

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1111: The Original Living God

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Waves surged forth on the God Blood River. The river was so wide that when you looked at it, there seemed no end to it. It stretched from horizon to horizon, filling one with awe and reverence. It was difficult to imagine how many gods must have been killed, and their blood drained, to form this river. It was nothing short of terrifying.

The light cast by the aurora in the dome of heaven caused darkness and brightness to flicker back and forth. As a result, the river almost seemed alive. It seemed to be vying with the aurora for glory. It was a most beautiful and moving image, like a scroll painting.

That painting actually contained evidence of history, bearing testament to the vicissitudes of heaven and earth. It told the story of the war between immortals and gods, and showed how the Fifth Star Ring had ultimately changed. It was deeply significant.

Within that blood-colored scroll-painting, a lone ferry boat braved the wind and waves. The voice of the ferry pilot echoed out into the world. His every word resonated like a thunderclap in Xu Qing's mind, shaking him deeply.

“There is only one Immortal Paragon. The Fifth Forefather of Humanity.”

The words filled Xu Qing's thoughts, and resulted in the image of an old man to appear in his mind's eye. It was the same old man Xu Qing had seen in the star chart in the Devilbird holy land. He was seated cross-legged in the Fifth Star Ring. And he was also the old man Xu Qing had met in the outer sea of Revered Ancient.[1]

After a long moment passed, Xu Qing took a deep breath and asked, “Senior, why is that Immortal Paragon... called the Fifth Forefather of Humanity?”

The ferry pilot put his pipe in his mouth, inhaled, then blew out some smoke. “The thirty-six higher star rings are the higher worlds. They each correspond to a different and larger number of lower star rings, which are the lower worlds. Some of the lower star rings have names. Some of them don't.”

The ferry pilot looked at Xu Qing in a very meaningful way. “The lower world connected to the Fifth Star Ring is one of the ones that didn't originally have a name. A long time ago, back when the gods ran rampant in the Fifth Star Ring, that lower star ring eventually came to be called the Fifth Lower World.

“All sorts of living beings called it home, but they were slaves to the gods, and were even required to worship them. Eventually there was fighting, rebellion, suppression, emancipation, and apocalypse. They waged war on the gods. The people of the lower world always failed, whereupon the Fifth Lower World would be wiped clean. Then it would all start over again, and the gods would bring about a new crop to harvest.”

As the ferry pilot spoke, his voice rose and fell, becoming like the River of Time itself, flowing through Xu Qing’s perceptions. “Eventually, a human emperor rose up in the Fifth Lower World. His leadership led to an unprecedented golden age in which the immortals fought the gods. The lower waged war against the higher.

“During the war, the emperor of the Fifth Lower World reached the Immortal Paragon level. And then something unexpected happened to the Fifth Star Ring’s God Paragon. The Fifth Star Ring was overthrown, and a new system was established. That’s why he’s called the Fifth Forefather of Humanity.”

With that, the ferry pilot looked up into the canopy of heaven, his face tinged with sorrow.

Xu Qing listened to the story quietly. History often played out like this. As it turned out, the story of the Fifth Star Ring was actually very similar to the story of Revered Ancient. That said, things here had gone more smoothly than back home.

“In that case,” Xu Qing said, “what about the other higher star rings...?”

“None of the wars and rebellions there succeeded,” the ferry pilot continued. “Success was never out of the question, but things always happened that led to failure.”

The ferry pilot shook his head as if thinking of the past. “The thirty-six higher star rings don’t belong to cultivators or immortals. All of them... are the domains of the gods. God and immortal. They are two different paths. And immortals... have limitations that place them one step behind the gods.”

The ferry pilot was speaking in a near growl by this point. “To be precise, once immortals reach the Immortal Paragon level, there’s no path to follow. In all the years that have passed, the Fifth Star Ring’s Immortal Paragon has not made any progress forward. But the gods are different. After the God Paragon level... is the level of Living God!

“Living Gods are not myths. They’re real. However, from ancient times until now, there has only been one. That one god is known as the original Living God. Reportedly, his arrival is what led to the creation of the higher and lower worlds. When it comes to that creation story, it’s hard to tell how much is real and how much is false. The history goes back too far for there to be definitive evidence of anything.”

Xu Qing was more shaken by this than by anything else he had heard.

Struggling to control his breathing, Xu Qing began to ask a question, but ended up being interrupted by the ferry pilot, who clearly knew what he had been about to ask.

“Where,” Xu Qing asked, “did that original Living God—”

“Hē left for parts unknown and never returned. As epochs came and went, the thirty-six higher star rings never saw a second Living God, until eventually Desolation showed up in the Ninth Star Ring. Hē was the first god after the original Living God who had any hope of reaching the Living God level. Luckily, hē ended up failing. Otherwise....”

The ferry pilot didn’t go into further detail, but Xu Qing could imagine what he had been about to say.

If Eminent Desolation had succeeded, then all of the thirty-six higher star rings would have been hit by a tempest of godly might. The immortals... would probably not have been able to survive.

Xu Qing sat there digesting everything the ferry pilot had explained.

The ferry pilot had told him many things. He now knew about the breakdown of the Imperial Sovereign level. He understood how strong Quasi-Immortals were. And now he had a clear view of the makeup of the world. It seemed like the ferry pilot had not held one thing back. He had explained everything.

Clearly, the ferry pilot had gone far beyond what his job description entailed. There was actually no reason for him to have gone into all of those explanations. When you coupled that with how the ferry pilot had acted when Xu Qing had been chased to his boat....

Xu Qing had some speculations, but there was no way to confirm them. But he was still inclined to believe... that this ferry pilot had a history with Revered Ancient. In fact, maybe he had even been there. Maybe he was friends with some of the cultivators from Revered Ancient. Xu Qing had no way to figure out the details on his own, but he had noticed how the ferry pilot’s eyes had lingered on The Emperor’s Sword.

After a long moment of silence, Xu Qing blurted, “Senior, have you ever heard of a place called Revered Ancient...?”

The ferry pilot’s eyes narrowed. He said nothing.

Xu Qing hesitated briefly, then sighed in his heart.

Though the ferry pilot had not said anything in response, that reaction in itself provided an answer to the question.

“Senior, some big things have happened in Revered Ancient....”

The ferry pilot continued to smoke his pipe silently.

Xu Qing didn’t say anything. He chose not to continue the conversation.

Time passed, and soon... the six-day voyage was nearing an end. The fare for the voyage was six days of life force, the reason being that the journey took six days.

As the sixth day arrived, Xu Qing spotted the other shore of the majestic God Blood River. He was looking at the western planetary system of the Fifth Star Ring. The water had become calm, with few waves. The boat continued on for a few hours, until the sixth day was almost over.

At that point it reached the shore. The soil was different from the swampy southern region. There was no swamp here. There was only the color red, as if everything contained fire.

“You can debark now,” the ferry pilot said coolly. “If you want to cross the river a second time, the fare won’t be six days of longevity. It’ll be a sixty-year-cycle.”

Xu Qing bowed without a word, then jumped off the boat and onto the shore. He turned back to the boat.

The ferry pilot, clad in his woven rush raincoat and conical hat, was smoking his pipe, and the smoke had gathered around him, yet again obscuring his face.

Thinking back to the six-day journey, Xu Qing ducked his head, clasped hands, and bowed at the waist. “Many thanks, Senior.”

Although the ferry pilot hadn’t said much in the final days of the journey, the information he had imparted early on had been monumental. He had completely opened up the world to Xu Qing. As far as Xu Qing was concerned, that was an immense show of kindness.

His bow was completely and utterly sincere. Straightening from his bow, he turned and flew off into the distance.

After Xu Qing was gone, the ferry pilot looked up in the direction he had disappeared.

“So, that stubborn fellow Swordsage finally perished, huh...?”

His voice contained a bit of reminiscence. A moment passed, and he sighed. *Revered Ancient.... It’s been a long time since I heard that name. I have the feeling nobody in Revered Ancient remembers who I am at this point.... I’ve surely been erased from the histories there....*

The ferry pilot lifted his hand and looked at his palm. There in his palm was a magical symbol that looked like a human face. It emanated a very gruish aura. If Xu Qing had been there, he would have recognized it.... Astonishingly, that face-shaped symbol was... an immortal skill![2]

As Xu Qing flew through the sky in the western region of the Fifth Star Ring, Starfire spoke into his ear.

“That guy... was really scary! The moment he looked at you I was convinced he was going to grab me and stomp me to death! Xu Qing, you brought me to a really, really horrible place!” Starfire was feeling very jumpy. That was especially true when crossing the God Blood River, during which time shē had been shaking in terror. “Ah, whatever. I’ll just go back to sleep I guess....”

Shē once again retracted hēr aura.

Xu Qing wasn't really sure what to say to Starfire. He had explained from the beginning that he was going to a place that didn't welcome gods. Apparently Starfire hadn't really believed him.

After a bit of hesitation, he decided to offer another warning. "Things are only going to get more dangerous...."

Starfire's aura shrank down even more on itself. Starfire would never behave like this in Revered Ancient, which seemed to indicate that the ferry pilot really had frightened her.

Xu Qing couldn't help but think back to what the ferry pilot looked like.

Who exactly was he...?

Unfortunately, there was no answer to his question. After a while, he put the matter aside and checked his map for information about the western planetary system.

The west was much weaker than the other three regions. And the orthodox organization here, the Dao Immortal Sect, was in dire straits. The heavenly inspector in the west didn't care much about mortal affairs, nor the development of the sect. In fact, the heavenly inspector didn't care about much at all. As a result, the cultivators in the sect had developed a very lackadaisical attitude.

However, because of that, there were more clans and other organizations here than the other three regions, and they were always fighting each other in the hopes of gaining supremacy. After looking over the information, Xu Qing reviewed the details of the Shining Star from this area.

Of the eight Shining Stars, the weakest was the apprentice of the Dao Immortal Sect's heavenly inspector.

Li Mengtu.... One unique thing about this clan is that all direct bloodline clan members have the character "tu" in their name. His cultivation base is in the early Imperial Sovereign level, and he has four types of authority. However, because he has the legacy of his clan's gruish magical technique, as well as training from his Master, he was able to kill a mid Imperial Sovereign.

Xu Qing looked around at the western lands.

This place seems a lot quieter than the south. I should be able to recover here. But it's not a good place to temper myself via battle. Right now, I need to find a good place to hole up and get better. As for what happens after that... I'll have to play it by ear.

Eyes filling with determination, he sped off.

1. Xu Qing saw an old man in the Fifth Star Ring in [chapter 1040](#). He met that old man in [chapter 1001](#). ❸

2. From the comments in this section in Chinese, it seems many readers believe the ferry pilot to be Grand Emperor Immortal Skill who has been mentioned a number of times in past chapters. Besides the direct mention of immortal skills, it's also noteworthy that he says, "I've surely been erased from the histories there." That conforms perfectly to what was said about him in [chapter 1057](#). ❸

Chapter 1112: Yunmen Clan

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A few days later....

The western region really is different from the south.

A thoughtful look could be seen on Xu Qing's face as he flew along in the sky. He had spent the past few days looking for a good place to hole up and recover. Along the way, he had encountered two cultivators who had activated their permission medallions.

The first had been more than 4,500,000 kilometers away, to the point where Xu Qing almost failed to notice the person. It had been easy to avoid them.

On the second occasion, the other person noticed him at almost the same time that he noticed them. For their medallion to have such a range indicated that they had to be a powerful expert. Even as Xu Qing's guard went up, the other person chose to avoid him. That was not how things had gone in the south. It was as if... people in the west preferred to avoid trouble, or at least, avoid causing trouble to the best of their ability.

Another week passed, and the same thing happened again. In the end, he felt like his theory had been confirmed.

The west... is a lot weaker than the south. Everybody prefers to avoid pointless conflicts. That doesn't mean that people here can't unleash slaughter, though.

Up ahead of him was a ring-shaped barrier of glittering light, the results of a defensive spell formation. A group of cultivators sat there cross-legged inside the formation.

Xu Qing wasn't the only person in the vicinity. There were a few dozen standing around, staggered at random distances. Some were in the same situation as Xu Qing. They had been trying to pass through, but their path had been obstructed by the spell formation. Others had previously been inside the formation, but had since been ejected. There was a lot of talk in the area.

"The Yunmen Clan and the Diling Dynasty are on the verge of starting a war of extermination against each other." [1]

"Both clans have become extremely powerful lately. And they both occupy the Spiritdust Mountains. It's to be expected for things like this to happen."

"Yeah, but both clans also have other lands outside of the mountains. Considering how the front lines are arranged, and the time involved, I doubt either one will really wipe out the other."

Xu Qing had changed into a hemp robe and was wearing a wide hat similar to the ferry pilot. As a result, his features were mostly hidden. Hovering in midair, he listened to the conversations in the area and sent his divine will ahead to see for himself what was going on.

Some time back, he had used the map to identify this place as a possible location to go into secluded meditation. There were sprawling mountains full of a lot of spirit energy. It had seemed like a good place to recover. But now... he sensed the fluctuations of magical combat. There were a lot of people fighting in the mountains.

Given the nature of the conversations he was hearing, he could tell that this was a case of one clan invading another clan's territory. Both parties were fighting fiercely.

There were powerful experts on both sides of the conflict; Xu Qing could clearly sense the presence of Imperial Sovereigns. He could also sense permission medallions among both groups. That said, it was obvious that the permission medallions weren't their focus. This was a case of gobbling up the enemy.

There were brutal and vicious tactics being used, and there was no doubt that each side wanted to wipe the other out of existence.

After assessing the situation, Xu Qing felt he had an even better understanding of the west.

Cultivators here don't go into battle unless they feel they have to. You could even say that most of them are lazy. However, they have very strong feelings of clan affiliation. Most of the time, the fighting revolves around conflicts between clan groups.

That dovetails with the information in the map. The Dao Immortal Sect doesn't care much about what goes on, doesn't take control in the west, and basically lets everyone do what they want. Because of that, the cultivator clans in the west are very tight-knit, but somewhat uncivilized. And they're far more numerous than those in the other three regions.

Xu Qing slowly started backing away. When he was several million kilometers away, he found an area full of mud pits. After looking around thoughtfully, he sank down into one of the mud pits. At the bottom of the mud pit, he set up a little cave. He bolstered the walls, set up spell formations to prevent his aura from seeping out, then sat down cross-legged to focus on recovery.

Perhaps because of the war that had broken out between the two big clans, most cultivators in the area had left. Those who had been traveling through the area found different paths to reach their destinations.

Because of that, the following half month was peaceful and quiet for Xu Qing.

Eventually, the mud in the quagmire sank down, and Xu Qing emerged and flew up into the air. As he hovered there, he felt a tightness in his chest that made him want to cough. He frowned. Although he didn't have any visible injuries, his aura was nearly as weak as it had been before.

"Dao injury..." he murmured.

Once your cultivation base reached a certain point, you could be injured in ways that couldn't be helped by the use of medicinal pills. The attacks of truly powerful experts could lead to dao injuries. Xu Qing had never experienced a dao injury in Revered Ancient. It was only here in the Fifth Star Ring that he was coming to realize how difficult it was to recover from them.

I thought it would be better in a month, but I was obviously wrong. Injuries like this would normally take years to recover from. I do have the violet crystal, so it won't take that long. And if I had access to stronger spirit energy, I could shorten the time even further.

Xu Qing looked down at the mud pit with a somber expression. Then he turned to look in the direction of the Spiritdust Mountains. In his mind, he was reviewing the map of the west. The spirit energy here surpassed that of the Revered Ancient mainland. But in the west, it wasn't very strong, with the exception of a few special places....

Right now, I should be fine as long as I don't run into any Imperial Sovereigns. I could kill some Smoldering Gods without affecting my injuries.

After a final consultation of the map, he made his decision. Eyes flashing coldly, he took a step toward the mountains and vanished.

As the aurora in the sky rippled, more and more little vortexes appeared. Just like that, an entire year passed.

During that time, the war dragged out between the Yunmen Clan and the Diling Dynasty. Early on in the war, the patriarch of the Yunmen Clan ended up seriously injured, but so did the patriarch of the Diling Dynasty. After that, the scale of the war declined slightly, although they were still trying to wipe each other out.

Over the months of fighting, the Yunmen Clan had gradually lost more and more territory. Previously, they controlled thirty-seven peaks. But then came setback after setback until they only had eleven. Their people were now quite on edge.

At the moment, three cultivators were seated outside of a spell formation at the Yunmen Clan's ninth peak. All three were Smoldering Gods with three or four worlds. As they sat there, they would occasionally open their eyes and look at the figure inside the spell formation. Their expressions were that of reverence and awe.

Sometime later, one of them took out a transmission jade slip to check a message. Afterwards, he stood and bowed to the person in the spell formation. Sounding very respectful, he said, "Formation Liege, we just received a message from Spiritdust City. Sir, the object you're seeking isn't in the latest shipment.... However, we got some new clues and have a caravan on the way to investigate. In all likelihood, the item will come with the next shipment."

The person he was addressing sat inside the spell formation, seated cross-legged and flipping through some ancient records. He looked middle-aged, with gray hair and a grizzled face. He was skinny to the point of looking unhealthy, and would even cough occasionally. Despite that, the three Smoldering Gods outside the formation didn't dare to make eye contact with him.

He was one of the Yunmen Clan's foreign vassals named Sir Firedark. Because he had the same cultivation base as them, they hadn't thought much of him originally. But over the past year, there had been several battles with the Diling Dynasty in which Sir Firedark hit the enemy like a bolt of lightning. He would attack enemy Smoldering Gods and kill them in one blow. He used brutal tactics, usually attacking the enemy in the throat.

Over the past year, he had killed a total of twelve enemy Smoldering Gods. Two of them had been at the six-world level, yet all it meant was that Sir Firedark had to spend a bit more time slicing them apart.

Because of that, though the Yunmen Clan was losing ground in the war, Sir Firedark was gaining a lot of attention. Eventually, he was appointed as the formation guardian of their ninth peak. People eventually started calling him the Formation Liege.

As he sat in the formation, Xu Qing looked up and coolly said, "I know."

Then he looked off into the distance, lost in thought. *I've pretty much recovered from my injuries, and was planning to leave soon....*

A year ago, he had come to realize that the most ideal place to recover from his injuries was the Spiritdust Mountains. After that, he made a decision. The next most suitable place would take a long time to get to.

Therefore, he decided to take advantage of the Yunmen Clan's wartime situation. They had been offering big money to anyone willing to join their army. Such people were little more than foreign vassals who couldn't be trusted. They weren't allowed to be part of the clan's conclave forces, and most of them ended up as cannon fodder. But as far as Xu Qing was concerned, it was the easiest way to get into the Spiritdust Mountains and use the spirit energy there to aid in his recovery.

Eventually, he started fighting in earnest. One reason was that the enemies he killed were trying to kill him. Another was that the spirit energy in the formation was very strong. And there was a third reason. He had come to find out that clan vassals were allowed to send clan caravans out to purchase special items. The determining factor in that arrangement was one's rank in the clan.

Therefore, Xu Qing chose to increase his kill count, though he limited his targets to enemies under the seven-world Smoldering God level. Killing someone in the seven-world level would be too eye-catching.

Therefore, he used his power in the Yunmen Clan to start looking for the very same type of clay that had been used by the young man with the birthmark. That type of clay had spatial properties. During the fight, that young man had used that item to glue down heaven and earth in a type of sealing magic. Unfortunately, his ring of holding didn't contain any more of that clay.

A month is a long time to wait, though.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. The fact that he was a foreign vassal meant that the Yunmen Clan didn't trust him very much, and as such, even in the year that had passed, he never had much contact with their conclave members. But given his cultivation base and perception, he had been able to learn quite a few important things about the clan, things that they couldn't really hide even though they tried to.

I'd say there's an eighty to ninety percent chance that Patriarch Yunmen is going to perish. Probably within half a month. And that means the Diling Dynasty is going to begin their final offensive in about half a month.

Xu Qing looked around at the Spiritdust Mountains. Despite the light shining from the aurora above, the mountains seemed dark and oppressive, as they were full of death energy. There were even grues lurking in the mountains nowadays, although no one underneath the level of an Imperial Sovereign would be able to see them.

Over the past year, Xu Qing hadn't just worked on recovering from his injuries. He had also been cultivating his various techniques. He had made a lot of progress, including with the five elements, space, and time. He had also improved his battle prowess. His most significant progress had been with space and time.

He now felt that he had a path to follow to reach the eighth extreme. After some consideration, Xu Qing's eyes shone with determination.

Whatever. I'm sure I'll be able to find other objects with spatial functions. It'll just take time, wherever I end up.

He closed his eyes.

Three days. After that, I'll be completely recovered and I'll leave this place!

1. Yunmen and Diling. Both of these are compound surnames that the author invented. The compound surname thing seems to be a theme of sorts in the Fifth Star Ring. I feel like it creates a more old-timey feel. These two surnames are very fantastic, to the point where I considered translating them instead of transliterating them. But in the end, they are treated as ordinary surnames, so I'm going with transliterated versions. We previously learned of a cultivator from the Yunmen Clan. Yunmen literally means "cloud gate" or "cloud door." Yun is pronounced sort of like yoon, and men rhymes with the English one or ton. As for Diling, it translates as "earth spirit." Incidentally, on the Diling side, the specific characters and the context indicates that they are a clan. However, they have a slightly different set of characters attached to the surname than the Yunmen people, so I'm going to describe them as a "dynasty" to maintain that differentiation. In reality, though, their clan name doesn't necessarily have anything to do with dynasties, kingdoms, etc. Di is pronounced "dee" and ling rhymes with the English words sing and bring. ㊦

Chapter 1113: Yunmen Qianfan

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Three days passed in a flash.

In the spell formation on the ninth peak in the Yunmen Clan, Xu Qing had finally benefited from the mountains' strong spirit energy and the violet crystal enough to fully recover from his dao injury. When he opened his eyes, his previously wan face now had a healthy flush to it. He no longer felt sick and weak. The cough that had been plaguing him for a year was now gone. He could breathe deeply without any trouble. As for his eyes, they were now sharp and clear like they had been before.

During the process of healing, his cultivation base had grown stronger, and he had gained even deeper enlightenment of his various daoist magics.

He had changed a lot in the last year. A year before, he had been like a sharp dagger. After the year of recovery and cultivation, he was now like a sharp sword. And that sword was sheathed! Its sharp tip was hidden.

It's time to leave.

Xu Qing looked off at the horizon. Everything was as normal at the moment. The three cultivators were outside the formation, seated in meditation. Over the past three days, there had been two unexpected battles, but no top experts had appeared in either of them.

Xu Qing was still convinced that Patriarch Yunmen was on death's door.

Up to this point, he had not yet revealed his true battle prowess, nor the fact that he had a permission medallion.

The violet crystal has turned out to be extremely useful.

When submerged in the mud pit, he had done some experiments with the violet crystal, in the hopes that it could conceal the presence of the Immortal Capital permission medallion. He had done the same thing early on, only to fail every time. It was as if the two objects repelled each other.

The permission medallion was made from some special substance that seemed inexplicably connected to the Fifth Star Ring itself. But in that mud pit, Xu Qing had come up with an idea.

It all came down to how Little Shadow could work with the violet crystal. First he used Little Shadow as a sort of membrane to cover his own skin, and then he used the suppressive powers of the violet crystal. He suppressed Little Shadow, and thus suppressed himself. By doing that continuously, he was able to create a sort of masking shield.

There were downsides. Specifically, Little Shadow was constantly sending out fluctuations that sounded like weeping. Another downside was that it was very draining. Keeping up the effect longterm was a big drain on his soul.

When dealing with people whose permission medallion range was smaller than his own, it wasn't difficult to deal with. But when dealing with someone whose range exceeded his own, it became a lot harder. It was very draining to Xu Qing himself, and it was extremely difficult for Little Shadow to endure. He was still just too weak.

Thankfully, the range of Xu Qing's medallion was fairly wide. Although there were people who surpassed him, in this lazy western region, most people weren't interested in getting near him if possible. After all, the second round still hadn't reached a crescendo point.

As for the Yunmen and Diling people, there were medallion-holders among both clans. But none of them had range comparable to Xu Qing, and therefore, he was able to mask his presence. None of them ever realized that there was another medallion-holder among them.

That was the reason why Xu Qing had ultimately decided to answer the recruitment call from the Yunmen Clan. What was more, most outsiders steered clear of the area. As a result, things had

been quiet for Xu Qing for a while now. But as of today, he had completely recovered from his dao injury.

Not much has happened in the last three days. But there was that mission from the Yunmen Clan....

Xu Qing's eyes remained narrowed as he looked away from the horizon to the jade slip in front of him.

The jade slip had arrived the previous day. Within it was a mission assigned to Xu Qing. The task was to escort a Yunmen clan member to Darkcloud City. The faster the better.

Just as the Yunmen Clan is heading into the final battle, they assign this mission...?

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment.

Sounds like they're sending out bait. But it comes with a very tempting reward.

The jade slip explained that the reward for successfully accomplishing the mission was the very same spatial clay that he had been looking for over the last year. There was no way it could be a coincidence.

Most likely, the clan caravan had actually found that clay a long time ago, but had refrained from giving it to Xu Qing or letting him know about it. Back before he had recovered, he wouldn't have accepted this mission, even with such a tempting reward. But now....

After some thought, he pushed down on the jade slip with his finger.

The jade slip glowed brightly. About an hour later, a prismatic beam of light shot from the Yunmen Clan's mountain peak headquarters, and it headed right toward the ninth peak. It moved quickly, and pulsed with the cultivation base fluctuations of third-stage Void Returning. It soon arrived.

The three cultivators seated outside the spell formation looked over with curious expressions.

The new arrival was a young woman. She was dressed in a simplistic white garment that was embroidered with a gray design. The gray design pulsed with the power of taboo formations. She was pretty and pure, like a flower petal at dawn. She seemed sweet-tempered and gentle, but at the same time, seemed like she could bubble with conversation at any moment.

After landing on the ninth peak, she swayed gracefully over to the formation, where she bowed respectfully to Xu Qing.

"Greetings, Senior Firedark. I am Yunmen Qianfan."

"You're the person I'm supposed to escort?" Xu Qing asked, his eyes flashing like lightning.

The young woman immediately got a bit nervous. "I'm sorry to trouble you, Senior."

Xu Qing's face was completely expressionless, and he was about to look away from her. But then he glanced at her chest, and his gaze hardened slightly. "Interesting. Alright, come in."

He waved his hand, and an opening appeared in the spell formation.

She seemed even more nervous now. However, she knew that her life was on the line in this situation, so she took a deep breath and entered the spell formation and stood in front of Xu Qing. As she looked at the ‘middle-aged man’ in front of her, she thought about the information she had been given about him. Inside, she sighed, wondering if she had made the right decision.

The clan had given her three options to pick from to be her escort. Ultimately, she had ruled out the other two and picked Sir Firedark. The reason was that because of her special constitution, she had been practicing a special type of cultivation since she was young. It was a trigram divination magic. She would always use trigram divination to try to deduce information about situations she would face, in the hopes of identifying the safest options. And her divination told her that her best chances of surviving lay with Sir Firedark. Unfortunately, that slim chance of survival seemed to come and go.

But she was a decisive person. Since she had made her decision... her eyes shone with determination. Gritting her teeth, she bowed, and before Xu Qing could say anything, she blurted, “Senior, there’s something I need to tell you. The mission the clan assigned wasn’t just given to you. The truth is that they assigned it to fourteen people!

“Every mission was assigned to a clan vassal, and the job is to escort a clan member to a different city. The reason is that one of those clan members has a secret key magically hidden on them. And that key is related to the clan’s future rise to prominence.

“No one knows which clan member has the key, not even the person who actually has the key. It’s possible I might have it. Or it could be someone else. It’s even possible none of us have the key. It doesn’t matter. All of the clan members who don’t have the key are just supposed to serve as bait for the Diling Dynasty.”

After she finished talking, Yunmen Qianfan took a very deep breath. She knew she was gambling here. And since she was gambling, she couldn’t afford to hold anything back. Therefore, she extended her hands to present a box to Xu Qing. She opened it. Inside the box was a fist-sized clump of clay! It pulsed with spatial power, causing the surroundings to ripple and distort.

This was the object Xu Qing had been seeking. According to the mission description in the jade slip, it was supposed to be a reward given *after* the mission was completed successfully.

But Yunmen Qianfan was giving it to him up front. Xu Qing studied it to see if it had sealing marks on it. It did. However, the sealing mark had recently been released by the means of some sort of blood magic.

“Senior, I know that you’ve been searching for this kind of spatial clay for the past year. I managed to get it from the clan. It was sealed, and the seal was linked to my life. As long as I’m willing, I can sacrifice some blood to unseal it. After thinking about it, I decided I didn’t want to try to force you to help me. So I unsealed it already.”

With that, Yunmen Qianfan respectfully gave the box to Xu Qing, then got onto her knees and prostrated to him. She had revealed everything she wasn’t supposed to reveal, and had completely subverted all the plans put in place by her clan to ensure her survival. She hid nothing and did

nothing to benefit herself. She was bowing, not just in body, but in heart and mind. She was completely sincere, and was opening herself up for Xu Qing to inspect.

Xu Qing's expression was the same as ever as he quickly studied the clay. After confirming that it was the exact thing he had been looking for, he put it away. Then he looked at the young woman prostrated in front of him. "Ordinarily, people who think clearly don't do things like this."

Yunmen Qianfan took a deep breath and quietly replied, "I have a special constitution, and cultivate the dao of divination. Don't worry, I didn't use it to spy on you. I wouldn't dare. But I did try to divine the direction my salvation would come from. And it pointed to the ninth peak."

Xu Qing's eyes glittered. "What do you want me to do?"

Looking up at him, she softly said, "Senior... I want to live. I want to make it to Darkcloud City alive."

Xu Qing didn't provide his response right away. After thinking for a bit, he rose and made to leave the formation. His every step caused the formation to ripple.

Yunmen Qianfan was more nervous than ever, and was trying to decide what to do as Xu Qing walked past her.

"Come with me," he said.

When those words reached Yunmen Qianfan's ears, she filled with excitement from head to toe. Jumping to her feet, she followed Xu Qing.

The entire ninth peak was trembling. As the three cultivators outside looked on respectfully, Xu Qing emerged from the formation. The first step he took caused him to rise up into the air, fluctuations rolling out in all directions. The second step took him high into the sky.

Yunmen Qianfan followed, looking almost like a handmaiden. She was now a lot more confident about the journey. She had put everything on the table. Now, all she could do was trust the object of her divination, Sir Firedark.

Chapter 1114: A Demure Handmaiden

Chapter 1114: A Demure Handmaiden

A wooden boat flew through the sky beneath the aurora.

Xu Qing, still disguised as a middle-aged man, sat cross-legged on the deck, perusing some ancient records. Seated opposite him was the beautiful Yunmen Qianfan.

"Senior," she said softly, "if we follow the route assigned by the clan, it'll take about half a month to get to Darkcloud City. However, according to the divinations I've performed, it's highly likely that the route has already been leaked to the enemy."

“Therefore, I planned a different route. We’ll pass Skywater Lake and Mount Ninesongs, then go through the Desert of Time before reaching an ancient teleportation portal. I have a way to activate that portal, and then we can just teleport directly to the Greatcloud River, which is right by Darkcloud City. This route will add about five days to the journey....”

About six hours had passed since they left the Spiritdust Mountains.

During the entire time, Xu Qing had been reading, and Yunmen Qianfan had been cautiously studying him.

She knew that this Sir Firedark was her best chance at surviving. He was her only hope. But she also knew that his battle prowess wasn’t at the absolute peak. If they ran into some truly powerful experts, it could very well mean her death. That was why she had decided on an alternate route, which she felt would be much safer. The big downside was that it would take more time.

After explaining things, she looked nervously at Xu Qing.

“We’ll go your way,” he said. He was fine with the route being changed. Although he was confident in his battle prowess, the ideal scenario would be one in which he didn’t have to fight.

Xu Qing’s response prompted Yunmen Qianfan to breathe a sigh of relief in her heart. After that, she focused on piloting the wooden boat, while at the same time keeping an eye on Xu Qing.

When she noticed him engrossed in reading a particular passage, she would slow the ship down and put up the barriers cutting off outside sound.

And when she saw him simply flipping through the pages, she would put some spirit fruit down next to him, and would pay very close attention to which variety he seemed to like the best. After calculating the time, she also started serving him spirit elixirs and spirit alcohol. Upon realizing that Xu Qing seemed to enjoy the spirit alcohol, she made sure that he always had a fresh flagon next to him.

When he finally put down the ancient records, she produced a zither and started playing music for him. And when he showed no signs of being displeased at that, she worked hard to play even better.

If Xu Qing noticed some interesting landmarks or terrain features, she would quickly offer information and anecdotes about them. As the journey went on, she was really acting like a conscientious handmaiden. She fumbled a few things at first, making it obvious that she had never really done this kind of thing before. But she worked hard to make sure that Xu Qing was having a pleasant journey. Overall, she was completely focused on his needs.

Xu Qing noticed all of that and did nothing to stop her.

Thus, three days passed.

Eventually, a blue lake appeared off in the distance. From up above, the lake looked like a mirror, perfectly still, with spirit energy pulsing off it. It seemed like a pure, clean place.

“Senior, that’s Skywater Lake. Legend has it that in ancient times, during the war between gods and immortals, Immortal Lord Awe-Gem had a daoist partner named Skywater. Sadly, Skywater died in this spot. After the war was over, Immortal Lord Awe-Gem came back here and was overcome by emotion. The tears he shed turned into a blue lake.”

As Yunmen Qianfan told the story, Xu Qing put his book aside and looked at Skywater Lake. When Yunmen Qianfan noticed his interest in the lake, she slowed the boat down, allowing them to drift slowly overhead and get a good view.

“This lake...” he murmured, his eyes gleaming. He reached out and made a grasping gesture, causing a drop of water to fly up from Skywater Lake. It landed in the middle of his palm.

The water looked ordinary, but given the level of Xu Qing’s dao of the five elements, he could sense that there was life force in the lake water, as well as a lingering will.

There are other unique properties....

Within Xu Qing’s eyes, his immortal skills stirred. The seven emotions and six sensory pleasures spread out, combining with the five elements and giving him an even more clear view of the water. Now he realized there was no will inside the water.

Instead, there were emotions. The waters of the lake were filled with profound grief. The discovery surprised him, and got him thinking.

If I connect the five elements to emotions, it might unlock even more transformations. It’s very similar to how immortal skills work on a substructural level....

Yunmen Qianfan could see that he was doing something, and didn’t dare to interrupt. She just kept her eyes on the surroundings, as if she were standing as dharma protector. Even after an hour had passed, he was still lost in thought. That was when Yunmen Qianfan’s expression flickered, and she suddenly looked off into the distance.

A beam of light had sailed over the horizon and was approaching them at top speed. Within it was an old man in a gray robe, pulsing with seven-world Smoldering God fluctuations that caused wild colors to flash in heaven and earth. The sky trembled and the lands quaked.

It only took Yunmen Qianfan a moment to identify him.

“That’s Xiao Zheng!” Her heart flip-flopped. “He’s one of the Diling Dynasty’s vassal elders!”

As a core member of the Yunmen Clan, she had read up on all of the experts among the Diling Dynasty. And seeing who was coming for them caused her heart to fill with a sense of extreme danger. At the same time, bitterness and despair arose within her. She had been sure that no one would intercept them considering she had altered the travel route. But now someone had intercepted them, and he had a very advanced cultivation base.

The strongest enemy Sir Firedark slayed was at the six-world level....

Even as Yunmen Qianfan’s anxiety mounted, the incoming Xiao Zheng’s gaze locked onto the wooden boat. His expression was as cold as if he was looking at a bug. Without saying a word, he

closed in. His mission wasn't just to kill one conclave member of the Yunmen Clan. He was supposed to kill two. It didn't matter that his target seemed particularly clever, and had guessed that they had been offered up as bait. She had even changed routes. Unfortunately....

"You made a mistake, girl. This isn't about bait. It's a game of chance!"

Xiao Zheng's face remained expressionless as he looked, not at the despairing and terrified Yunmen Qianfan, but at Xu Qing. Then he waved his hand, and thunderous rumbling filled heaven and earth. A massive hand appeared out of nowhere, which swept viciously toward the wooden boat.

A terrifying aura and a horrifying mightiness surged, causing Yunmen Qianfan to freeze in place in both body and soul. She felt like she was suffocating, and could do nothing but watch the huge hand moving toward her.

That was when Xu Qing looked up, his eyes calm.

One look....

The giant hand stopped moving. It couldn't proceed another inch. Then a boom rang out as the hand exploded.

At the same time, the pressure weighing down on Yunmen Qianfan ceased. The suffocating sensation vanished. Upon feeling herself go back to normal, she inhaled sharply. Looking up into the sky, she saw the previously cold-faced Xiao Zheng looking completely astonished.

What happened next left Yunmen Qianfan completely flabbergasted. Unexpectedly, Xiao Zheng fell back into retreat, his face pale. He looked like he wanted to simply flee.

The reality was that Xiao Zhen was shaken to the core, almost as if he had been struck by innumerable bolts of lightning. Based on his briefing before the mission, he had been confident he knew all the details about the bodyguard Sir Firedark, including his battle prowess. Although he had agreed that Sir Firedark was impressive, he was certain that his own attacks would be impossible for the bodyguard to defend against.

How could he ever have guessed... that the bodyguard had seemingly been switched with another person, with someone who could vanquish his divine ability with one glance?

That level of battle prowess. This guy... he's....

Xiao Zheng was trembling from head to toe. His scalp was numb, and all he could think to do was flee with every ounce of strength he could muster. Yet even after he turned tail and fled, his mind still filled with rumbling sounds. Despite using secret magics to bolster his speed, he suddenly realized that he wasn't moving. It was as if space had been locked down.

Looking down, he saw Skywater Lake. He was in the exact spot he had occupied moments before.

His heart started racing, and then his vision blurred as something new appeared on his face. Tears. Tears were flowing uncontrollably out of his eyes. More and more....

Soon they were pouring down him, soaking his entire body. Then they turned into flowing blood. Tears of blood covered his face! As the blood began to coagulate, life force began to flow out. Soon, his life force was flowing out in torrents, until his fleshly body and soul were emptied. Then he crumbled into ashes.

The ashes drifted away into the air. What an extremely gruish development!

Yunmen Qianfan was stunned to the core. She almost couldn't believe what she had just witnessed. But the sight of the ashes drifting away into nothing was something she would never forget. Just now, she had watched as a vassal elder of the Diling Dynasty had started shedding tears in midair. The tears turned into blood, and then the blood turned into life force. He had cried himself into dust. It was shocking to say the least.

She started breathing heavily, and her mind and heart filled with waves of incredulity. She even wondered if she was seeing things.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing retracted his gaze and shook his head.

Definitely similar to immortal skills, although not as impressive. It's fine for killing Smoldering Gods, but it wouldn't work on Imperial Sovereigns. It's a bit too taxing.

He had not even risen to his feet in the wooden boat. Looking over, he picked up a book and started reading. A moment later, he realized that Yunmen Qianfan was in a daze. He smacked the book on the deck a few times.

The sound entered Yunmen Qianfan's ears, and she snapped out of her reverie.

"Let's get moving," Xu Qing said quietly.

She took a deep breath and tried to settle her thoughts. But she just couldn't calm herself down. It took a very long moment before she regained her composure and sent the boat flying away again.

Looking at Xu Qing with confused curiosity, she finally asked, "Senior... which way should we go now?"

Not bothering to look up from his book, Xu Qing said, "We'll go your way."

"Okay!" she said with a humble nod.

Chapter 1115: Gods as Slaves

Chapter 1115: Gods as Slaves

Seven days later, they were passing Mount Ninesongs.

Yunmen Qianfan was singing softly in a voice that sounded like countless chanting spirits. "*Green summits conceal traces of immortals, nine curves twist and turn through the clouds. Emerald waters whisper through the stones, evening clouds gently add color to the trees.*"

Her words drifted over Mount Ninesongs, swirling to the summit, curving nine times before landing at the foot of the mountain, where emerald waters flowed in a mighty river. There was a boat on the river, almost like a fallen leaf.

“Senior, that’s Mount Ninesongs. The stream that comes down the mountain has nine bends in it, and when it flows, you can hear the sound of immortal songs. That’s where the name comes from.”[1]

Incense was burning in the boat, and a lantern provided light.

Yunmen Qianfan was playing the zither and simultaneously looking at Xu Qing, who was studying Mount Ninesongs. She was not any less shaken than she had been earlier. Seven days had passed, but she couldn’t stop thinking about the grisly death of that Diling Dynasty elder. He had been a seven-world Smoldering God, but he had died weeping. That... seemed like something that only nine-world Smoldering Gods, those in the great circle, could possibly accomplish.

She was getting the sense that whatever Sir Firedark had done in the Spiritdust Mountains, it was only the tip of the iceberg. And unless they ran into an Imperial Sovereign, she was going to be completely and utterly safe. As a result, the sense of danger within her had grown weaker. In its place came a marvelous sensation of freedom. Now she felt like she was just on nothing more than a pleasant journey.

As she relaxed, she smiled more. It affected her music as well. As the zither song drifted in the wind, it merged with the sound of the water to make something even more pleasant.

Combined with the incense and the lantern, it really made it seem like they were just drifting along without a care in the world.

As Xu Qing listened to the wonderful sounds around him, and gazed at the mountain, he took a sip from his flagon of alcohol.

In contrast to the way Yunmen Qianfan was relaxing, Xu Qing couldn’t stop thinking about real life. Though he was sipping alcohol, his thoughts were actually wrapped up in memories. He was thinking about another time he had traveled on a boat with someone. And he was thinking about the music from that time.[2]

Yunmen Qianfan eventually sensed his mood. Looking down, she sang a bit more quietly. *“The bird soars in search of dreams; the cascading water brings peace to the heart. I’ll spend my life with you, my love; I’ll ne’er ask when we shall depart.”*

The glistening river flowed past Mount Ninesongs.

All of a sudden, Xu Qing said, “There’s a song I know that I haven’t played in a long time. Would you mind playing it?”

Yunmen Qianfan looked up at Xu Qing, whose back was to her.

“Of course,” she said softly.

Xu Qing waved his hand, and a jade slip flew over to her, which contained the score to the song.

She picked up the jade slip and then closed her eyes in concentration. The zither music changed.

A familiar song filled heaven and earth. The little boat slowly floated down the river. A young woman's delicate hands caressed the zither strings. A man stared off into the distance. He was searching for an old dream in the flowing waters.

The sound of the river drifted along with the wind. The zither music described the joys and sorrows of life. It ended in a flagon of unfiltered rice wine.[3]

Xu Qing drank.

Yunmen Qianfen hesitated briefly, then said, "Senior... this song is profound. It contains a lifetime of obsession, and though it's full of grief, it also feels free and at ease. The person who wrote this song is obviously someone extraordinary. Does the song have a name?"

Xu Qing didn't answer the question. He just looked at the water flowing off to the horizon. The wind blew, stirring his hair and rustling his robe. It seemed filled with something cold and detached.

Then the wind stopped. The water no longer glittered.

All of a sudden, the river in front of the boat exploded!

Water sank down as an enormous head rose up. It looked like the head of a pitch-black snake, covered with scales and slime. Crimson eyes burned with deep malice. It was hundreds of meters long, and compared to it... the boat looked like a child's toy.

Along with it came a sound like chanting. It entered the ears to fill the heart of the listener with madness, to destabilize their soul and cause their fleshly body to tremble. The gruish head caused the surroundings to ripple and distort until everything was like a blur.

When its gaze locked onto Yunmen Qianfan, she felt her heart racing so rapidly it felt like it would burst out of her chest. At the same time, a feeling of madness gripped her as something extremely domineering tried to invade her from the outside. She trembled from head to toe, as if her flesh and blood had a will of their own that was trying to expel her from her own body.

The spirit energy in the area was in chaos as a different variety of energy invaded it, took it over, and rejected it. The spirit energy was being polluted! This was the aura of a god. It was mutagen! This was... an actual god!

Yunmen Qianfan was shaken to the core, and her cultivation base was suppressed. But even as she felt like her body and soul couldn't stand up to the presence of this god, a gentle force swept out from Xu Qing and enveloped her. It screened her off from the outside.

Xu Qing extended his right hand and made a grasping gesture. The ripples and distortions shattered and dissipated. His grasping gesture caused mountain-toppling, sea-draining force to make a huge hand that reached down and latched onto the god's head.

He yanked upward. Heaven and earth trembled. An ear-piercing howl erupted from the god's mouth as the thing was pulled up writhing from the river. Water cascaded down as a bizarre body

was revealed. The head made up ninety-nine percent of its entire body. Beneath the gigantic head was a tiny body with gray skin, covered with sticky slime. The thing was surrounded by glowing spheres that slowly orbited in a circle, emanating a fantastic and gruish glow. The entire area filled with a wild sensation, like that of primal-chaos itself.

Within the body of the god was a burning flame, although above that flame was a lampshade formed from magical symbols. The lampshade sealed the flame and allowed it to be controlled. Above the lampshade was a unique jade slip. It seemed alive, and had long tentacles that covered the brain of the god, locking onto it and parasitizing it.

Thanks to Xu Qing screening Yunmen Qianfan away from the outside, she had already recovered. Now her heart was pounding. How could she ever have guessed that the people chasing her would deploy something like this to try to kill her?

When she thought about how terrifying these things were, she shivered and, without even thinking about it, said, “A godslave! Senior, this is a godslave that the Diling Dynasty bought at a very high price from the Dao Immortal Sect. Godslaves... have Imperial Sovereign battle prowess. Senior, you—”

However, before she could even get halfway through what she planned to say, her eyes went wide and she stopped talking. As she watched, an illusory hand grabbed the vicious and terrifying god, which was powerless to get free.

In front of it was Xu Qing, whose expression was the same as ever as he sized up the god, almost as if he was studying it.

Yunmen Qianfan was breathing heavily as she thought back to that vassal who died crying.

As Xu Qing looked at the lampshade and the flame beneath it, he said, “A god in the Godfire level.”

The lampshade was covered with a dense network of magical symbols, all of which were different from each other. There seemed to be millions upon millions of them, and though their structure was complex, there seemed to be order in how they were put together, although that order shifted constantly.

The living jade slip above the lampshade was even more bizarre. Xu Qing had never seen anything like it before, and wasn’t able to make heads or tails of it at the moment.

This was not his first time encountering a god in the Fifth Star Ring. And he had seen gods turned into slaves before; cultivators could make gods into magical treasures, or be treated as animals.

Thankfully, Yunmen Qianfan’s explanation told him what he needed to know about where this godslave came from.

So, the orthodox sect controls them. And they can sell them if they want?

Xu Qing was intrigued by the idea of turning gods into slaves. From what he was looking at, he could tell it was an ingenious technique. Unless you understood the inner workings, it would be very difficult to undo the effect. If you used too much force, the enslaved god’s godfire would be

destroyed. The god's mind would collapse, and the god's soul and body would likely crumble into nothing.

But if it's a slave, and can even be sold, then it's obvious that it can be controlled.

Xu Qing looked off into the distance. Beneath the crimson light of the aurora, he could see ripples as four figures appeared.

Yunmen Qianfan saw them too, and she recognized them. Three of them were Diling Dynasty vassals. The other was a Diling conclave elder. The three vassals were all seven-world Smoldering Gods. As for the core elder... he was at the nine-world level. She immediately imparted this information to Xu Qing.

The four of them hovered in midair looking astonished and even terrified.

One of them had a little drum in his hand that was connected to the god. Yet no matter how he beat the drum, causing the god to struggle against Xu Qing, it did no good.[4]

Xu Qing's mere gaze caused the four cultivators' minds and hearts to tremble. Scalps tingling, they turned to flee. Clearly, they didn't act fast enough.

The moment they took to flight, Xu Qing took a step forward. Wild colors flashed in heaven and earth.

From Yunmen Qianfan's perspective, it was like a majestic scroll painting was being unfurled into the sky, covering everything and making it blurry.

After a few breaths of time passed, the scroll painting vanished. The four cultivators were gone. Xu Qing was returning. In one hand he held a flagon of alcohol. In the other hand he held a head. The head was that of the Diling conclave elder. He wasn't dead, and his eyes shone with terror and despair. He was being soulsearched.

By the time Xu Qing was back on the boat, the soulsearch was over. Xu Qing now knew exactly what was going on.

The Yunmen Clan has a secret key leading into a land of good fortune. That's why the two clans are at war. But there's something special about the key that makes it hard to steal. Therefore, after pushing the Yunmen Clan into a corner, the Diling Dynasty made an offer that couldn't be refused.

The Yunmens would send out fourteen conclave clan members for the Dilings to chase. If all fourteen of them die, then the Yunmen Clan will be declared the loser. But if even one of them survives, the Dilings will be the losers. The prize is the secret key and the survival of the Yunmen Clan.

Xu Qing had no interest in the secret key.

He crushed the head into ashes, then took out the little drum that could be used to control the god. He tapped it. The thump of the drum caused the god to turn into a stream of light that entered the drum and turned into a design on its surface.

Then Xu Qing looked over at Yunmen Qianfan, who was staring at him in astonishment and trying to control her breathing.

“I’m out of alcohol,” he said, tossing her the flagon.

“Uh....” She caught the flagon. Then, shivering, she produced a new flagon and handed it to him.

1. The Chinese character I’m rendering as “songs” has two main meanings. Obviously, in one sense, it can mean a song or tune. But the character can also refer to the bend in a river. So the name of the river has a double meaning that can’t be conveyed with one word in English. ㊦

2. Xu Qing is thinking about the journey that began in [chapter 297](#). ㊦

3. The description of the song matches the song in [chapter 299](#). ㊦

4. If you look up the characters for this kind of drum in a dictionary, or use MTL, it will be called a “snare drum.” But in xianxia, everything is generally based on ancient Chinese stuff. So in reality, this drum most likely resembles something like [this image](#). ㊦

Chapter 1116: Wandering the Jianghu

Chapter 1116: Wandering the Jianghu

Blue sand dunes flickered radiantly, almost as if each individual grain of sand was a gemstone. The dunes stretched endlessly, like massive, solid, and silent waves.

Within the silence, the intense heat caused everything to blur. The sand glittered like starlight, like countless timelines, converging into a dream. A dream like an illusion. As one gazed at it, it was a beautiful illusion.

The boat was currently gliding toward the edge of the Desert of Time.

Yunmen Qianfan sat next to Xu Qing peeling fruit for him as he read a book. Looking over at him, she said, “Senior, this is the Desert of Time. After we cross it, we’ll be at that ancient teleportation portal. And we can use that portal to get very close to Darkcloud City.”

To her, this journey had been like the constantly fluctuating heat waves out on the desert. Her heart had trembled, and her mind felt like it was in a dream. Thinking back to what happened left her with an incomparably marvelous sensation. Sir Firedark had killed a seven-world Smoldering God by making him cry to death. He had slaughtered four elders in a few breaths of time. He had crushed a god with the wave of his hand.

Because of all of that, she was now convinced that Sir Firedark was actually an Imperial Sovereign! She had dealt with Imperial Sovereign cultivators before, be they the patriarch of her clan, or clan chosen. She had also seen quite a few foreign Imperial Sovereigns from a distance. All of them were profoundly above her station.

But never had she been so close to one, let alone gone on a journey with them. She had never in her life experienced the sensation of being completely protected from all danger. It moved her down to her soul.

Over the past few days, she had occasionally taken advantage of moments in which she served him alcohol to ask some questions about cultivation. He had never been stingy, and had always taken time to give her pointers.

All of the pointers had been beneficial, and had helped her resolve confusing aspects of cultivation that had been blocking her progress. In fact, from what she could tell, Sir Firedark seemed more knowledgeable than her own clan's patriarch.

As for why an Imperial Sovereign would choose to serve as a vassal in her clan, and hide his cultivation base in the process, was something she didn't bother thinking about. Nor did she care. Clan matters like that didn't have anything to do with her personally.

Sir Firedark has his own difficulties to deal with. I doubt he wants his secrets made public.

Yunmen Qianfan carefully peeled another immortal fruit. At the same time, she noticed that Xu Qing's flagon was empty, and she deftly replaced it. She had packed her bag of holding full of many things, and though only a portion was filled with food and drink, even that bit was more than enough.

It was not the result of her divinations. Rather, after she settled on picking him as her escort, she decided that she would commit fully to playing the part of a handmaiden. She would do everything possible to make Sir Firedark's journey comfortable. After all, that would make her own survival much more likely.

Xu Qing didn't care either way. However, he had to admit that Yunmen Qianfan was doing a remarkable job as a handmaiden. She was smart and decisive, especially in the way she explained the situation upfront and gave him the spatial clay. Because of that, Xu Qing intended to live up to his promise.

Taking a sip of alcohol, he looked at the desert stretched out in front of them. It was scintillating and hazy, and he could see time itself within the desert.

As they neared, the desert became like a painting that heaven itself had inscribed with magical laws. Off in the distance, the rolling dunes seemed to hide ancient secrets.

There were a few plants here and there. All had needle-like leaves, which was how such plants adapted to the heat and lack of water. Life was hard here. But that was just life. And all living beings had to deal with similar things.

A few fierce eagles soared above, silhouetted by the light of the aurora. The desert was silent except for their piercing cries, which just added to the mysterious and desolate air of the place.

"Why is it called the Desert of Time?" Xu Qing asked as the boat flew into the desert.

Up to this point in the journey, Yunmen Qianfan had seemed like she knew everything. But now she hesitated. A moment passed.

“Senior,” she said in an uneasy voice, “none of the ancient records explain how the desert got that name. It’s just what the desert dwellers call the place. In other words, I don’t really know how it got the name....”

Xu Qing nodded and looked over at her. “You picked some interesting places to pass through. Skywater Lake. The Desert of Time. It seems all of them have names with special meanings, or at the very least, ancient legends associated with them. You must know about other interesting places, right?”

Yunmen Qianfan took a bamboo scroll out of her bag of holding and respectfully offered it to Xu Qing.

“Senior, the truth is that I like reading about different places and their stories. And I collect what I learn in this scroll. Some of the places are locations I’ve personally been to in my clan’s territory. But some are places I’ve only heard about from others. I can’t really guarantee what information is true and what isn’t.”

Xu Qing picked up the bamboo scroll and scanned it with divine will. His eyes glittered. The scroll was full of written information about all sorts of geographic locations, from mountains, to rivers, to valleys. All of them had names and stories attached to them.

“The Pond of Fallen Evil. Heavenwind Cave. The Firevoid Mountains. The Fallen Immortal Moors. Primary Dao Precipice. The Geotale Cisterns. Cloudmire Basin.”[1]

The names were very intriguing to Xu Qing.

It seems that more than half of these places are as unique as Skywater Lake or the Desert of Time. This information is going to be very helpful.

Xu Qing rolled up the scroll. As far as he was concerned, it was probably just as valuable as the spatial clay.

He looked at Yunmen Qianfan again. “Are you in a rush to get to Darkcloud City?”

“No,” she replied. “No rush at all.”

She was very excited to see how pleased he was with her bamboo scroll. Based on the cultivation tips Xu Qing had been giving her, she got the feeling that extending the journey would be a good thing.

Xu Qing nodded, then took a step forward and disappeared from the boat. When he reappeared he was in the desert. He sat down cross-legged, his eyes gleaming.

Time is in chaos here. Or you could say that different timelines are flowing at different rates. But because of how they all mix together, the result is that everything seems normal.

He sent his divine will spreading out in all directions.

Yunmen Qianfan was already used to how Xu Qing would occasionally seek enlightenment. When he sat down, she put away the boat and then landed next to him. She immediately got busy. She

started by setting up a canopy of woven spirit plants, along with a matching floor mat. There, she sat down with her chin resting on her hand as she gazed at Xu Qing. Although Xu Qing was still disguised as a middle-aged man, he still seemed unusually dashing to her.

I bet that when he was younger, he was really gallant and dashing. He probably has so many stories to tell.... I wonder what he's thinking about when he's looking off into the distance. Maybe he's thinking about his family or some old friends.

And then there's that song about wandering the jianghu. It sounds so heroic, but also sad. Whenever I play it, I find myself thinking about a woman. Could she be... Senior Firedark's daoist partner?[2]

As her thoughts wandered, the warm wind blew, stirring Xu Qing's hair and robe.

When the wind touched Yunmen Qianfan, it pressed her garments down, causing her elegant curves to become even more prominent. She was very beautiful.

At that moment, it was as if heaven itself had taken notice, and began to turn that desert scene into a beautiful painting.

In that manner, time passed. Five days.

Xu Qing's divine will covered a massive area within the desert. At the same time, it penetrated every individual particle of sand. During the five days that passed, Xu Qing's study of the desert helped him to gain a deep sense of the chaos within time. He wasn't sure exactly why it was happening. But he could sense his sundials inside of him, and could feel the gnomons speeding up and slowing down, starting and stopping.

His dao of extreme time was very active. As a result of his observations, he was gradually coming to understand time better, and had even come up with some new speculations.

There's so much sand here that it seems as uncountable as the drops of water in a sea. But the reality is... that to me, it seems like a cohesive body. That doesn't mean that the desert itself has a body. Rather... it's completely unified!

Xu Qing's mind was racing.

Put more precisely, every grain of sand has different patterns of wear, and is a different size. They're all unique. But the truth is that when they started out, they were all exactly the same. Whether it was their size or the state of their surfaces, they were all completely identical. Given how many of them there are, it seems almost like they're all copies.

After his observation and reflection, he was reaching new enlightenment. Reaching out, he scooped up some sand and looked at it.

It seems like... there only used to be one grain of sand here. Because of the wind, or maybe some other external factors, the grain of sand moved. And every time it moved, it used its inherent time to effect transformations.

Each transformation caused a new timeline to appear. That's how there came to be many grains of sand. Because of the flow of time, or perhaps because of some other mysterious force, more and more timelines appeared. More and more grains of sand appeared.

Each grain started out the same. But as the individual timelines formed, they interacted, resulting in different friction and paths of motion. Ultimately, they turned into the desert we see now. That's why this place has so many different timelines, all interacting with each other.

Xu Qing looked off into the depths of the desert.

This is a really miraculous place. Or maybe it's better to say... that this place is a precious treasure related to time itself. Not very many people exist who could take the sand away. The only way to do so would be to correctly adjust the time in each grain of sand, and cause the desert to revert from chaos back, and take all of the multitude of sand grains and convert them back into a single grain.

Not even I could do that right now. But... at least this place has given me a glimpse into what can be done with the true power of time.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered.

“Splitting time!”

1. Most of the translations of these names are fairly straightforward. One exception is my use of the word ‘moors.’ In Chinese, its actually described as ‘plains’ in the name. However, later physical descriptions are a bit different, so I'm deviating slightly from the direct translation to match how it's described later. ❷

2. The last time ‘wandering the jianghu’ was mentioned was in [chapter 298](#). Just to reiterate, this kind of talk of the jianghu carries a very wuxia vibe. No, *Beyond the Timescape* is NOT wuxia. It's xianxia. And though I love xianxia, I have an even more complex and sentimental connection to wuxia. The idea of heroes wandering the jianghu is super entrancing to me. In fact, the concept of a vibrant and exciting jianghu is the very foundation of the ttrpg I co-authored, [Righteous Blood Ruthless Blades](#). ❷

Chapter 1117: A Direction for the Eighth Extreme

Chapter 1117: A Direction for the Eighth Extreme

Time doesn't just speed up, reverse, or stop. It has more profound functions....

Xu Qing looked out at the majestic desert. He was already able to use some of the power of time. But the moment he had gained enlightenment of the substructure of the place, he was shaken to the core by a whole host of new thoughts.

Time can be macroscopic. In other words, it can be viewed from the perspective of an entire star ring. On the other hand... time also exists within every living being, on a much smaller scale.

The River of Time exists everywhere. And yet, it's not fixed. It can be affected by outside forces or can be transformed in other ways. As for this desert, it shows how time can be split.

The enlightenment within Xu Qing grew clearer.

The movement of an individual grain of sand forms one timeline. But atop that one particular timeline will be a second grain of sand. The first grain and the second grain have the same substructure, but different timelines.

The interactions cause more timelines, leading to mass chaos, and in the end, this desert. In order to combine them all back into one, you would have to travel within time, but also be outside of time and independent. In that way, you could gain control.

His eyes glittered brightly.

Unfortunately, I'm not currently capable of doing that. The most I could do would be to cause disorder in time. That type of disorder sown into time, and the resulting transformations, are fundamentally... different fates? Every new timeline will result in a new grain of sand. The momentum of that grain of sand doesn't have anything to do with the previous grain. It's on its own path.

Xu Qing thought to the godly authority of fate that his god clone had, and gradually, a fantastic sensation began to build up within him. That was because he was coming to realize that cultivator authority and godly authority were basically different approaches that led to the same outcome.

That said, they do have subtle differences. My godly authority of fate works by using a carving knife to cut new threads of fate, bringing them to the forefront, and making them the dominant aspect. But splitting time involves provoking transformations to a whole bunch of different timelines belonging to the same object....

In order to gain deeper enlightenment of this, I'm going to need to go back to Revered Ancient and reunite my immortal body with my god clone. As for right now....

Xu Qing's eyes gleamed with mysterious light as he considered how he could use the ability to split time when in combat.

With that, he produced some holy fardark nectar and took a drink. He had already consumed two bottles of the nectar today, making this his third. As the effects of the nectar spread through him, Xu Qing's mind raced.

I could use it on myself, and with each movement I made, even the beating of my heart, I could form different timelines. Though I wouldn't be able to combine them, I could use my sundials to unleash the power in explosive bursts. It would create a chaotic sea of time!

Any who entered that chaotic sea would sustain the effects of time. They would be hit by countless timelines, causing them to either die or go insane! If I did the same thing to an enemy... the result would be the same! Their every movement would create chaotic timelines. As more built up, and they failed to control the transformations, then they would be stricken by mass chaos!

It would be like being gazed upon by a god, causing their flesh and blood to become independent entities. Not even an Imperial Sovereign would be able to easily deal with a divine ability like that!

Xu Qing's eyes turned cold.

Enter the sea and find bitterness. Experience tribulation. Time comes to cease. It is... Infinite Timelessness!

Xu Qing performed a double-handed incantation gesture to tap into his power and send it out into the desert. Then, he focused all of his thoughts, forming his will, gathering his dao, and sending all of that into his seventh extreme.

Having accomplished that, his thoughts continued to wander. The power of the holy fardark nectar was still active, causing his unusual powers of understanding to be even more astonishing.

There must be some other ways to use the ability to split time. I just need to think more about it. For example... can I combine it with spatial power?

Thoughts were spinning within his head.

New timelines, plus the space attached to that independent timeline... would create something the same as my essence, but also different. A different... fate?

Xu Qing struggled to control his breathing as he realized he was on the verge of grasping something new.

Put precisely, wouldn't that be called... space-time? Would that be a space-time created by me? Countless aspects of space-time. Countless versions of me....

Heart pounding, Xu Qing looked up and started doing some experimenting.

Three days passed.

He was still engrossed in the seeking of enlightenment, and of delving into methods of combining space and time. As his thoughts meandered, he made deductions and reached practical conclusions. But unfortunately, everything he tried resulted in failure.

Eventually, he changed tactics and started focusing on the chaotic timelines, using his spatial abilities to form a box to keep the timelines in. It was slow going. That didn't bother Xu Qing. He was fully immersed in what he was doing.

However... Yunmen Qianfan was increasingly shaken as she watched Xu Qing work on his cultivation. She had a Void Returning cultivation base, and would only be able to break through to Smoldering God with the right destined opportunity. But as a conclave member of her clan, she was quite knowledgeable.

That said, she hadn't dealt much with Imperial Sovereigns. Therefore, the sight of Xu Qing working on his cultivation left her stunned deeply. It was like a tempest that built within her as Xu Qing gained enlightenment of the desert.

During the first few days, she realized that the grains of sand that surrounded them were starting to glitter. Eventually, the surrounding desert came to look like a scintillating starry sky. She was understandably taken aback.

Next, the grains of sand started vibrating. She even noticed some of the sand starting to float up into the air. It was a dreamlike sensation that left her heart pounding. Yet that was like nothing compared to what happened next.

What she noticed... was that everything around Xu Qing was rippling and becoming blurry, almost in layers. And then, though she wasn't sure if she was seeing things or not, she was almost sure she saw countless versions of Xu Qing.

In the blink of an eye, the seemingly illusory vision vanished, and she found herself dizzy and shaking. The world was spinning around her. Even more shocking to her, she felt like she was rapidly shifting back and forth from being ancient, to being an infant, to being normal. The sensation continued, making it feel like she was living different lives all at the same time. She felt sorrow, joy, love, and hatred all at the same time.

Just as all of those emotions hit her, Xu Qing noticed what was happening. He quickly performed an incantation gesture, and a gentle force swept out and covered her, preventing the effects from reaching her. Had he not done that, she would have withered up into a skeleton.

The things that had just played out left Yunmen Qianfan absolutely shaken to the core.

Not even the patriarch makes me feel like this....

Gasping for breath, Yunmen Qianfan backed away from Xu Qing. She didn't dare to stay too close to him. She felt reverence, and at the same time, a strong sense of safety. As of that moment, she was convinced that divinations had been completely and utterly accurate. She had no idea if the other clan members who were part of this mission were alive. But she was sure that she would be fine.

That said, she was also getting the feeling that, after what just happened, her divination skills had improved.

Is Senior Firedark working on some sort of cultivation that connects to the dao of divination?

She continued to sit cross-legged some distance away, carefully trying to get as much information as she could from what she could sense.

Another two days passed.

The entire desert was now shining brightly. Innumerable grains of sand were floating into the air and spinning around like a tempest and causing intense rumbling sounds.

Someone was approaching the desert. It was a woman clad in a black gown and carrying a long black spear. She was pretty, but her gaze was fiendish, and she emanated a cold aura.

She stopped short on the desert border. Then, after a long moment passed, she stepped inside. However, after taking only one step, she stopped moving. A moment later she took a step back. As she stood there, she seemed almost like a mountain of ice, so cold that the surrounding energy solidified.

Any living things that got too close to her would be devoured by the frigid energy. However, that state only lasted for a short time before she returned to normal.

A grave expression overtook her face.

The Desert of Time.... The authority of time. No wonder the conclave elder and those vassals all died so strangely. And now it makes sense that they sent me to deal with this Yunmen Clan vassal. He's not just an Imperial Sovereign. He seems to be a mid Imperial Sovereign!

He must have been hiding out in the Yunmen Clan all along in the hopes of getting the secret key....

The woman stood there silently. She was considered a top chosen in the Diling Dynasty. On top of that, she had an Immortal Capital permission medallion. As someone who had come out on top of countless battles in her life, she was more knowledgeable than ninety-nine percent of the people in the Diling Dynasty. What was more, she was confident that she could best any enemy in the same level as herself.

But right now... her expression was grave, and she was feeling an increasingly strong sense of danger. The step she had just taken into the desert imparted a sensation of death.

I'm not strong enough to beat this guy.

Another long moment passed, whereupon she took a deep breath and backed away. After taking three steps, she stopped moving, and her face fell. She now realized that she had waited too long to back away.

She had stood inside the desert for too long, during which time her heart, her mind, and even her physical body had been too active. Most importantly, she just should not have stepped into the desert, not even one step. Before she even realized what was happening, numerous timelines had appeared on her body. And then, when she stepped back, she ended up surrounded by distortions, blurriness, and overlapping versions of herself.

She was an Imperial Sovereign, and thus, was no simpleton. The moment she realized something unusual was happening, she instantly activated her cultivation base. Without an instant of hesitation, she even resorted to detonating her clan's secret treasure, all while unleashing her authority in explosive fashion.

In a flash, an actual mountain of ice appeared with her in the middle, spreading out in all directions outside the desert. It sealed everything inside, freezing it, including her and time!

A few days later, the ice mountain was still there. The tempest in the desert had died down, and everything was back to normal.

Xu Qing opened his eyes. He didn't glance at the distant ice mountain. He simply sighed as a result of his enlightenment. After all of his experimentation, he had only come to prove that, thanks to his own lack of understanding, he could not combine space and time.

However, at least I have a direction to pursue for my eighth extreme!

Taking a deep breath, he waved his hand, causing the desert to seethe. Countless grains of sand trembled, and numerous timelines intersected, creating a dazzling, multi-colored display. A dazzling road appeared in front of Xu Qing.

"Come on, let's go," he said to Yunmen Qianfan, standing.

Yunmen Qianfan had just noticed the ice mountain, and had spotted the woman sealed inside. She recognized her.

"Senior, that woman... she tried to seal time, but she failed. She's not dead yet, but she's very close. Uh, what about... the thing she has on her?" Yunmen Qianfan blinked a few times.

Xu Qing shook his head but said nothing. The sea of infinite timelessness sealing the ice mountain had been instigated by him. However, he had no way to undo it. Anyone who entered it would be stuck inside. Of course, Xu Qing didn't want that information spreading.

He took a step forward onto the dazzling road. As he did, he crossed time and crossed the desert. When he reappeared... he was in front of an ancient teleportation portal. Yunmen Qianfan followed meekly.

Chapter 1118: We Don't Have To Be Enemies

Chapter 1118: We Don't Have To Be Enemies

The Desert of Time was fundamentally a very old place. But the network of teleportation portals in the west was even older. The western region was a sprawling place. Without the teleportation portals, traveling within it would have been taxing even for top experts. Because of that, after the starry sky was converted into land, and the western region was compacted, the Immortal Capital ordered the Dao Immortal Sect to set up a system of 108 teleportation portals in various locations. That was why no clans or organizations in the west would dare to damage the ancient teleportation portals.

Xu Qing was currently looking at one of those 108 portals, which was made of 36 enormous stone gates that stood tall in the wilderness plain.

The complex magical symbols carved into the gates were dark. But when Yunmen Qianfan took out some pieces of immortal jade and fed them into the proper place, the symbols glowed and the portal powered up. Fluctuations began rolling, not outward, but into the portal!

The ground trembled as an ancient power seemed to wake up. It was almost as if the lands had opened their mouth to devour the world. Deep rumbling sounds then emanated from the portal. The sound wasn't loud at first. But soon it became thunderous.

And then it mixed with a piercing sound coming from the horizon. The air pressure built up.

Xu Qing looked off toward the horizon. Someone was about to arrive at their destination.

Yunmen Qianfan didn't seem to notice what was happening. She inserted the final piece of immortal jade, and the symbols flared with bright blue light. The light seemed to distort Xu Qing's perceptions. Even the aurora overhead was affected, as it began to twist and ripple.... It was as if the area where the teleportation portal was located had become a depression in the land that dragged everything toward it. Anything in the area was being distorted in the same way. The five elements, space, time, and even light. None were exceptions. Nature itself was standing aside for this mysterious ceremony.

This portal surpassed any portal Xu Qing had seen in Revered Ancient. That said, when comparing it to the vortex in the Primeval Sea, it was a case of *a minor magician pales into insignificance in the presence of a great one*.

They work the same, though, Xu Qing thought. He was no amateur when it came to these things, as he already had a much deeper understanding of space and time than before. And right now, he could tell that this portal was emanating the power of both space and time. He was gradually able to see the substructure.

These so-called long-distance teleportations rely on the overlapping of space to shorten the distance to the destination. It's like putting two holes in a piece of paper and then folding the paper so the holes touch. In that manner, it's a simple thing to cross through the holes.

If I have sufficient enlightenment of space and time, then doesn't it mean that I could easily teleport anywhere in this heaven and earth. In fact... I could go anywhere in the planetary system or the star ring.

Unfortunately, because of the development on the horizon, Xu Qing wasn't able to spend more time contemplating the subject.

Even Yunmen Qianfan, who had been preparing the enchantment to activate the teleportation, now noticed that something was going on. She looked over at the horizon.

Though even the aurora was distorted because of the teleportation portal, there was a rift being opened up in the air that tore through the distortions. A crashing sound filled the area as a figure stepped out from the rift. The arrival of this person caused wild colors to flash in heaven and earth. Great winds blew. The terrifying might of a mid Imperial Sovereign spread out, weighing down with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force.

An old man appeared, his robe black, his hair a cascade of white. He looked ancient and withered, with a face lined with deep wrinkles. His eyes were sunken like two black holes, and his gaze was icy cold. Hovering in the air, he glared at Xu Qing.

"P-Patr... Patriarch Diling..." Yunmen Qianfan said, her voice trembled as she cowered behind Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked up at the patriarch, his expression the same as ever.

When their gazes locked, the air seemed to rip. A deafening rumbling exploded out, as if countless lightning bolts were crashing in the area. Pressure erupted from both of them. The two pressures slammed into each other destructively!

Xu Qing took a step back. Up above, the ends of Patriarch Diling's sleeves crumbled into ashes. It didn't seem that either was superior to the other.

"You're not here to fight, are you?" Xu Qing said coolly, shaking his head. He had not previously fought any mid Imperial Sovereigns. In fact, before coming to the west, his own assessment had been that his battle prowess was sufficient to fight anyone under that level. However, after coming to the west and recovering from his injuries, he had come to a deeper understanding of his dao. Though he had not yet formed his eighth extreme, he had achieved enough success that his battle prowess had improved. And yet he didn't get any sense that this person had the desire to do battle.

Patriarch Diling turned to look at the ice mountain on the other side of the desert. Then he looked at Xu Qing and spoke in a raspy voice.

"I already have the secret key. If you and I fight, one of us will die. But we have no animosity between the two of us. So what's the point of fighting? The secret key has the capacity to be used by both of us. And therefore... I came here to see if you qualify to join me. We don't have to be enemies. We can work together."

Patriarch Diling looked closely at Xu Qing, then turned and stepped back into the rift. From beginning to end, he didn't look at Yunmen Qianfan a single time.

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. Unless there was absolutely no choice, he didn't want to get in a life-or-death fight with someone that strong. Besides, this teleportation portal had given him a lot to think about. He looked back at the portal and continued his previous way of thinking. Right now, dao enlightenment was the most important thing for him.

I wonder if it's really true that when I form the eighth extreme I'll be able to teleport to anywhere in the star ring.

A moment later he shook his head. *Not necessarily.*

He thought back to what the ferry pilot had told him when they were crossing the God Blood River, and the fact that after you passed the Quasi-Immortal level, there was a special kind of power. It was the quintessence of dao lineaments of authority. It was called... canon!

He said that canon exists at a higher level, and because it envelops the thirty-six higher star rings, even the most powerful immortals in the lower star rings can't compare. At the moment, I don't have much of a sense of what canon is. But I have the feeling that after understanding space and time even more, I'll eventually be able to sense its existence.

Meanwhile, Yunmen Qianfan was feeling very calm. She now knew that she really was safe. Taking a deep breath, she walked up to the teleportation and uttered the enchantment.

As her words drifted out into the surrounding plain, the ceremony to activate the teleportation portal reached a critical point. The light from the magical symbols was dazzling, and the distortions grew more intense. Next, all 36 stone gates rumbled simultaneously. Light shone up

from them, converging into a glowing pillar that rose up into the clouds. It became a bright streak in the night, connecting heaven and earth.

Xu Qing and Yunmen Qianfan disappeared.

The next day....

Darkcloud City was different from most cities. It wasn't constructed out in the open, but rather, inside a massive mountain. It was like a grotto-heaven.

There was a magical light source inside that operated cyclically to create day and night. The walls of the cave were made of dark stone, the uneven surface of which resembled clouds. Thanks to the light source, those clouds looked dark, which led to the name of the city.

For a certain distance around the city, the aurora was blocked off and out of sight. At the moment, the light source in Darkcloud City was giving off a rosy glow, indicating that it was evening.

The glow from Darkcloud City shone onto Xu Qing and Yunmen Qianfan. Xu Qing was walking at a normal pace, but Yunmen Qianfan had slowed down. It had been a long journey, and now... the end was in sight.

Xu Qing stopped walking. "The Yunmen Clan mission was to escort you here. Presumably your clan has arranged for what happens after you get to Darkcloud City. Therefore, this is where we part."

Yunmen Qianfan was feeling somewhat emotional. The journey had been terrifying and wondrous, and she knew she should be happy to have reached her destination. Instead, she felt sad, and for some reason, didn't want to part with Xu Qing.

"Senior, the Yunmen Clan hasn't done much to prepare here in Darkcloud City. This place actually belongs to my mother's clan.... Senior, is there any chance you'd like to be a vassal here? Or perhaps... well, if you don't want to, that's fine. But you could stay here if you'd like. I—"

Xu Qing interrupted with a shake of his head. "I have other matters to attend to."

He turned to leave.

Yunmen Qianfan looked at him about to walk away and suddenly felt an immense sense of loss. Biting her lip, she hurried forward a few steps.

"Senior, thank you so much for escorting me on the journey. I don't have much that I can repay you with. Senior, please, take this. I know my cultivation base is weak, and I can't help you with battle prowess. But I made this jade slip with my life force. You can use it to perform a single divination. Hopefully you can find some use for it."

She took a jade slip out of her garment and offered it to him.

He stopped and looked back at her. He looked at the jade slip. Nodding, he took it. Then he continued walking away.

Zither music played behind him. The sunset was like a dream. Wandering the jianghu, living a life full of joy and grief. It ended in a flagon of unfiltered rice wine.[1]

Once beyond the border of Darkcloud City, when the red light of the aurora hit him, Xu Qing took out a flagon. He took a drink. He walked on.

The song ended, and Yunmen Qianfan sighed.

1. Again, the description of the song matches the song in [chapter 299](#). ٢٩٩

Chapter 1119: Vast Heaven and Earth

Chapter 1119: Vast Heaven and Earth

If one traveled south from the central part of the western planetary system, and went roughly 1.985 billion kilometers, they would eventually reach a mountain named Inkstone.[1]

There was a valley in that mountain, within which was a mysterious pond of emerald-green water. Occasionally, evil spirits would swim in the water. They looked like nothing more than smoke on the water, and if you touched them, they would vanish. The surrounding crags resembled bizarre dog fangs. Ancient trees rose up, creating a leafy canopy that blocked the sun.

Next to the pond was a stone dais, upon which was an inscription carved in very ancient characters. It said: *“Evil has fallen here. The good shall stay away.”*

Few people came to this location. Most just passed by as quickly as possible. The only people who did come were those who practiced cultivation that required evil energy. But even they would only come when the aura above was brightest, and they would never stay longer than an hour.

Standing just outside of Mount Inkstone was a young man in a black robe, who was peering at the pitch-black mountain. *According to the rumors, there was a fiendish devil cultivator in ancient times who buried his sword here just before he died. The sword’s name was Inkstone. It eventually became this mountain, which was full of evil energy. And that was how the Pond of Fallen Evil formed.*

This young man was Xu Qing, who had left Darkcloud City some time ago.

After escorting Yunmen Qianfan to Darkcloud City, he decided to do some traveling in the west. He focused on areas from the bamboo scroll Yunmen Qianfan had given him, specifically, the ones similar to the Desert of Time that had fantastic names and bizarre stories attached to them.

The Pond of Fallen Evil was his first stop.

After studying the mountain for a while, he waited until the aurora was at its brightest, then started walking up Mount Inkstone. He walked past boulders and thickets until he reached the valley. He saw the pond and he saw the dais with the inscription.

He also saw the so-called evil spirits. He studied them. They approached malevolently, howling viciously. They looked like they wanted to devour Xu Qing. However, as soon as they touched him, they collapsed into smoke.

This place isn't strong enough to kill a cultivator instantly. But it could infect the soul, slowly devouring one's flesh and blood. If you stay too long, you'll eventually die. Some of it has to do with the time of day you enter. When the aurora in the sky is dark, the evil spirits here will be much stronger.

Xu Qing cast his senses about to scan the area before focusing on the pond itself. His eyes glittered mysteriously as his gaze penetrated the water, passing through the ripples on the surface. At the bottom of the pond was a stone coffin.

I definitely don't want to touch that thing.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. He could tell that the coffin was extraordinary. And what was more, it was giving him a feeling of extreme danger. After studying the place for about an hour, he turned to leave.

This isn't a place I need to seek enlightenment from.

Just as he was about to step out of the valley, a sinister wind blew from the pond, causing all the vegetation to rustle. The sounds seemed ordinary in nature. Any mortal present would just hear the wind blowing and the leaves stirring. But Xu Qing's senses picked up more. There was clearly a gruish chanting in the wind.

"Silky grass among scattered trees, an icy rain the wind does chase.

"A frail and lonely soul simply longs for a bit of friendly grace.

"A lonely dais next to a spring; why, sir, did you come to this place?

"Through the haze, the lantern reveals a most beautiful face...."

The icy voice echoed in the silent valley. It was like a lonely spirit calling out into the night from the Yellow Springs.

At the same time, the surface of the pond rippled as the head of a woman rose halfway up from the water. She had an extremely pale face and dark hair that sank down into the water around her. As for her eyes, they were pure white as she stared at Xu Qing.

All of a sudden, everything started freezing over. The land. The plants. The crags. A frigid coldness spread out in all directions, causing everything to pulsate.

Then the woman in the pond vanished, almost as if she had teleported. She was now floating above the pond. Her gown was white, and she was surrounded by rippling distortions. She was about to continue with whatever she was doing when a huge pair of shears suddenly appeared above Xu Qing's head. They snapped loudly. An invisible thread was severed. freewebnovel.com

The severing of the thread caused the woman to cease her teleportations. She hovered in place, a few hundred meters away from Xu Qing, looking at him with her white eyes.

Xu Qing had remained calm the entire time. "I'm not your enemy," he said coolly. "But if you keep pestering me, I'll make sure you aren't able to stick around here any longer."

With that, he continued on his way. After he was gone, the temperature in the valley went back to normal.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing left Mount Inkstone. Once he was a good distance away, he looked back. He could sense that the gruish woman who had appeared was no longer there. But he could still hear her chanted words ringing in his ears.

The stories aren't true. There's no sword buried there. There's a god sealed there. And the fact that the mountain is still infected despite the sealing goes to show that it's a peak Altar God at the very least.

He turned and left.

Half a month passed.

765 million kilometers to the south of the central part of the western region was a plain called Heavenwind.

In the eastern part of that plain was a vast cave that was essentially a tunnel that stretched for thousands of kilometers. The further you got into the cave, the more cramped it got, until it was extremely narrow. It was a very mysterious place. Within the cave there was a nameless wind. It was a very strong wind that was rumored to be controlled by an immortal that lived inside.

Anyone who walked into the depths of the cave would eventually see strange carvings on the walls.

People say that the carvings are charms carved by the immortal that controls the wind. Supposedly, they contain the secret of how to summon and manipulate the wind. It's common for mutant beasts to appear in the cave. They can travel within the wind, as they're partly illusory.

It had taken Xu Qing about half a month to reach Heavenwind Cave. Now he stood outside, looking down at the description from the bamboo scroll Yunmen Qianfan had given him. Then he sent his divine will out to scan the area. His eyes gleamed.

This is a marvelous place. There's a dao lineament of wind authority here. And it's publicly open for people to seek enlightenment. There are hundreds of cultivators down there meditating.... The deeper you get into the cave, though, the less people you find. The wind gets stronger, and the more charms are carved into the walls.

Xu Qing had encountered wind authority before. And by using his dao of wood, he had been able to imitate it to an extent.

He strode down into the Heavenwind Cave. As he proceeded into the depths of the cave, he passed many cultivators who were seated cross-legged in meditation. He didn't pay much attention to them, and they didn't pay much attention to him.

Ten days later, he left.

A few months later, he appeared a great distance away in the Firevoid Mountains, which were in the western most parts of the western planetary system. The sky there was red, and the mountains stretched for 90 million miles. They had undulating peaks, and were made from volcanic rock that was bright red and constantly emanated burning heat. Occasionally, flame phoenixes would soar in the air, breathing fire and shaking the surroundings. There were lots of hot springs in the mountains, and the steam they let loose formed clouds and fog.

Supposedly, somewhere deep in the Firevoid Mountains was the Firevoid Immortal Palace. It was a palace of operations originally built by one of the Fifth Star Ring's eleven Immortal Lords, who was called Immortal Lord Firevoid.

People connected to the immortal palace by destiny could search for it and find it. In doing so, they could *reach heaven in a single bound*, and become apprenticed to Lord Firevoid. That said, from ancient times until modern, that story had been nothing more than that: a story. No one had ever acquired the destined opportunity it mentioned.

Xu Qing stayed in the Firevoid Mountains for about half a month. He went to many places, but never found any immortal palace. However, thanks to the fire that was everywhere, his understanding of five elements fire grew more profound. That said, his experience left him with a new question.

Where did all this fire come from...?

No answer came to him. Despite exploring the depths of the mountains, he never found any clues. The fire seemed to be naturally occurring. As if it *grew* there. It didn't seem like *grew* was the perfectly right word, but it made sense to Xu Qing based on what he had seen. At a certain point, he simply sat down cross-legged to seek enlightenment. After a while, a palace like a sun rose within his mind's eyes. It seemed to have a bit of a resonance with him.

But then his vision blurred, and an ethereal voice spoke into his mind.

"Your karma is not with me."

Before Xu Qing knew what was happening, a bizarre force ejected him from the Firevoid Mountains. After a bit of contemplation, he decided not to ask any questions. Turning, he bowed, then proceeded on his way.

This time his destination was the Primary Dao Precipice. It was a cliff that was also located in the west, although it took a bit of searching before Xu Qing found it.

The looming cliff was so dramatic that it looked like it had been sliced out by a massive blade. It towered so high that it entered the clouds. There were ancient characters carved into the cliff that read: *"The path of the primary dao is all-encompassing."*

Another point of interest was that there was a unique type of flower that grew on the cliff which was known as 'primary dao flower.' The flower was pure white, with petals of shining gold. It was as if the flower could bear witness to the most paramount of daos. And of course, it had medicinal

properties to match.... You couldn't eat it. You could only smell it. Doing so could help you to learn about the dao.[2]

Every hundred years, the flowers would bloom, and the fragrant aroma would assail all people within millions of kilometers. Because of that, cultivators would come to the precipice at that time to break through cultivation bottlenecks.

Unfortunately, Xu Qing didn't come at a good time, as the next bloom wasn't to come for another forty or more years. Because of that, there weren't many cultivators on the Primary Dao Precipice. However, upon arriving, Xu Qing felt like his thinking ability had been bolstered, as he suddenly came up with a few new trains of thought. After about half a year of constant traveling, he finally decided to stop for an extended time.

For one thing, he wanted to consolidate everything he had learned on his travels. What was more, he wanted to settle his heart and mind and look into the spatial clay he had acquired. He also wanted to try his hand at making that special kind of glue.

During the process, he took out the divination jade slip that Yunmen Qianfan had given to him. The jade slip didn't just contain her power of divination. It also had... a secret key. It was a magical symbol the likes of which Xu Qing had never seen before. It was ancient and mysterious, almost as if it had its own life force. However, it was dim, almost illusory, as if it hadn't reached the point at which it could shine brightly.

Xu Qing looked thoughtfully at the secret key. The original mission he had accepted had been to escort a conclave member of the Yunmen Clan to a specific destination. He had known all along that some of the people had secret keys. As he had learned from various members of the Diling Dynasty, the entire thing had been a game of chance.

Xu Qing wasn't sure of the real story behind the event. But there was one thing he was certain of.

When Yunmen Qianfan gave me this jade slip, I looked at it briefly, and... there was no secret key inside. The secret key seems to have formed naturally inside the jade slip.

He put the jade slip away. It didn't matter what the secret key was, or what location it was supposed to open. Right now, it wasn't his focus.

He planned to stay at the Primary Dao Precipice for a time, then move on to the Geotale Cisterns, the Cloudmire Basin, and finally, the Fallen Immortal Moors, which was supposedly the source of the aurora.

Unfortunately, plans don't always go as intended. The second round of the Immortal Capital's Trial of the Hunt had reached a critical point! It was a part of the competition that countless cultivators had been longing for.

On that day, the aurora above disappeared. On that day, four stars became the brightest sources of starlight in the sky of the Fifth Star Ring.

1. As most of you know, I convert the ancient/traditional Chinese units of measurement into modern units of measurement to make it easy to conceptualize what they indicate. In this case, I convert "li" into kilometers. The non-converted number is 3.97 billion li, or 3,970,000,000 if you

write out all the digits. As far as I can tell, the number is not significant in any way other than it being a really, really, really (insert really several more times) big number. If you take the narrative at face value, and assume that the star rings are roughly equivalent to galaxies, then the Fifth Star Ring seems to be a “flat earth” type landmass the size a galaxy. When you consider that the Milky Way is something like 950,000 trillion km across, a distance of roughly 2 billion km is not much. That said, I really don’t think the author’s intention is for us to make calculations and compare to real-life sizes. It’s just supposed to be BIG. For those of you who watched my YouTube video on this subject or read my [FAQ book](#), you will know that I actually asked the author personally about distances and sizes. And his response was basically “it’s not real life.” ☹️

2. There’s some wordplay here that, if translated directly, sounds kind of silly in English. Basically, the verb “to smell” is applied to the dao. So literally the text says that you can’t eat the flower, you can only smell it. And it’s like “smelling the dao.” The thing is that the verb has multiple meanings. For instance, it can also mean “to hear,” or more metaphorically “to be informed about something.” I’m just rendering it as “learn about” because that’s the meaning. And to say that it’s like “smelling the dao” is just... too silly for me. ☹️

Chapter 1120: Four Immortals

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The Fifth Star Ring’s crimson aurora was extraordinary and full of mystery. After all, it stretched out over the entire Fifth Star Ring, and contained unknowable fantastic properties.

But beyond that, there was also the fact that it was patrolled by twelve inspectors from the Immortal Capital. All twelve of them were Lower Immortals. That said, they didn’t make public appearances very often. They only came down when the Fifth Star Ring was facing impending catastrophe.

But right now, as the aura disappeared, some of the inspectors were revealed. That was because... the second round of the Trial of the Hunt had reached a critical point. It needed... protection from all four corners of the star ring!

Four stars appeared in the pitch black canopy of heaven, and they were visible in the east, west, south and north, in all four of the Fifth Star Ring’s planetary systems.

In the south was the Grand Immortal Mountain.

Within that mountain was a grand hall of pure silver. Out of it strode an old man in a silver robe who had the demeanor of a transcendent being. He was surrounded by a mysterious swirling energy as he walked out into the clouds. His cultivation base could shake heaven and earth, and sent out fluctuations into time itself. The sky rippled as he pulsed with heaven and earth power.

This old man was the patriarch of the Grand Immortal Mountain. He was Immortal Monarch Vastpeak! He had been sent into the south by the Immortal Capital to act as overseer. His cultivation base... was Lower Immortal!

As he emerged, he grew taller and taller, and the silver light shining off of him grew brighter and brighter. Eventually, he became the most spectacular and dazzling person in the entire south. Because there was no aurora in the dark sky, he became the only source of light in the south. All living beings there bowed their heads in astonishment.

Meanwhile, in the northern planetary system, there was the Sword Immortal School. In the east of that location was the Star Ring Pagoda. Cultivators emerged from those locations as well, provoking similar reactions from the people.

A stream of sword energy emerged that could sever heaven and slaughter gods. It shot high into the sky with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force, unstoppable and destructive. In the presence of that sword energy, Quasi-Immortals would bow their heads, Imperial Sovereigns would tremble, and Smoldering Gods would be struck senseless.

The boundless sword light turned into an immortal. The sword he wielded bore the name Blue Mallard, and the person who wielded it was Sword Immortal Blue Mallard. He wore blue clothing, had gray hair, and carried an ancient sword as he rose up into the sky.

Something similar happened in the east, except there was no sword. Instead, it was a woman with eyebrows as dark as distant mountains, and eyes as glistening as autumn ponds. She wore palace attire embroidered with gold and silver. Depicted in the embroidery were auspicious dragons and phoenixes that were incredibly lifelike. She wore a jade belt around her slender waist, and had black hair cascading down her back. She swayed gracefully as she walked, and was surrounded by the fragrance of a delicate perfume. Her every frown and smile seemed capable of deeply stirring the hearts of anyone.

As she emerged, her gown flowed around her. All living beings in the east bowed their heads and murmured her name. None of them dared to look at her.

She was Immortal Mistress Star Phoenix.

Last came the west.

Three astonishing figures had risen into the dome of heaven in the other locations, but an unprepossessing old man walked out of the Dao Immortal Sect. He wore a coarse robe that was a bit dirty. In fact, he almost looked like a farmer that had been interrupted in the middle of doing some farm work.

He didn't seem special at all, and the only thing he had with him was a wooden walking stick. He always carried that walking stick with him. It was so cracked and splintered that it seemed that after countless years of use, it was about to collapse.

Shaking his head, he walked up into the sky. With every step, he teetered, almost as if he were walking through the depths of time itself. There was no dazzling glow to him. He didn't cast out resplendent fluctuations. He seemed completely and utterly ordinary. The light that reached his face from the other three individuals just accentuated the wrinkles.

After he strode into the heights of the sky, he looked to the east, south, and then the north.

That was when Immortal Monarch Vastpeak spoke from the south. "You're late, Poison Monarch!

“How come you’re always late?” asked Star Phoenix from the east. “What was it this time? Were you busy tending your little flower garden?”

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard from the north didn’t say anything.

The man they had referred to as Poison Monarch didn’t seem very pleased with what the others had said. What was more, when he saw how the others were shining with dazzling light, like stars, he snorted and unleashed a black light that spread through the sky. It was clearly a paramount star on par with the others.

However, while the light from the others was gentle, aggressive, and cold, his light was like nighttime, and it pulsed with evil and wickedness. His disposition was quite opposite of theirs.

“I don’t have time to chat with you three,” Poison Monarch said in a sinister voice. “Also, you know I don’t like being called that. And if any ignorant fool uses that form of address on me again, I’d be more than happy to go over to their lands and distribute some poison canon.”

This old man actually had multiple names. Sir Virtuous. Immortal Monarch Boundless. Old Man Immortal Flood. And of course, Poison Monarch. The first three were names he had given himself. The fourth was what other people called him.

In response, Immortal Monarch Vastpeak just smiled. Star Phoenix from the east had a thoughtful look on her face.

As for Sword Immortal Blue Mallard, he looked up at Poison Monarch and said, “You’ve reached the critical point?”

Vastpeak’s gaze hardened, and Star Phoenix’s eyes shone brightly.

Poison Monarch in his farmer’s clothing was clearly more tolerant of Sword Immortal Blue Mallard. In response to the question, he nodded slowly. “I’ve touched the thread. But I lack some karma.” He didn’t seem inclined to go into any more details. Sounding a bit impatient, he said, “Hurry up. We’re wasting time.”

Sword Immortal Blue Mallard’s eyes narrowed, but he didn’t make any more inquiries.

It was Immortal Monarch Vastpeak’s turn to officiate this round of service, so he said, “Since we’re all here, then in accordance with the rules set forth by the Immortal Capital, we will now begin the legacy phase of the second round of the Trial of the Hunt. This will really heat things up. It will reflect well on us if some people with true potential rise to the top. If that happens, maybe we’ll be able to end our service early and get back to the Immortal Capital.”

Immortal Monarch Vastpeak waved his hand, and out of nowhere appeared a mountain made of natural and magical laws. In the blink of an eye, it went from something rather small to something massive floating in the sky over the south. All people in the south with permission medallions could see and sense it!

In the north, Sword Immortal Blue Mallard waved his hand, sending out a stream of sword energy that divided into countless bits of sword will. And thus, a sword rain began to fall in the northern planetary system.

In the east, Star Phoenix's legacy was a green cup. An ancient and mysterious energy pulsed from the cup, making it clear that despite its ordinary appearance, the cup was obviously something marvelous. In fact, the people with permission medallions who saw it were shaken to the core and felt sensations of deep terror.

After looking at the east, south, and north, Poison Monarch from the Dao Immortal Sect unleashed a divine ability that caused a black bamboo slip to appear. He crushed it. Instantly, black light erupted out.

Because the aurora was gone, the sky was already dark. Then Poison Monarch began to emanate darkness. But now, it was an even darker black.

The black light from the shattered bamboo slip surpassed everything else. It was like the most extreme black possible, the source of all darkness. Compared to this, the previous sky might as well have been called bright. As it spread, all of the west was cast into utter darkness. All light in the world was eradicated. For the moment, it didn't even exist. Even magical techniques and divine abilities that could create light were now incapable of doing anything.

This scene was very different from the ones playing out in the other cardinal directions. In those areas, everyone could look up and see what the legacy was. But in the west, when people looked up, they just saw darkness.

The unusual development caused the other three immortals to look over quizzically. All of them were fully aware that there was an unspoken agreement between the four of them about how the legacy phase of the second round worked. The legacies that were revealed had to be unique, such that even if someone gained enlightenment of them, even the other immortals, it wouldn't be possible to continuously use the legacy.

They were said to be legacies. But similar to dao lineaments of authority, they actually contained a bit of canon! It was impossible to put into words how precious of a chance this was.

These were legacies that had been prepared for the immortals' personal apprentices. In other words, only people who had approval could gain enlightenment of their fundamental nature. Of course, anyone with a permission medallion could seek enlightenment. But without approval, the process would be astonishingly difficult, and the chances of success would be virtually nonexistent.

This arrangement was the result of a tacit agreement between the four immortals. Of course, there was still a need to put on a pretense of giving everyone the chance.

And yet, despite all that... Poison Monarch didn't seem to be putting on a pretense at all right now. The legacy in the darkness from the bamboo slip could only be perceived by people with special qualifications, regardless of whether or not they had a permission medallion. Only people who met that qualification would be given a chance. No one else would.

Vastpeak shook his head. *Ah, who cares? The old poison freak is always trying to cover up his mistakes. The west hardly has anyone talented anyway. That's why he's doing this....*

Paying no further attention to what was happening, he vanished. The other two reacted similarly.

Meanwhile, Poison Monarch from the Dao Immortal Sect was already gone.

The sky in the Fifth Star Ring was now rumbling as legacies from the east, south, and north all shone brightly.

Only the west was covered in darkness.

In the darkness of the west, a bit to the east, there was a vast expanse of land that contained a restricted area controlled by the Li Clan. There were 9,000 pagodas there, arranged into a shocking spell formation. The central tower was some 300,000 meters tall, rising high into the night sky.

A person sat atop the tower. It was one of the eight Shining Stars of the Fifth Star Ring, and the only one associated with the west.

Li Mengtu. At the moment, he was looking up into the darkness above. He knew that this was a destined opportunity given to him by his Master. All he had to do was seek enlightenment.

If I succeed, then I'll have five types of authority. And this new one has a scrap of canon in it, which means I'll have a much higher chance of reaching immortal ascension later!

With such thoughts in mind, he took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with determination. He was fully aware that, given his current battle prowess, he would have no problem going to the Immortal Capital. All he had to do was reach immortal ascension, and then his clan would truly rise to prominence.

His clan had produced a Summer Immortal in the past. It was the clan patriarch. Supposedly, that patriarch wasn't a native of the Fifth Star Ring, but had actually come from another star ring. He had eventually fallen into a deep depression and then passed away in meditation. But his descendants were still around.

Li Mengtu knew... that the stories were completely true. As his clan fell into decline, he had worked hard, relying on his talent, killing anyone who got in his path, and ultimately becoming an apprentice of the only Lower Immortal in the west.

I have to keep working hard!

With that, Li Mengtu looked up into the sky and began seeking enlightenment.

Atop the Primary Dao Precipice, Xu Qing was also looking up. When the sky suddenly turned dark, he realized it looked like a huge flower. And every flower petal had the face of a beautiful woman on it.

"Is that...?"