished red candle. As he studied the tattoo with his senses, his expression darkened.

Back in the World Origin Pocket Realm, he had not been able to exert any control over it. In fact, he wasn't even sure what it was. Perhaps everything that happened was all the candle's doing. After all, the candle was conscious to a certain extent. Or perhaps it had been drawn to Xu Qing because of his special fleshly body. Regardless, Xu Qing did not like the tattoo. And his senses were telling him that it contained potential calamity.

From the very beginning until now, it had remained in an extinguished state. But Xu Qing could sense that the candle was reaching the point of waking up. When he thought about the terrifying power of that candle's flame, his eyes flashed.

*Unless I can control you, I absolutely cannot allow you to awaken and ignite that flame.*

Then the authority of erasure appeared in his eyes, spread to his back, and covered the candle wick. The authority of erasure caused the aura of awakening to weaken. However, it didn't disappear. Therefore, Xu Qing called out to Little Shadow.

"Devour!" he ordered.

Little Shadow wasn't keen on doing that, but also didn't dare to defy orders. Bracing itself, it rushed forth with gaping maw to devour the aura of awakening. Because of Little Shadow's unique properties, it actually succeeded to a certain extent. The aura weakened further.

Time passed. Evening fell.

As the afterglow of the setting sun faded on the horizon, Xu Qing used the authority of erasure several times over. He also had Little Shadow make more attempts to devour the candle. As a result, the aura of awakening was now almost impossible to detect.

*It's still there, but at least I can control it.*

Xu Qing went on to place some more sealing marks on it. Considering he was still waiting on the empress, he decided to do further study of Five Dogs Cleave Immortals.

However, that was when a sudden sensation of dread skyrocketed within him. Eyes hardening, he shot backward at high speed. A rumbling like thunder shattered the evening glow. Everything started to ripple and distort.

Then a pitch-black spear appeared, something that could destroy worlds, and it was shooting down directly toward Xu Qing. The haft of the spear was long enough to fill heaven and earth, while the tip was like a terrifying mountain. It contained almost unstoppable force as it appeared right in front of him.

At that moment of crisis, Xu Qing shot backward at top speed.

Being this close to it, Xu Qing was shaken to find that the mightiness of this spear was almost on the same level as an Imperial Sovereign. Because of how quickly Xu Qing evaded the attack, the spear screamed past him and slammed into Mount Heaven's East. That one spear shattered the entire mountain! Rubble exploded everywhere.

The spear then passed through the remnants of the mountain and buried itself in the ground. There it remained, stabbed deep into the earth, quivering from the leftover force of the blow.

For 5,000 kilometers in every direction, the land shattered, all while black flames erupted from the tip and up through the resulting cracks and crevices. The entire area became a sea of flames.

Within those flames could be heard howls of anguish coming from countless souls. Those souls belonged to human cultivators. They were obviously victims that had been slaughtered by the spear on the battlefield. Those souls weren't allowed back into the cycle of reincarnation, but were instead bound to the spear to bolster its might.

It was now possible to see a devilish figure standing atop the haft of the spear, which stuck out diagonally from the ground. Red hair swirled around a pitch-black suit of ferocious-looking armor. Behind him was the illusory projection of a heaven-devil that filled half the sky and glared menacingly at Xu.

"So, you're Sir Blood Dust?"

