

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1121: Dao-Corroding Flower

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The flower that Xu Qing could see in the sky above the west seemed to be rooted in nothingness. As it swayed back and forth, a sinister wind appeared that seemed to bring with it the sound of weeping. It was both demonic and gruish. The stem of the flower writhed like a snake. It was covered by a host of glittering thorns that made it seem surrounded by mystery and terror. It was as if the darkness contained some sort of evil and wicked aura. As for the flower's leaves, they were long, narrow, and violet. Their edges flickered with uneven flames, and were covered with dark veins that seemed to come from the deepest abyss.

What was more horrifying about the flower were the petals, which were dark red in the middle and black on the edges. They made the flower look like it had bloomed in hell. There were twelve petals, and each one contained the face of a beautiful woman. Some were laughing, others wept in grief. Some looked flirtatious, others were angry.

Every single woman was extraordinarily beautiful. They had long hair that spread through the petals and emerged into the open like tentacles. The way they swayed and writhed made it seem like they were hunting for prey. The flower emanated the lovely perfume of a woman, but if you smelled it for long enough, it turned into a noxious aroma that prompted vomiting.

The sight of the flower caused Xu Qing's eyes to glitter.

In the Fifth Star Ring, the east, south, and north all had glittering legacies up in the sky. Those legacies were currently the only sources of light.

Only people who had permission medallions could see the sources of light. Those who didn't qualify would look up and see only darkness. As for those who did have permission medallions, they had to use their own abilities, items, and pills as they sought enlightenment.

They all knew that they had entered the legacy phase, which was the most important part of the second round of the Trial of the Hunt. This phase was like a gift. After it was over, all of the participants would be ranked strongest to weakest based on their enlightenment.

After all, even if you gained only the tiniest scrap of enlightenment during this phase, it could have a profoundly beneficial effect. And if you could gain true enlightenment of the fundamental nature of the legacy, you could be like the *carp that jumped the dragon gate*, and *reach heaven in a single bound*. It made sense considering... that these were legacies that contained canon!

Not everyone in the Fifth Star Ring understood exactly what canon was. But the people who had Immortal Capital permission medallions weren't ordinary people. Even those who didn't understand a lot about canon would have at least heard about it.

All cultivators with medallions were currently overwhelmed with longing. It was common knowledge that in past Trial of the Hunts, it was almost always cultivators from orthodox sects who succeeded at the legacies. In fact, there were rumors that the legacy phase had been set up specifically for them.

That said, there had been exceptions through the years. And that was why everyone was going to fight hard.

In the east, south, and north medallion-holders were all seeking enlightenment. But the west was relatively quiet....

The sky in the west was as dark as could be imagined. People there who didn't have a permission medallion would look up and see nothing. In fact, most cultivators who *did* have medallions also saw nothing when they looked up. The color black had overtaken everything.

People were helpless, confused, and irritated. But the west was known for being lazy, and the cultivators there generally didn't like fighting. There were a few outliers who struggled to succeed, but the vast majority just gave up.

If the immortal from the Dao Immortal Sect wouldn't let people seek enlightenment during this phase... then they wouldn't try. After all, nobody could even see anything.

As for Xu Qing, he was on Primary Dao Precipice, looking at the demonic flower up above, and his eyes were glittering more and more brightly. The flower wasn't difficult for him to see.... In fact, he could see it perfectly clearly! It only took a moment of observation for him to understand what it was.

That's a legacy!

He could sense that there was a dao lineament of authority in the flower. But there was something even more impressive than that.

Is that...? Xu Qing's pupils constricted, and he struggled to control his breathing.

However, as his divine will spread out, he noticed that the handful of cultivators nearby on the Primary Dao Precipice had only turned their attention to the sky for a moment before looking away.

There are two people here with permission medallions. Their range isn't as big as mine, so they can't detect me. Nobody is looking at this flower, not even those two. They can't see it? What's so unusual about this flower?

Xu Qing sent out his divine will to examine the facial expressions of the other cultivators on the cliff. He soon realized that the two of them weren't here as lone wolves. They were actually working together. Before long, based on their facial expressions and conversation, Xu Qing realized what was going on.

This is the legacy phase. Everyone with a permission medallion can seek enlightenment! But they can't see anything....

Mind racing, Xu Qing looked up into the sky again at the flower. Now he could see a red thread emerging from the gruish flower and heading off toward the east. There was someone in the east that was absorbing the flower! Based on the speed with which it was happening, they would be able to absorb the flower completely within ten days.

Xu Qing's eyes flashed with determination.

I don't know exactly what's going on here. But I do know that I'll regret it later if I give up on this legacy flower.

Having reached this point in his train of thought, he unhesitatingly looked up into the sky and gathered his concentration.

First, he studied the women in the petals. Bewitching chanting sounds entered his ears and delved into his mind. A moment later, a magenta color appeared on Xu Qing, and his flesh was wriggling as faces started bulging out from inside. The faces looked like they wanted to devour him.

A tremor passed through him as he unleashed authority to keep himself lucid. He opened his eyes and coughed up a massive mouthful of blood. When the blood landed on the ground, flowers bloomed that looked exactly like the one in the sky. However, they rapidly withered and crumbled into ash.

He had failed to gain enlightenment.

I'm doing something wrong. I tried to understand the inner nature of the flower, but I'm not strong enough. What's more, this legacy is different from the legendary places I've visited on my journey so far.

He thought about the situation for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. After that, he circulated the five elements within him, as well as space and time. Then he gathered his authority of erasure and his immortal skill authority.

Bolstering himself with the power of authority, he once again looked at the flower in the sky. This time, he used different dao lineaments of authority to observe the flower. An hour later, he shivered as his body withered, leaving him hardly more than skin and bones. At the same time, his blood exploded out through his pores.

It splashed onto the ground and turned into a sea of flowers. The sea of flowers rapidly withered up. Then Xu Qing struggled to open his eyes. He was in great pain and was very weak. He had failed again.

I'm still doing something wrong. Maybe... I should use the same method I used to imprint the Ghost Emperor mountain into myself. I can take the flower and put it in my sea of consciousness! [1]

Xu Qing wiped the blood off his face, then took out some medicinal pills. After a few breaths of time passed, he took a drink from a bottle of holy fardark nectar, then cleared his thoughts. He

waited for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Then he waited for a full hour. Everything seemed normal.

Two hours later... a thread descended from the swaying flower in the sky. It was the second thread, and it was going right toward Xu Qing on the Primary Dao Precipice. It immediately entered the cave where he had holed up and connected to his forehead! His forehead glittered as a lineament like a flower petal formed there.

East of the central part of the western planetary system, in the Li Clan's restricted area, Li Mengtu sat cross-legged atop the tallest of the 9,000 towers, his forehead also shining brightly. He also had a flower petal there, but because he had been seeking enlightenment longer than Xu Qing, the petal was complete, and a second petal was now forming. All of a sudden, his eyes snapped open and he looked off into the distance.

Someone's stealing from me! That's impossible!

Suddenly breathing raggedly, and his expression grim, he focused on the direction of the guilty party. He had been able to tell that he was the only one seeking enlightenment earlier, and the process had been going quickly.

But just now, his speed of absorption had slowed. And he could tell from the flower petal he currently had that someone else had joined the session of enlightenment.

His first reaction was incredulity. His Master had told him that this time around, the legacy phase... would deviate from the rules laid forth by the Immortal Capital. That the legacy wouldn't be set aside exclusively for him, it would have specific requirements attached to it.

There were three, and they were all focused around him. Only someone who met all three requirements could see the dao-corroding flower! Theoretically speaking, it was impossible for a second person to perfectly conform to all the requirements.

How can this be happening?

The fact that someone else had joined in made Li Mengtu both nervous and angry. He was determined to get the legacy of the dao-corroding flower, and could not tolerate any slip-ups. After all, he was fully aware that his Master had set up this situation to pass on his legacy. It was truly an amazing and precious opportunity.

There was a reason it was called a dao-corroding flower. After gaining enlightenment of it, you could use a terrifying divine ability that would corrode the dao lineaments of other people. It was essentially a high-level poison.

If that were all it could do, it would have been impressive but not amazing. After all, there were many ways to deal with an attack that corroded dao lineaments.

But... when you added in canon, it became completely different. If you likened 'essence' to the authority of a local government, then 'authority' was like a command from the imperial

government ministries. And ‘canon’... was above either of those things. It was like a decree from the emperor himself!

This dao-corroding flower had a scrap of canon in it! When it was used, it wouldn’t just corrode dao lineaments of authority... it could cut them away! It could permanently cut away authority from someone. It could slice out their dao lineament. And because it was done with canon, the effects were irreversible! Unless you had a divine ability to counter it that also had canon... it was impossible to defend against.

Given how precious of an asset that would be, it was no wonder Li Mengtu was antsy to get it. But now he had to interrupt his own session of enlightenment to send a message to his Master.

In the Dao Immortal Sect in the west, there was a fertile land filled with endless plants. All of them were bizarre and fantastic. Any of them that were sent out into the world would lead to outright war.

Poison Monarch was still dressed as a farmer as he used some nine firmaments immortal serum to water a pair of plants. He was concentrating fully on his work, to the point where he wasn’t paying attention to anything going on outside.

The two plants he had been watering both seemed intelligent, and they were currently fighting over who would get the immortal serum.

“How interesting...” he said in a raspy voice. “So, which of you has karma with me?”

1. The Ghost Emperor mountain enlightenment section started in [chapter 306](#). ❸

Chapter 1122: Li Clan Reserve Power

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In the sky over the west was an enormous flower that virtually no one could see. And it was swaying back and forth dramatically. It was also starting to get blurry. Of the twelve petals with the beautiful women in them, two had vanished. There were now ten left. Of those, two were very blurry.

The two petals which had vanished were now visible on Li Mengtu’s forehead! As the apprentice of Poison Monarch, this legacy had been provided for his sake, and he had prepared thoroughly. He knew more than anyone what the legacy was. In fact, he had even been able to study images of it on multiple occasions. Each time, he had gained some enlightenment.

In fact, he had made every advance bit of preparation possible. He had put a lot of thought into poison, and had come to a deep understanding of it. And now, all of that preparation was paying off and giving him a huge advantage in seeking enlightenment.

On the other hand, Xu Qing had made some mistakes, wasted time, and was now quite behind. However, after he realized how to do it correctly, his enlightenment proceeded with spectacular speed. Unfortunately, that speed was still slow compared to Li Mengtu.

This period of enlightenment required advanced preparation and sudden inspiration.[1]

It wasn't as simple as just branding the information onto one's mind. It required comprehension, and a deep realization of something's inner nature. That was the way to truly get the legacy.

Li Mengtu's advance preparations were completely and utterly thorough.

But Xu Qing was only just starting to explore the situation. That was why there was such a clear difference between the two in the early stages of enlightenment.

It didn't take long for Li Mengtu to be able to sense what was going on through the flower. The realization made him relax a bit.

It's impossible to say why things changed like this, or how this other person has qualified to seek enlightenment of the legacy. But in the end... weak people are weak. My Master prepared this legacy for me personally. There's no way some outsider could prepare properly. Comparing this guy to me is like comparing the mud to the clouds.

Li Mengtu's eyes gleamed icily as a third flower petal formed on his forehead.

Back at the Primary Dao Precipice, Xu Qing's facial expression was completely placid. The flower petal on his forehead was about twenty percent complete. In other words, it had a long way to go.

He could tell that the flower overhead was getting blurry, and he could sense that the threads leading off to the east were getting denser. But he wasn't feeling anxious. He knew that he wasn't the only one in existence with freakish powers of understanding. Clearly, whoever else was seeking enlightenment in this moment was actually superior to him.

What was more, this session of enlightenment was obviously a competition. Coming out ahead in the competition would be great. But failing to do so wasn't a reason to get angry.

I'm doing things correctly now. This legacy is different from all those legendary places I visited in my travels. What I need to do is get this legacy into my sea of consciousness, just like I did with the Ghost Emperor mountain all those years ago.

Xu Qing looked up at the flower. That was his reference point. Then, he started making an outline in his heart, over and over again, all with the goal of understanding the inner nature of the legacy. Based on his experiences, the better he understood it, the more smoothly the enlightenment would go. Unfortunately, after studying its inner nature for a while, his gaze hardened, and his heart started beating faster.

This legacy....

Being a bit uncertain of what he was dealing with, he temporarily ceased trying to put it in his sea of consciousness. Instead, he focused on trying to seek enlightenment of what he had already brought into himself. After some analysis, a puzzled expression appeared on his face.

“It’s a kind of poison?” he murmured. He thought about it for a moment.

He was skilled in poison. After all, the taboo poison he had made part of himself had already become a godly authority. He didn’t have the taboo poison with him in this immortal body. It was in his god clone. But poison was part of the dao of plants and vegetation. And that dao was one of learning and knowledge. It had been fixed within his mind, meaning that it wasn’t isolated in one particular body.

So this legacy is about the dao of plants and vegetation....

Xu Qing shifted his thoughts as he recalled what he knew about plants and vegetation. Then he went back to observing the legacy flower, and now he started noticing details he had missed before.

This flower has sawtooth leaves, a hollow stalk, and has typical characteristics of perennial plants. It’s similar to a mountlong orchid, except that this flower is illusory. It has twelve petals, each of which has the face of a woman. Each facial expression is different. It contains the power of longing, making it similar to seven emotions grass. It exudes a poisonous air, and it has tentacles that produce a toxic serum. Even the veins in the leaves contain poison, as do the roots.... This is definitely a poisonous plant....

It contains powerful poisons from top to bottom. Though the poisons don’t seem impressive at first, when you combine them, they create millions upon millions of variations. In fact, that combined poison is nothing short of astounding. An ordinary person who looked at this poisonous plant wouldn’t see much special about it. But when you analyze it based on the dao of plants and vegetation, it’s obvious that someone bred it!

They used no less than ten million different types of plants, extracting their medicinal properties to make a new plant.... There are also other unique items added in. This plant has an extremely high level of personhood! Whoever did this was nothing short of amazing!

Xu Qing’s heart was pounding, and he was visibly moved. The more he understood about what he was looking at, the more surprised he was.

To breed a poisonous plant like this would require an outlandish level of skill in the dao of plants and vegetation.

Xu Qing was really starting to get excited.

That means that ordinary enlightenment won’t do much here. And a broad overview of it isn’t going to do anything. The best thing to do here... is to analyze the poison! And poison....

Xu Qing’s eyes glittered mysteriously. Information about plants and vegetation was now swirling in Xu Qing’s mind. One by one he made comparisons, organized, and combined. The information became a tool for him.

He imitated similar poisons, mixing their poisonous properties. Inspiration would hit him as he observed the flower in the sky. And thus, an image of a flower was slowly being imprinted in his sea of consciousness.

In that manner, time passed.

In the tower in the Li Clan's restricted area, Li Mengtu was fully immersed in seeking enlightenment of the legacy. The third flower petal on his forehead had fully formed.

The process had slowed down. The deeper his enlightenment became, the more difficult it was. Although he was fully confident, and knew he had extraordinary powers of understanding, that didn't mean he would succeed instantly.

Master said that gaining enlightenment of the legacy would probably take ten days or so. It seems he was right.

Taking a deep breath, Li Mengtu prepared to continue with the process. But then, the flower overhead shivered and suddenly got more blurry. Of the nine remaining flowers... one had just disappeared!

"Hmm?" Li Mengtu's pupils constricted, and at the same time, flashed with cold light. Then he looked in the direction of the Primary Dao Precipice, his expression grim.

Over at the Primary Dao Precipice, a flower petal had appeared on Xu Qing's forehead.

I'm doing the right thing!

Xu Qing was delighted to sense the flower petal. It had been a long time since he felt this happy. One reason was because he was acquiring the legacy now. The other reason was that the process was really improving his understanding of plants and vegetation. He had finally noticed that the legacy contained the aura of something that surpassed a dao lineament of authority.

This poisonous plant is a postheaven entity. There was never a plant like it before. It's unprecedented. In other words, it's coming into existence was an act of creation! And then, it was blessed in a way that ensured no second version could ever come into existence. Not even its creator could make another one. And that means that... it's essentially extinct already.

It has no past and no future. This is the only plant like it in the world. And when you add in its astonishing personhood.... So this unique dao is used to summon something truly mysterious. It can form a power that surpasses dao lineaments of authority?

Xu Qing's mind was spinning. Eyes glittering, he looked up at the flower and murmured a single word.

"Canon?"

The moment the word left his mouth, his mind suddenly opened up. From that point, there was nothing stopping him! After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, a second flower petal appeared on his forehead.

An hour later, a third petal formed! The process was shockingly fast.

Though Xu Qing had started late, as of now... he was about to catch up to Li Mengtu. None of the other people with permission medallions in the west could tell what was going on. Otherwise there would have been a huge commotion. Xu Qing was succeeding far too quickly.

Li Mengtu was about to go mad. He had three full petals on his forehead now, with a fourth one that was only about forty percent complete.

Where'd this person come from?? He was going slow before, but then suddenly sped up to a freakish speed!

Li Mengtu's heart was racing, and he could hardly control his breathing. To see someone stealing his destined opportunity right out from under his nose caused his killing intent to surge. At the same time, it made him very nervous.

I can't let this happen!

Li Mengtu's eyes filled with determination. He still had trump cards left to play. He had originally planned to use them only after he acquired the eighth petal, to get a sudden burst of speed. But now....

Li Mengtu lifted both hands and performed an incantation gesture. The tower beneath him trembled, and then a red beam of light shot up from it into the air. At the same time, other towers in the restricted area did the same, their red light arcing up into the sky.

There were a total of 9,000 towers, and now all of them were bolstering Li Mengtu's powers of understanding. As a result, the fourth flower petal on his forehead was now rapidly approaching completion.

And yet, he didn't think that was enough. The flower only had twelve petals, and if he didn't act fast enough, his opponent might surpass him, and he couldn't accept that.

Gritting his teeth, he pulled out a scroll painting! It pulsed with an ancient aura that caused wild colors to flash in heaven and earth. This was the only legacy treasure of the Li Clan! Years ago, the clan patriarch had brought it from their homeland. Just before passing away in meditation, he had passed it on to later generations, along with an explanation.

"This scroll can be used three times. Crack it open, and it will seal anyone under Quasi-Immortal. Open it halfway, and it will devastate Quasi-Immortals. Open it all the way, and it will seal Lower Immortals!"

Countless years had passed, and the Li Clan had managed to maintain ownership of the scroll the entire time. For generation after generation, Li Clan cultivators had tried to use the scroll. To open it. All of them had failed.

Only Li Mengtu... had succeeded in ancestral awakening. He could use the scroll painting, although at the moment he was only strong enough to crack it open. This was the true reserve power that made him one of the Shining Stars of the Fifth Star Ring!

1. What I'm rendering as "inspiration" is actually just another word that dictionaries/MTL will define as "enlightenment." The first version of enlightenment, which is the word most commonly used in this novel when Xu Qing "seeks/gains enlightenment," contains a sense of feeling, emotion, and time spent. The second term which I'm rendering as "inspiration" here, contains a sense of sudden and unexpected enlightenment, as if something becomes clear in an instant after a certain time of confusion or lack of understanding. Normally I would also render it as just "enlightenment," but since it's contrasting them here I'll use these two different versions to make sure the difference is obvious. That goes for the rest of this scene. Any time over the next couple chapters that you see "inspiration," it's the same term being used to indicate some sort of *sudden* enlightenment. ❸

Chapter 1123: Dao Fight

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In the Li Clan's restricted area, Li Mengtu narrowed his eyes and waved his hand, causing the scroll to fly out and hover above his head. It didn't open up, but rather, sent out a gentle light of blessing down onto Li Mengtu.

Even going all out, I can only crack open the scroll. And its range is only 500 kilometers....

The scroll still had a function when not opened. It could bolster a person's mind, making it easier to think clearly and gain enlightenment. At the same time, it could serve as a trump card to provide a huge boost when needed. Combined with the 9,000 towers, it provided a major augmentation to his powers of understanding.

I'd planned to save this for the end. But I guess... I'll have to use it early!

Li Mengtu took a deep breath. He knew that this legacy had been prepared for him by his Master, which was a deviation from what the other three planetary systems were doing. This legacy was unique in that it could only be acquired once by a single person! If his state of enlightenment ended up crumbling, he would have no way to regain control.

I don't care who this person is. This behavior makes it clear that this is a dao fight. We might not have any previous enmity, but as of now... we can't live together under the same sky! [1]

With such thoughts on his mind, Li Mengtu's eyes glittered as if they contained numerous ancient magical symbols. Then he looked up at the legacy flower, and inspiration surged within him. The fourth flower petal on his forehead became complete in an instant, and then a fifth petal started

forming. He would fight hard to gain the upper hand. And after everything was over, he would go track down the person who was trying to compete with him.

And he would take back the legacy that belonged to him! There was only one way to do that. By killing the other person!

Having made his decision, Li Mengtu cleared his thoughts and focused on enlightenment. Using the help of the 9,000 towers and his clan's mysterious scroll painting, his powers of understanding advanced by leaps and bounds.

Before long, the fifth flower petal was complete. Previously, there had been twelve petals in the sky, but now there were only four. Then, without any warning... another petal disappeared. Only three were left.

The petal that had just gone missing was now on the forehead of Xu Qing, who was still at the Primary Dao Precipice. As four flower petals rotated on his forehead, the dao of plants and vegetation filled his heart and mind. He was now methodically coming to understand all aspects of the legacy flower's poisonous properties.

Suddenly he raised his hands and instinctively performed an incantation gesture. Illusory medicinal plants appeared, swirling around each other, occasionally combining and occasionally splitting apart.

An incense stick of time passed. A fifth flower petal appeared on Xu Qing's forehead.

At the same time, a sixth petal formed on the forehead of Li Mengtu in the Li Clan's restricted area. The flower in the dome of heaven was very blurry, but it was still possible to see that there was a single petal left.

All of a sudden, two streams of red shot down from that flower, one toward the Primary Dao Precipice, one toward the restricted area in the Li Clan.

Xu Qing and Li Mengtu were now directly competing. Both were operating at incredible speed, relying on their various methods of understanding to absorb the petal. As a result, the petal was rapidly disappearing.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, the entire western planetary system was filled with thunderous rumbling sounds.

The legacy flower vanished. In the moment it did, the darkness lifted, and the red aurora became visible again. The other cultivators with permission medallions in the west knew... that the legacy phase was over.

"Nobody even had a chance to seek enlightenment in the legacy phase. I guess that means the only person who qualified was Li Mengtu."

"We all know what was going on. There's no point in jabbering about it. The legacy was prepared for him. The other three regions do the same thing; they just hide the truth a bit better."

“That’s how social hierarchy works. People like us can’t do anything about it.”

“Heh. You said it, not me.”

As discussions raged in the west, the 9,000 towers in the Li Clan went dark. The light that had been shining from them went out, and the clan’s scroll painting dropped down into Li Mengtu’s hands. He stood up.

Shockingly, he had six-and-a-half flower petals on his forehead! Six were complete. But the half-petal had obviously not become a seventh. What was more, it was blurry, indicating that only fifty percent of it was there.

Li Mengtu stood there rubbing his forehead. A somber and desolate aura surrounded him, causing everything around him to turn as cold as ice. In fact, black snowflakes started drifting to the ground.

Fine. It’s time to see... who exactly you are!

Li Mengtu’s killing intent burned with great intensity. He was the only Shining Star in the west, and he refused to believe that there was anyone in the same generation as himself who could compare to him. In fact, even if he ran into a late Imperial Sovereign, he was confident that he could use his clan’s legacy treasure to seal that person and ultimately kill them.

With no further hesitation, Li Mengtu shot into the air, causing terrifying pressure to surround him as he headed in the direction of the Primary Dao Precipice.

He needed no teleportation portal. Though he was far away from the cliff, as one of the Shining Stars of the region, and as an apprentice of a Lower Immortal, he had all sorts of treasures to rely on. One of them ensured that he could travel great distances without having to use teleportation portals.

As he rocketed in the direction of the Primary Dao Precipice, Xu Qing was in that very location opening his eyes.

Five-and-a-half flower petals were spinning on Xu Qing’s forehead. He felt the sensation of sudden inspiration, but at the same time, detected an intense sensation of deadly crisis.

That sense of danger caused him to sigh inwardly. He had predicted that something like this would happen.

In the moment of enlightenment, he had seen the thread stretching from the legacy flower into the east, and knew it indicated he was competing with someone else. He had assumed there would be an eighty to ninety percent chance fighting would break out after the legacy phase ended. He was also fairly certain he knew who the other party was.

There were only two threads in the entire western region. That means there were only two people seeking enlightenment. The fact that no one else could see the flower or participate indicates... that there were requirements to be able to seek enlightenment.

No one else qualified, and though I don't know why I somehow qualified, it does seem to indicate that my participation was unexpected. Given all of that, the identity of the other person... seems fairly obvious. He must be... the eighth Shining Star of the Fifth Star Ring, and the only shining star in the west. Li Mengtu!

Xu Qing stood and recalled the information about Li Mengtu from the map.

Li Mengtu comes from the Li Clan. He later joined the Dao Immortal Sect and became the apprentice of the heavenly inspector there, who's a Lower Immortal.

His clan rose to prominence thanks to him. They were previously in decline, but are now very strong. Something unique about their clan is that direct bloodline clan members all have the character "tu" in their name.[2]

His cultivation base is only in early Imperial Sovereign, but he has four types of authority. With his battle prowess, plus 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's eyes narrowed. It didn't sound like this information was up-to-date, so he had to treat it as a general overview. It seemed most likely that Li Mengtu was a lot more dangerous than the information indicated.

Xu Qing looked off into the distance, his eyes radiating determination. He had acquired this legacy, so there was no way he would give it up just because things got dangerous. Great daos were all about fighting and struggle. Giving up would just result in falling behind. But taking a step forward would lead to continued momentum.

Xu Qing took a deep breath and then shot off into the distance. He had no intention of staying behind on the cliff.

As one of the Shining Stars, Li Mengtu surely had all sorts of trump cards, and definitely had outstanding elements to his battle prowess. Even if you prepared well in advance, fighting an opponent like that wouldn't necessarily be worth it.

But if I can form my eighth extreme....

Eyes narrowing, Xu Qing flew as fast as possible toward the nearest teleportation portal. His plan was to head toward the God Blood River.

That's the best place to fight. If I win, great. But if I start losing, I'll have a path to make a getaway.

Xu Qing accelerated, causing ripples to spread out as he shot through the sky.

A few days later... an enormous, pitch-black hand suddenly appeared above the Primary Dao Precipice, instantly blocking out the light of the aurora. There weren't many cultivators on the cliff, but all of them were shocked to see the hand, as well as the figure within it. He had a black robe, black hair, icy eyes, and six-and-a-half flower petals on his forehead. He was none other than Li Mengtu. Glancing around, he identified the spot where Xu Qing had been meditating.

"Binding Order: Wind Inquiry! What cultivation level was this cultivator?"

He reached out, and the wind began to take the shape of a person.

“Binding Order: Heaven Inquiry! What types of authority did this cultivator have?”

His words echoed out as ripples filled the sky, becoming the spirit of the person.

“Binding Order: Law Inquiry! Where did this cultivator go?”

Magical laws gathered, turning into the eyes of the person. A mysterious entity was now looking at Li Mengtu. Then, it spoke.

“Smoldering God cultivation base. Nine types of authority. The five elements form the foundation, augmented by time and space, as well as erasure and something else very gruish. Battle prowess equivalent to mid Imperial Sovereign. He’s heading south!”

Upon hearing the information, Li Mengtu’s eyes shone brightly. “Someone like that....”

He turned to look off into the distance, his killing intent intensifying. An instant later, he was speeding southward, all the while checking everything within the range of his Immortal Capital permission medallion. Any time he detected the presence of anyone else with a medallion, he would approach to check them.

If someone could look down on the entire western region, they would see Li Mengtu slowly catching up to Xu Qing.

In the Dao Immortal Sect, within the fields of plants, Poison Monarch was still watering the two poisonous plants with nine firmaments immortal serum. He still looked like a farmer.

The two poisonous plants seemed even more intelligent than before, and they were still struggling with each other to get as much of the serum as possible. Both had stabbed their poisonous thorns into the other. They were even trying to devour each other.

Seeing that caused Poison Monarch to smile. “It doesn’t matter which one dies and which gets my legacy. It’s all karma to me.”

1. The term ‘dao fight’ is basically an invented term, not something commonly used either in literature or spoken Chinese. The character I’m rendering as ‘fight’ has a lot of dictionary definitions, such as: contend, vie, strive, argue, debate, fight (over or for something), struggle, wrangle. After experimenting with a few different options, I picked ‘fight’ as my translation choice based on some later wordplay. But as you can see from the various options, the implication of this usage of “fight” is that of a struggle as opposed to combat or battle. 鬥

2. We still do not have any explanation about why the “tu” in the name of the clan members is important. In fact, I don’t think we have any clues. This character “tu” means earth/soil, the same one from the five elements. It could also be interpreted to mean your home or homeland. Up to this point, it just seems to be emphasized as a unique and interesting aspect of the clan name, without any deeper meaning. 土

Chapter 1124: Not About Mercy or Grudges. Either Live or Die!

Chapter 1124: Not About Mercy or Grudges. Either Live or Die!

Days flew past. Xu Qing was little more than a streak of afterimages in the sky. He was now so close to the God Blood River that he just needed to go through one more of the ancient teleportation portals.

Based on my current speed, I should be able to reach the portal in two days!

He reined in his aura, hid the flower petals on his forehead, and used various secret magics to head as quickly as possible toward the portal.

Time ticked by. The sense of impending danger increased. The feeling of mounting crisis seemed to confirm that his previous analysis was correct.

It made no sense that Li Mengtu *wouldn't* qualify to seek enlightenment, considering he was the apprentice of a Lower Immortal and one of the Shining Stars. Li Mengtu had to be the other person Xu Qing had sensed during the legacy phase.

Although the information about him says that he has mid Imperial Sovereign battle prowess, it's likely that information is out-of-date. That's not to mention that he probably keeps his true battle prowess a secret.

Xu Qing pondered such things as he proceeded at top speed.

Half a day passed.

The aurora in the sky was back to normal, flowing like an endless red river. Xu Qing sped along beneath it, keeping a close eye around him. All of a sudden, he looked over his shoulder.

He had concealed his Immortal Capital permission medallion, but that only protected him from people whose medallions had a smaller range than his own. He couldn't hide from people whose medallions had a greater range than his. Using his medallion, he had just spotted a dazzling mote of light around 5,000,000 kilometers away.

It was moving so fast that, only moments after he spotted it, it had halved the distance.

An instant later, thunderous rumbling sounds rose up from the horizon. Millions of bolts of lightning exploded into the air like writhing snakes. The lightning bolts rapidly spread out to fill the sky. They made it seem like doomsday had come, like heaven would collapse and the earth would shatter. A terrifying aura filled the area.

Next, a person appeared within the terrifying sea of lightning. He was a young man with black hair, clad in a black robe. His eyes were like glittering stars filled with lightning, and his features

were handsome, though sinister. Astonishingly, there were six-and-a-half flower petals rotating on his forehead.

He was none other than Li Mengtu.

The moment he appeared, he seemed to replace the sun and moon, as if he was the ruler of all heaven and earth.

He took a step forward, and Xu Qing's mind spun. An intense pressure raged out, like a tempest, causing Xu Qing's hair and robes to whip back and forth. He didn't speak a single word. The moment he spotted Xu Qing, he erupted with a heaven-shaking, earth-shattering mightiness.

That mightiness was the evidence of a dao lineament, and contained the aura of authority. It surpassed the authority of any Imperial Sovereign Xu Qing had faced up to this point. In fact, if you described his authority in terms of the light in a starry sky, then Li Mengtu was like a full moon.

As that aura erupted, a symbol formed in front of Li Mengtu. It was a sealing mark that emanated an intense aura of death.

The moment it appeared, Li Mengtu spoke a single word.

“Decease!”

Clouds seethed. Wild colors flashed. The entire world seemed to fill with an aura of death, causing demonic images to appear, as if the entire place had been filled with evil spirits from the Yellow Springs. Anguished howling sounds drifted about.

A seemingly unstoppable sensation of dying slammed into Xu Qing. It was invisible, unstoppable, and unavoidable. The word spoken and the authority behind it had become the inevitable. It had become natural law, a heavenly dao. It had become everything.

This was one of Li Mengtu's four types of authority. It was a death curse!

When he attacked, he resorted immediately to authority and trump cards! That made it possible to see how decisive and murderous Li Mengtu was. It was the result of the other type of authority he had used, that of binding revelation. That was how he had learned about Xu Qing.

And after finding out what kind of opponent he was up against, he knew he couldn't underestimate him. It was a case of either not doing anything, or going all out. If he made a move, he would kill his opponent without offering a chance for a counterattack or defense!

The truth was that he wasn't sure if Xu Qing was the person he sought. But he knew based on the information he had procured that the person he was following had the ability to conceal sealing marks.

Along the way, whenever he ran into anyone else with a permission medallion, he had immediately resorted to trump cards. He had killed every single one. After all, if he ended up killing the person he sought, then the legacy would return to him.

And if someone he attacked *could* defend against his trump card, then it meant... that they were probably the person he was looking for. He would rather kill the wrong person than let the guilty party escape. He made no exceptions.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing's expression flickered, and his heart started pounding. There was no way to evade this enemy, nor any way to resist the authority. In an instant, his body withered, and his life force started fading.

It was as if this curse was part of death itself, and could destroy even fate. This type of authority was very gruish, and everything Xu Qing did to fight back failed.

The sensation of death filled him. Any other person would have had a hard time surviving such a situation. After all, this attacker... was Li Mengtu. But though none of Xu Qing's tricks worked... he could still use his timeshifting magic to reverse things.

An instant later, a sundial appeared behind him, and fluctuations of time spread out, distorting everything. As the gnomon spun, time flowed around him. Even the will of death had to give way in the face of time.

In the blink of an eye, Xu Qing's withered state reversed. His soul was no longer dim, and his aura was no longer weak. He was back to the way he had been moments before!

The moment he resolved the deadly crisis, he backed up, circulated his cultivation base, and unleashed his authority. His expression was uncharacteristically grave. This was the first time he had met a person who immediately resorted to the most deadly trump cards possible. What was more, this person's actions hinted at a possibility.

There's no way that he can use trump cards like that without paying some sort of price! Either he's used to doing it, or... he had some way to get information about me. That's why he didn't want to give me a chance to fight back. He immediately went all out with a trump card in the hopes of killing me!

That thought occurred to Xu Qing almost immediately, but it didn't discourage him from fighting back. At almost the exact moment that his sundial worked, he launched a counter attack. He didn't waste time probing his enemy. He didn't give time for things to develop. He also went right for a trump card!

Heaven and earth rumbled. A great wind kicked up. Even the sea of lightning was affected as Xu Qing's five phases erupted, creating a shocking aura that filled the world. Time and space both rose up.

In the blink of an eye, metal became a godly seal, earth became a dao altar, wood became a blade trough, water became streaks of blood, fire burned, time became an axel, and space became a blade!

After coming to the western planetary system, Xu Qing's five elements God Decapitation Altar had evolved. By adding time and space into it, he had turned it into a seven extremes God Decapitation Altar. From a distance, it was possible to see the gigantic God Decapitation Altar overtaking everything. Heaven and earth filled with flickering light. The world trembled.

The god-decapitating blade slashed down toward Li Mengtu!

Li Mengtu's face had gone a bit pale. Every one of his authorities was extraordinary. And yet, because they were so terrifying and gruish, they actually hurt him when he used them. Unfortunately, his opponent had just reversed time and then used a spectacular divine ability. Eyes narrowing and pupils constricting, he suddenly erupted with a frigid coldness.

"You're definitely the person I'm looking for!" he growled. He could sense the mighty nature of this blade, and from its horrible pressure, he could see how amazing it was. And yet, his eyes flashed, and instead of dodging, he lifted up his right hand and performed an incantation gesture in front of his chest.

"Flowers in Mirrors!"

The moment the words left his mouth, something bizarre happened. A host of huge black mirrors appeared all around him, so that he was in the middle of it all. The mirrors looked extremely ancient, and they pulsed with a terrifying aura, like that of a curse, which seemed like it came from a minor world. As the aura swirled around, reflections of Xu Qing appeared within the mirrors.

And then, though the god-decapitating blade seemed like it was about to slash into Li Mengtu... Xu Qing's heart sank. A sense of deadly catastrophe had welled up within him. At that critical moment, Xu Qing's eyes flashed viciously, and instead of retracting the power of the God Decapitation Altar, he actually bolstered it, making it even stronger.

At the same time, he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and pushed down. In an instant, water seemed to spread out beneath his feet. Heaven and earth had become a well.

The god-decapitating blade fell, slashing into Li Mengtu. However, the injury actually appeared on Xu Qing.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the magic of Fishing the Moon in the Well continued to form.

Li Mengtu was then fished out of the well. But so was Xu Qing. Fishing out the former caused his soul to leave the mirrors and sustain injury. Fishing out the latter caused him to avoid the decapitating blade and escape from the well!

In the blink of an eye, heaven-rending, earth-crushing might erupted out, shattering the sea of lightning.

The mirrors were still there around Li Mengtu, but his soul had flown out, and was now screaming and trying to use defensive techniques against the god-decapitating blade. Although the soul was not destroyed, it was sent spinning off to the side, seriously damaged.

As for Xu Qing, a tremor passed through him as the blade slashed through the well. Of course, he couldn't escape being affected. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he tumbled backward. Face grim, he looked at Li Mengtu.

The battle had just started and was already very intense. But that only filled Xu Qing with the desire to fight. At that point, he ceased concealing the flower petals. In the blink of an eye, five-and-a-half of them appeared on his forehead.

Li Mengtu's soul had returned to his body, and he staggered backward coughing up mouthfuls of blood. Now the mirrors rotating around him reflected himself instead of Xu Qing. When he looked up, so did they, and all of their eyes burned with sinister killing intent. That was especially true when he spotted the flower petals on Xu Qing's forehead.

"You definitely qualify to compete with me! Fights over great daos are not about mercy or grudges. We shall battle today, and whether I kill you or you kill me, there won't be any hard feelings!"

Chapter 1125: Aurora Fills the Sky, Like an Immortal Flood!

Chapter 1125: Aurora Fills the Sky, Like an Immortal Flood!

Li Mengtu spoke slowly and clearly, in a way that was obviously sincere. Given the somber expression on his face, there was no doubt that he believed the words he had spoken to be extremely important.

This was a dao fight. It was not about asking for mercy or pursuing grudges. There was no concern for living or dying. Truth be told, that was simply how cultivators lived. In low levels they focused on surviving. In slightly higher levels, they were concerned with getting stronger. But in high levels like this, everything was about the dao.

And Li Mengtu's dao could not be tarnished. Hovering there in midair with his black robes and hair swirling in the wind, he looked down at Xu Qing and said, "I am Li Mengtu, apprentice of Immortal Monarch Boundless from the Dao Immortal Sect. I don't like dirty tricks. Nor am I the kind of person to rely on help from my clan or Master. I'm acting alone today. And I swear to hold nothing back to kill you and fulfill my dao!"

Xu Qing didn't say anything. He had dealt with many types of people in his life. And though people like Li Mengtu weren't very common, they did exist. For example, Sir Firedark had been very much like this Li Mengtu. Xu Qing could tell from the look in his eye that he was completely focused on his dao.

"I'm Xu Qing," he said.

Li Mengtu nodded. There was no need for questions or chatting. Eyes filling with a somber and desolate look, he lifted his right hand, pointed into the sky, and barked, "Lightning!"

A deafening boom echoed out in the sky, and the sea of lightning that had dispersed because of the fluctuations of combat returned. And this time it was ten times or possibly even a hundred times as impressive. Rumbling echoed out in all directions as silver streaks swept across the sky. They instantly reached a distance of 500,000 kilometers, and then continued on to well past 5,000,000 kilometers. They seemed endless.

And then the lightning began to converge. The lightning caused colors to flash in the sky. The heavens seemed to roar, like the bellow of a great dao. The sea of lightning was back. It wasn't just in the sky. Lightning rose from the lands below, filling everything.

After the process was complete, there was a vortex-like sea of lightning tens of millions of kilometers wide. It was a completely shocking sight, like a heavenly tribulation that had come to the world.

This was Li Mengtu's second type of authority, that of lightning! Lightning was about inflicting death.

As Li Mengtu hovered there surrounded by the light and sound, he seemed like the lord of all lightning. In fact, there were even lightning bolts coming off him and connecting him to the surrounding sea. Then he pointed at Xu Qing. The sea of lightning screamed, shaking the cosmos as it shot toward Xu Qing.

The mightiness of this authority caused Xu Qing's pupils to constrict. He hadn't encountered a large number of Imperial Sovereigns, but he did know he hadn't run into any that were as impressive as Li Mengtu.

Just what I would expect of one of the Shining Stars!

Xu Qing wasn't the least bit hesitant. As Li Mengtu had said, this was a dao fight...

I guess that means it's time to fight!

His eyes were shining. After all, from the moment Peerless City disappeared from existence, his entire journey had been a fight!

He fought to live. He fought fate. He fought the dao of heaven and earth.

Suddenly, the pupil of his right eye blurred as it was overtaken by a dao lineament! The dao lineament of erasure shot out from his right eye, erasing everything that he could see! The land blurred and the sky rippled. And the incoming sea of lightning was instantly affected!

Unfortunately, the authority of lightning was hard to surpass when it came to killing and slaughter. It was even capable of dealing with the authority of erasure. Everything shook as blinding light exploded out, filled with terrifyingly deadly power.

The dao lineament in Xu Qing's right eye collapsed, and stinging pain filled him. Blood spurted out of his eye.

Despite that, the power of his erasure caused the sea of lightning to start rippling. Its momentum had been slowed. Though it still approached Xu Qing, when the critical moment arrived, a towering sword will emerged from Xu Qing.

It was The Emperor's Sword. The sword flew out of the top of his head, and as he took a step forward, he reached up and grabbed it by the hilt.

As soon as he took hold of the sword, his energy surged, becoming something so mighty it could shake the starry sky. And as a result, the mountain-toppling, sea-draining sea of lightning lurched to a halt.

Xu Qing took a step forward and slashed down with The Emperor's Sword. Everything blurred as a howling sound echoed out, and boundless earth energy built up in the sword. It was turning into a sword of the earth!

Earth Treasury stance!

The sword slashed into the sea of lightning. The power of earth rose, also like a sea. As a result, the sea of lightning shook violently. Intense shockwaves rolled out when the two forces clashed. The sea of lightning passed through the sword energy to appear right in front of Xu Qing. There, it exploded and turned into a deadly attack.

Xu Qing's hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture as he dispelled the power of the attack. A string of booms rang out as he was shoved backward.

On the other side, the sword energy slashed through the sea of lightning to appear in front of Li Mengtu. As it did, all of the mirrors around Li Mengtu flashed. Li Mengtu also performed an incantation gesture, causing the might of the sword to diminish as he also slid backward.

From a distance, it looked like the two of them were evenly matched. In between them, the earth sea and the lightning sea clashed while the two cultivators were forced in the opposite direction.

However, Li Mengtu was an early Imperial Sovereign and one of the Shining Stars. He came from the Li Clan, was the apprentice of Poison Monarch, and had more tricks up his sleeve than the vast majority of Imperial Sovereigns. Even as he was shoved backward, his eyes shone with a silver light. It was as if he had become the incarnation of heavenly might as he spoke.

"I inquire of your soul: who is your Master?"

"I inquire of your spirit: where are you from?"

"I inquire of your body: do you have internal injuries?"

"I inquire of your heart: how many more moves do you have?"

This was none other than his third type of authority, that of binding revelation! This authority could be used to inquire of heaven, earth, and the dao. It could be used to inquire of all living things, and could make any sort of inquiry. It was a very intimidating and startling authority!

When a question was asked with this authority, the truth would be revealed. Refusal would bring punishment from the dao. And if one refused to respond, they would be struck immobile... in body, soul, and will.

When the binding inquiry was made, Xu Qing shivered. A terrifying and intimidating force swept over him, striking him immobile. It hit his soul, dazing him. It hit his memories, overwhelming them.

The moment Xu Qing was affected, Li Mengtu's eyes flashed with cold light, and he fell back further, all while performing a double-handed incantation gesture.

He wasn't truly interested in asking those questions of Xu Qing. In fact, he couldn't care less what the answers were. He didn't care where this person came from, who his Master was, what internal injuries he had, or what additional moves he had to make. Such things were inconsequential. His sole interest was using the binding inquiry to immobilize him.

He wanted to create an opportunity to launch a fatal blow! And that opportunity was now there. Therefore, he didn't hesitate for an instant to unleash the deadly legacy trump card from his Master!

"Aurora Fills the Sky, Like an Immortal Flood!"

His Master had several names: Sir Virtuous; Immortal Monarch Boundless; Old Man Immortal Flood; Poison Monarch. The names didn't come from nowhere. Actually, each name represented one of Poison Monarch's divine abilities. One of them, Old Man Immortal Flood, represented the divine ability that Li Mengtu had just unleashed.

As Li Mengtu performed the incantation gesture and spoke the words, the dome of heaven trembled. The crimson aurora that filled the sky of the Fifth Star Ring as far as the eye could see, and existed far above the previous sea of lightning... was affected.

There was no way its entirety was affected. In the Fifth Star Ring, that aurora was paramount, and something that could affect the entire thing would have been stupefying.

But right now, the aura overhead was rippling! The area affected was about 50 kilometers! That part of the aurora... detached!

50 kilometers of the aurora seemed to come under Li Mengtu's control. It dropped out of the sky as if it had been cut out or severed. It brought with it an unfathomable heaviness, an immense pressure that weighed down on the hearts and minds of everyone. It was like a flood. A waterfall. A sea, dropping down from the sky. Crimson light descended, and as it passed, the sea of lightning crumbled and the sword will collapsed.

That one single attack caused Xu Qing's energy and blood to seethe. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he dropped down to the ground.

His injuries were not insignificant. That said, the injury actually snapped him out of the immobilized state caused by the binding inquiry.

He could now see that 50 kilometers of the aurora falling, causing immense pressure and red light to fill the area. It was like a sea of blood.

Li Mengtu was 50 kilometers away and keeping his distance. Even he was leery of this divine ability that could summon the aurora.

Meanwhile, Xu Qing was experiencing a sensation of deadly crisis. As the critical moment neared, he unhesitatingly unleashed the full power of his five elements authorities. He had spent a year resting and studying, and had also picked up bits of enlightenment while traveling. Now he called on all of that.

He started with the wood element. Countless plants sprang up, obscuring the sky and creating a world of vegetation that blocked the aurora. The world of wood shattered, and the aurora continued to descend. Xu Qing went into a double-handed incantation gesture, and the scraps of wood burst into towering flames to block the aurora. The addition of the fire worked temporarily, and then Xu Qing's thoughts shifted, causing all of the fire elements to suddenly give birth to earth. A world of earth formed to further block the aurora. The earth element erupted, and for a time it worked, but soon it shifted into metal. The power of metal shot up to pierce the sky.

But the aurora was so astonishing that the piercing failed.

When metal reached its limits, it came time to release water. The power of the water element swept out in an unprecedented fashion. The surroundings turned into a huge sea, filling millions upon millions of kilometers and creating a body of water that mortals couldn't even fathom. The sea of water spread boundlessly, reflecting the dome of heaven!

And as the crimson aurora fell, it was reflected within the water. It was another obstacle.

Ultimately, the sea weakened, and finally the wood element was born again. And thus, the five elements shifted between each other, creating obstacle after obstacle for the aurora, preventing it from descending.

Around that time, the killing intent in Xu Qing's eyes burned. Waving his hand, he produced several sticks of life-burning incense. After imprinting them with the image of Li Mengtu, he lit them, bolstered them with the power of time, and then blew on them. The incense burned so quickly that, in an instant, it was almost burned out.

Li Mengtu's face fell as blood sprayed out of his mouth. He staggered back, a dour look on his face.

Xu Qing took advantage of the moment to lunge forward. The power of space erupted, giving him astonishing momentum as he closed in on Li Mengtu.

At the same time, the dao lineament of immortal skills surged in the pupil of his left eye. The power of Six Thieves Deceive Life formed. Five Dogs Cleave Immortals erupted. A golden crow flew out, blessing Xu Qing. Then Little Shadow appeared to help him.

But even all that wasn't enough. Without any hesitation, Xu Qing unleashed the fourth stream of sword energy that Grandpa Ninth had given him. He sent it right toward Li Mengtu!

Li Mengtu's facial expression was unsurpassably grave as he urgently shot backward.

Chapter 1126: Everyone's a Schemer

Chapter 1126: Everyone's a Schemer

The aurora was an immortal flood, still weighing down with immense pressure, but blocked by the cycle of five elements that Xu Qing had unleashed. Unfortunately, as Xu Qing knew, it was only a temporary respite. At the very most, it would have a few dozen breaths of time!

If he wanted to truly vanquish the immortal flood of the aurora, he needed to figure out a way to kill Li Mengtu. If his opponent died, then his opponent's magical techniques would be dispelled.

And thus, as Li Mengtu fell back... Xu Qing became a string of afterimages as he blurred toward his opponent with explosive speed. He was moving so fast that it almost seemed like time had slowed down. His eyes grew even colder than before as his left hand flashed in an incantation gesture.

He shoved his hand out, and the power of space appeared. Wild colors flashed as a grid came into being. Each part of the grid was an independent space, and they now had all of Li Mengtu's paths of retreat blocked. He couldn't teleport. And the pressure was now weighing down on him dangerously.

Li Mengtu's heart pounded. He knew that this 'Xu Qing' was no ordinary opponent. The power of the binding revelation he had used back at the Primary Dao Precipice had told him that he was dealing with someone very strong. Despite the preparations Li Mengtu had made, he was finding this to be a difficult opponent to deal with.

He had to focus completely on the fighting. If he was even the least bit lax, if he made even the slightest misstep, his opponent would seize that opportunity. And that was exactly what he had done, and now Li Mengtu had to deal with an attack of mountain-toppling, sea-draining force. This enemy was obviously proficient in finding openings to exploit.

Li Mengtu was coming to realize that this opponent had stronger mental fortitude than he himself had possessed in the fight that earned him his reputation. The thoughts flashing through Li Mengtu's mind didn't distract him from defending himself. Even though he was isolated by the power of space, he quickly bit the tip of his tongue and spat out a mouthful of blood. It was blood sorcery, and as a result, a host of blood-red magical symbols sprang into being in front of him.

Flowers in Mirrors spun around him, flashing as they prepared to deal with the incoming tempest. However... it was never a good idea to use the same move twice on Xu Qing, unless you could pull it off with absolute perfection. And in this case, Flowers in Mirrors had not been pulled off perfectly.

The first time it had been used on Xu Qing, it caught him off guard. But this time, he was prepared. This was not some sort of karmic magic. Rather, it was a divine ability that used the power of space.

The basic principle was magical reflection. It created overlapping layers of dimensional space that could be used to deliver deadly blows the enemy wouldn't even notice.

In that way, its flaws were deeply hidden, though still present. The flaws were the reflections and the intangible overlapping dimensions.

Xu Qing could deal with the latter by isolating them with the similar spatial power of his grid.

As for the former... that was exactly why he had summoned Little Shadow. Little Shadow had a body of darkness that could spread out wildly in the shortest of moments to cover the reflections. And thus, what Flowers in Mirrors reflected was nothing but darkness. The dimensional spaces were isolated, and couldn't be truly revealed, thus rendering them incomplete. All of this takes a

bit of time to describe, but in reality, took place in the amount of time it takes a spark to fly off a piece of flint.

Flowers in Mirrors was limited, and Xu Qing's immortal skills erupted.

First came Six Thieves Deceive Life. The seven emotions and six sensory pleasures that came from the immortal skill were like monsters that exploded within Li Mengtu's mind and heart. They infected his emotions, devoured his will, and stained his dao heart.

Next came Five Dogs Cleave Immortals. The stingy dog entered the haunt and threw memories into chaos. An opened door formed, allowing the greedy dog to howl, charge inside, and bind the soul. Next, the foolish dog formed, lusting for death. The depraved dog entered, longing to fall into hell. And finally came the austere dog, and the body was lost forever!

An anguished scream escaped from Li Mengtu's mouth. His face twisted, and his body shook violently. This was the first time in his life that he had faced a magical technique like this. In fact, at this point, it wasn't even right to call it a magical technique.

It was more like a gruish curse! Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. His three spiritual souls and seven physical souls howled in agony. And his memories had fallen into chaos.

But Xu Qing's deadly attack wasn't over yet. In fact, he had just gotten started. He defused Flowers in Mirrors. He used immortal skills to throw the enemy's soul into confusion. And next came sword energy. Grandpa Ninth had given him five streams of sword energy, and he was now using the last of them.

Sword energy shone brightly in the sky, moving with unstoppable momentum. An aggressive sword projection appeared, slicing through everything until it reached Li Mengtu.

Li Mengtu shivered as a massive wound opened on his chest, out of which poured masses of blood.

Next came the black fire of the golden crow, which turned into a black spear. Xu Qing emerged from the flames to grab the spear. His cultivation base was surging as the powers of time and space appeared. He pulled them into the long spear. Then he stabbed out in front of him!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the spear stabbed into the exact wound that Grandpa Ninth's sword energy had just opened up. It pierced into his flesh, reached his heart, and stabbed through it!

The aurora vanished. The five elements retreated. Yet Xu Qing's facial expression had not turned relaxed. Rather, his pupils had constricted. Abandoning any plans to rip the corpse to pieces, he fell back. He moved so quickly that he was off in the distance only a moment later.

The moment he retreated, a terrifying explosion spread out from Li Mengtu's corpse. It covered an area of 500 kilometers. All living things within that area were wiped out of existence!

Xu Qing's expression was grave as he stood 500 kilometers away, as even at that distance, he could sense the terrifying nature of the blast. Had he been a bit slower, he probably wouldn't have died, but would have suffered grievous injuries.

At the same time, a raspy voice spoke from the destroyed lands in front of Xu Qing.

“You gave me no choice but to use my third authority. Very impressive!”

Along with the voice came Li Mengtu, slowly walking out from the destruction. His clothes were tattered, but his injuries... were gone. Everything about him, from his aura to his general state to his cultivation base were back at the ultimate peak.

The power of his third authority was heaven-defying. It was called regeneration!

Li Mengtu looked at Xu Qing with a grave, complicated look. “Before I met you, I assumed you qualified to participate in the legacy phase because you were among the best of the best, and that even if you were stronger than me, it couldn’t be by that much.

“But now... even though I have an early Imperial Sovereign cultivation base and you’re only a late Smoldering God, the fact is that our battle prowess is roughly the same. When it comes to talent and aptitude, I can’t match you. But in the world we live in, nothing is truly fair. There is—”

“You talk too much,” Xu Qing said calmly. After encountering an Imperial Sovereign who used words to weave taboo formations, Xu Qing was wary of such methods. Therefore, even as he interrupted his opponent, the authority of erasure glittered in his eye. He immediately erased all traces of dao lineaments in the area.

Li Mengtu’s eyes gleamed as he lifted his right hand and pushed it out in front of him. The fragrance of flowers spread out from Li Mengtu. The sky went dark, and then... countless flowers and plants bloomed for millions of kilometers in every direction.

The entire area was turned into a sea of flowers. As for the flowers... some were beautiful, some were ugly, some were rotten, some were ferocious. But all of them... were poisonous! As for the floral aroma, it contained the aura of innumerable poisonous plants that combined into one poison! It was an astonishing aura that spread out rapidly to cover Xu Qing.

Any other person in Xu Qing’s shoes would be in a deadly situation. But Xu Qing was an expert when it came to the dao of plants and vegetation. Though he had no medicinal plants on him at the moment, he had a lot of medicinal pills. Medicinal pills were formed by refining plants and vegetation, and adjusting their internal qualities to meet a specific need.

Thus, Xu Qing waved his hand, causing a host of pills to appear. He had selected every one intentionally, and after they were out in the open, he crushed them, extracting what he needed from them, and then using his skill to combine them again.

That was how he neutralized the poison attack. Time was limited, so he couldn’t completely dispel the poison. But he could at least keep his battle prowess up despite being in the middle of the sea of flowers.

However, even as Xu Qing produced the medicinal pills and then crushed them to deal with the poison, Li Mengtu shot forward explosively, moving over 500 kilometers in an instant to appear right in front of Xu Qing. There, he launched a fist strike.

Xu Qing looked up and fought back.

Deafening booms rang out as Li Mengtu launched a storm of blows. He sometimes used physical attacks, sometimes magical attacks. He was fully on the offensive, not even bothering to mount a defense. He was fighting in a completely different way than before.

Facing such an intense attack forced Xu Qing to respond in kind. The black spear in his hand flashed back and forth. The five elements authority exploded out. The power of space and time rippled forth. In the shortest of moments, both of them were fighting back and forth with utter ferocity. There was no pause in the rumbling booms.

Of course, there were injuries. Xu Qing was being hurt both in body and soul. He was soon covered with blood.

Strangely, though... Li Mengtu wasn't hurt at all! Put more precisely, whenever he was hurt, his regeneration abilities would return him to normal! It seemed almost as if his authority of regeneration gave him infinite healing abilities.

When Xu Qing saw that happening, his heart sank. This regeneration authority was truly heaven-defying, and what was worse, his opponent could seemingly use it over and over again.... A power like that went beyond heaven-defying.

Xu Qing had never seen anything like it. In fact, he had never even heard of anything like it. That said, his ability to reverse time could be considered comparable, so at least he had some level of understanding.

My time reversal ability is heaven-defying. But I can't even use it twice in a row. In that case, this Li Mengtu... must have to pay some sort of price to use this authority. There's no way he can just keep using it long term. And once it stops working, he'll definitely have to pay that price!

With that thought in mind, Xu Qing gritted his teeth and shifted from offense to defense. As his opponent launched his flurry of attacks, Xu Qing fell back.

Despite how Xu Qing was delaying things, Li Mengtu only attacked with greater ferocity. Xu Qing's injuries kept piling up and worsening, until he was drenched in blood.

Li Mengtu's eyes glittered. He knew that his regeneration authority was out of the ordinary. Specifically, he could enter the regeneration state for a time, but had to pay a heavy price. What was more, once he left the state, there would be a big backlash. And he would also be unable to enter the state a second time, at least temporarily.

Though he seemed like he wasn't worried about Xu Qing's time reversal technique, the truth was that he was very wary of it. And thus, there were two reasons why he was pushing the attack.

The first was that, though he knew it was wasting time, that counted for Xu Qing as well. As far as he could tell, Xu Qing could only reverse time to a limited degree. At the most, it was probably an incense stick's worth of time. In fact, that seemed generous. It was probably only a few dozen breaths of time.

Second, because of the threat of time reversal, he didn't want to unleash any trump cards that dealt a lot of damage. Instead, he would use a flurry of attacks to cause the damage to build up steadily. That way, if Xu Qing did decide to reverse time, he wouldn't be able to do so in a way that brought

him back to his peak state. At the best, he would only go back to a point where he was *less* injured, but still injured.

Now I just need to test him out and see if he can still use that ability! If he can, then I might just have to resort to that one option.... But if he doesn't, then this battle is over!

After doing a quick calculation to determine how much time he had left with the authority of regeneration, Li Mengtu suddenly pulled out a wooden statue.

It was pitch black, pulsed with a fiendish energy, and looked like an old man. It was very lifelike. The old man's facial features were distorted as if with agony, and his body seemed to be writhing, as if he was expecting to die at any moment.

And then Li Mengtu did something that struck shock into Xu Qing's heart. Li Mengtu held the statue with one hand, then stabbed himself with his other hand, shoving it into his chest and ripping his own heart out!

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When he crushed the heart, it exploded in a cloud of blood. Despite Li Mengtu being in the regeneration state, the injury was intensely painful. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as well as the hole in his chest. Now he was just as drenched in blood as Xu Qing. In fact, it was so painful his body writhed awkwardly. Yet strangely... he was smiling.

The wooden statue of the old man in his hand was also smiling. Both of them were writhing in agony, and both were smiling. They looked exactly the same.

Next, to Xu Qing's astonishment, his own chest exploded as if invisible hands had appeared and ripped it open to reveal the heart. And the heart... was grabbed by those invisible hands, which started to crush it.

Karmic magic!

The authority of erasure in Xu Qing's eye glittered, revealing to him a host of karma threads connecting himself to the wooden statue, and connecting the statue to Li Mengtu. The statue was obviously a medium connecting Xu Qing to Li Mengtu. That connection didn't transfer injuries, but inflicted them simultaneously! When Li Mengtu crushed his heart, Xu Qing couldn't avoid his own heart being crushed.

Xu Qing's expression darkened as he looked down at his crushed heart. Without any hesitation, he produced a huge pair of shears. It was not the same shears he had acquired years ago. Rather, it was a materialization of the dao lineament of erasure.

Though they weren't as strong as the earlier shears, as Xu Qing's cultivation base improved, they became extremely sharp. The moment they appeared, they snapped down on the karma threads connecting Xu Qing to the statue. A snap rang out as the karma threads were severed.

The dangerous situation was resolved! Xu Qing took a step forward in Li Mengtu's direction.

However, that was when Li Mengtu again spoke in a raspy voice. "From the moment I saw you using that special authority, I guessed that you probably had the ability to sever karma. And given that, do you really think I would do something like this without a plan? Digging out the heart was just a way to check if you really had a karmic magic. That's all."

Li Mengtu suddenly squeezed his hand down onto the statue until the head snapped off. The statue had a mysterious origin and was very gruish. Though the karma threads had been severed by the shears, it still managed to unleash a ferocious backlash attack. The moment that happened, the karma threads that had been severed seemed to gain new life. They were like giant snakes that instantly wrapped around the shears.

By doing so, they reestablished the connection. Xu Qing's pupils constricted.

At the same time, Li Mengtu laughed uproariously. Then he lifted his left hand, within which was a dagger. Glaring at Xu Qing, he unhesitatingly plunged the dagger into his own throat! Blood sprayed out as a wound appeared so deep it severed the bones.

The same type of wound appeared on Xu Qing. Blood poured out as pain wracked Xu Qing from head to toe. His already wound-covered body had been severely injured, throwing his cultivation base into chaos and causing his life force to start draining. All he could do was clamp his hand down over the injury and fall back at top speed. Dizziness swept through him with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force.

By contrast, Li Mengtu simply put away the statue and relied on the authority of regeneration to return him to his previous state. His heart grew back, and the terrifying neck injury vanished. By the time the authority of regeneration faded away, he was back into a peak, uninjured state.

However, as soon as the authority of regeneration was gone, he had to pay the price. In the blink of an eye, his hair turned gray, his body withered, and his aura weakened.

Then his glittering eyes locked onto the retreating Xu Qing. "Apparently, I was right. You can't use your time reversal ability two times in a row."

With that, he burst into motion toward Xu Qing, his killing intent surging. He was now completely and utterly convinced that his opponent would not be using his ability to reverse time. He moved so fast it was like a teleportation. Appearing in front of Xu Qing with killing intent surging, he thrust his right hand out. His plan was to kill Xu Qing right here and now.

It was a critical moment. Xu Qing's head was about to fall off his shoulders thanks to the horrific neck injury, and his cultivation base was suppressed. However, his eyes shone, not with panic, but with killing intent. Without the slightest hesitation, he bit down onto an object that he had put into his mouth just before the fighting started.

It was a magical symbol that looked like a flower petal! It was the gift Grandma Fifth had given him back in the Moonrite Region, and it could bless him with a full recovery. He had been unwilling to use it unless it was absolutely necessary. If he used it, it would completely heal all injuries. But... it would drain some of Grandma Fifth's life force. As of now... he had no other options.

The moment he bit down on it, a gentle force swept through his entire body. The mangled wound on his chest healed. All his wounds went away. His horrific neck injury vanished.

Next, he crushed the sealing mark that Grandpa Eighth had given him, which was a manifestation of pure rage. The most intense rage imaginable erupted within Xu Qing, along with a boost to his cultivation base and killing intent.

Because of the rage, even his fleshly body was improved. In the blink of an eye, his muscles and veins bulged, his eyes turned bloodshot, and even his breathing seemed full of strength and emotion.

Even as Li Mengtu's face fell, Xu Qing lunged forward. A heaven-rending, earth-crushing fist strike landed.

Li Mengtu had already paid the price for using his authority of regeneration. It was in a very weakened state that Xu Qing's fist strike hit him. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he tumbled backward in astonishment.

Glaring at him furiously, Xu Qing shot forward with tremendous speed and unleashed another fist strike.

Booms rang out as Xu Qing pursued Li Mengtu and launched one successful blow after another. Li Mengtu was battered backward, blood spraying out of his mouth as he reeled in shock.

Seeing the danger he was in, Li Mengtu threw his right hand up and pointed toward the sky. Intense rumbling sounds echoed out as a host of towers appeared. In short order, there were 9,000 of them! Then Li Mengtu thrust his hand down, and the 9,000 magnificent towers began to fall like rain. All of them flew toward Xu Qing to block his path.

Xu Qing's body and cultivation base surged as he reached out with his right hand. The Emperor's Sword appeared. And then, he and the sword shot toward the towers.

The raging sword energy destroyed everything it touched. From a distance, it was possible to see one tower after another shattering into nothing. Deafening booms rang out constantly.

From the beginning up to this point, this fight had been extremely difficult for Xu Qing. Li Mengtu had more tricks up his sleeve than any other Imperial Sovereign Xu Qing had faced. His authorities were very gruishing, to the point where even after Xu Qing had used all of his own trump cards, he still couldn't come out on top of things.

Li Mengtu had similar feelings. However, despite his weak state, his eyes were flashing with determination. As he used 9,000 illusory towers to block his opponent, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture. Then he started tapping different spots all over himself.

Each tap of his finger caused a magical symbol to appear. Every magical symbol was exceedingly complex, and actually seemed to be made up of over ten thousand smaller magical symbols. After there were 108 of them, they started flowing back and forth to make a spell formation.

"Sealing marks: release!" Li Mengtu roared.

The formation of symbols emerged, appearing in front of him, whereupon all the symbols started moving rapidly. It quickly expanded to a size ten times larger than before. And with every rotation, it grew larger. Soon it was 100 times larger. 1,000 times larger. 10,000 times larger.

Ultimately, an astonishing spell formation was visible, radiating golden light. And then the power of a god began to seep out from the spell formation. This was a power that surpassed that of a Flawless God. It was Altar God power!

Astonishingly, this was a god-sealing spell formation! As the spell formation opened, and the aura of a god emerged, a hand appeared! Put precisely, it was the severed right hand of an Altar God, which had been sealed inside of Li Mengtu to be used as a trump card!

The hand had rough, magenta-colored skin and was covered with very fine tentacles that made it look malicious and terrifying. The moment it appeared, mutagen surged, and a faint chanting filled the area.

An ordinary person wouldn't be able to understand the chanting, but given that Xu Qing had a god clone, he could make it out clearly. There were two words being spoken.

"Human pill!"

Li Mengtu was saying the same thing.

The sound echoed in heaven and earth as the huge severed hand of the god stretched toward Xu Qing to grab him! Xu Qing shivered as Altar God power erupted from the god's hand and slammed into him. His bones immediately emitted cracking sounds. His body writhed. His soul writhed. Every part of him writhed.

It was as if a huge hand had grabbed onto him and was crushing him into a ball, turning him into... a flesh and blood human pill!

It was a difficult process for Li Mengtu to endure as well. But Xu Qing was so difficult to kill that he resorted to undoing the sealing mark, which would also force him to pay a heavy price later.

However, right at that moment, something strange happened to Xu Qing. It was not the work of Starfire. Rather... a languid voice that had been sealed inside Xu Qing began to speak at this very unique point in time.

"There was a little showboater named Xu Qing who went out for training. A few years later, the showboater came back safely."

It was Yu Liuchen's story. And it was a blessing from Yu Liuchen.

The severed hand came from an Altar God. And Yu Liuchen... was also an Altar God. The voice turned into a conflict between gods. And an instant later, the severed hand that Li Mengtu had released went slack and retreated back into the spell formation. Yu Liuchen's voice faded away.

Xu Qing was no longer writhing. Though he was bleeding profusely, he forced himself to look up at Li Mengtu, who was glaring back at him fiercely. Xu Qing launched himself forward.

Li Mengtu struggled to breathe as a sensation of profound crisis erupted within him. However, his killing intent had not been reduced. Instead, it grew stronger as the moment got more critical.

“Now this is what I call a duel to the death. Incredible! Really incredible!” Li Mengtu waved his hand, causing a scroll painting to appear in front of him that emanated an ancient aura. “Xu Qing, you are such a worthy opponent that I’m willing to permanently lose thirty percent of my longevity to utilize my clan’s scroll painting!”

Li Mengtu was the only person in his clan who could open this scroll. But he had never been inclined to do so. Keeping it closed was the best option. And that was because opening it required paying a massive price that surpassed anything imaginable. Even just opening it by a crack required a payment of one third of one’s longevity.

He had used it once years ago, and now... he was using it a second time!

The moment he produced the scroll, Xu Qing’s mind started spinning. Li Mengtu didn’t hesitate. He forcefully put out his hand... and cracked open the scroll!

It was unstoppable. No one could evade it. When the scroll cracked open, black light emerged. That light covered everything in heaven and earth. It only lasted an instant. Then Li Mengtu snapped the scroll shut. He was breathing heavily, and couldn’t stop himself from coughing up several huge mouthfuls of blood.

As for his surroundings.... He was completely and utterly alone. Xu Qing was nowhere to be seen. He had been sealed inside the scroll!

“It’s over.... This fight has been the most difficult since I confirmed my dao!” Li Mengtu wiped the blood from his mouth and, ignoring how weak he was in body and soul, looked down at the scroll painting.

The legacy didn’t come to me, which indicates he’s not dead....

He couldn’t see inside the scroll, but based on the information passed down by the clan patriarchs, he knew that the scroll came from the location they had originally come from.

It’s a place called Deep Earth. He’ll definitely die eventually. And it won’t take long. However, just to be safe, I’ll take the scroll to the clan’s restricted area and suppress it with blood. That will make sure he dies sooner rather than later!

Taking a deep breath, Li Mengtu shot off into the distance.

Chapter 1128: The World is a Tavern for Living Beings

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In the Dao Immortal Sect in the west, there was a vast, fertile land where two medicinal plants had been locked in a struggle. That struggle had just ended.

One plant stood tall and in a full state of bloom, its leaves rustling, and the entire plant glittering like starlight. In contrast, the other plant had withered up. Its leaves had dried up, its flowers wilted, and it looked like it was about to fall to the ground.

And yet... Poison Monarch was still observing the situation closely. He was not looking at the plant that was on the verge of victory, but rather, the plant that was about to collapse onto the ground.

“Facing death without fear, huh?” he murmured, and his eyes started shining.

High in the sky above the western region, Li Mengtu looked very pale in the face. His rapid pace of travel had exacerbated his internal injuries, causing him to occasionally cough up blood. He was doing everything he could to suppress them, but was reaching his limit.

This was the most intense and difficult battle he had fought in his entire life. It had been very perilous to achieve victory, and he had also ended up severely injured. It was unprecedented.

This is probably what would happen if I fought some of the other Shining Stars.

Despite having come out victorious, when he thought back to everything that happened in the fight, he still felt lingering fear. Because of that, he hadn't let down his guard.

There's always the possibility of unexpected developments. And unexpected developments... tend to favor chosen cultivators.

Li Mengtu took a deep breath. He was not going to permit any unexpected possibilities from playing out right now. And because of that, he was fully aware that he wasn't moving fast enough.

Reaching up with his right hand, he pushed down onto his forehead. Rumbling sounds resulted, and his face turned unusually ruddy. Apparently he had tapped into some latent potential, and was even burning some authority. The resulting burst of speed was like a major teleportation.

He did the same thing multiple times over the next three days. Combined with the impressive nature of the ancient teleportation portals, and it resulted in him reaching the Li Clan in only four vortex-days.

This was not the clan's restricted area in the east. Rather, it was their ancestral land. It was Li City! The place was imposing, huge, and bustling, with a population made of countless cultivators.

Meanwhile, deep under the ground beneath the city was a spectacular necropolis. It seemed like an independent world, and actually, it was. It was a minor world. It had its own heaven and earth, although it didn't have living beings. The world was calm, but there was a wind blowing past rivers and plains before reaching a towering mountain.

On top of that mountain was a building crafted from wood. Its main gate was tightly shut. In the courtyard was a pill cauldron, out of which curled incense smoke. Despite the wind, it rose straight up like a blue cloud.

A short time later, ripples spread out through the sky of the minor world, whereupon Li Mengtu stepped out into the open. Taking a deep breath, he entered the courtyard and looked at the closed door with a grave expression.

He dropped to his knees. This was a holy location to the Li Clan. It was where their aging patriarch had resided. The patriarch eventually passed away into meditation, whereupon the place became a shrine hall. According to custom, clan members weren't permitted to come to this place except when it was time to offer ancestral sacrifices.

Li Mengtu touched his forehead to the ground in a kowtow, then quietly said, "Your descendant Li Mengtu has come to disturb your peace, Patriarch."

After a moment passed, Li Mengtu stood. Looking away from the door, he turned his gaze to the pill cauldron. That cauldron was the reason he had come to this place. With the wave of his hand, he produced the scroll painting with Xu Qing sealed inside, and threw it toward the pill cauldron.

When it entered, the cauldron vibrated violently, and in turn, the entire minor world started shaking. Loud rumbling sounds filled the place. Boundless subterranean fire shot up, filling the world with light. Spell formations activated. With the world itself as a spell formation, and subterranean fire setting the limits, the cauldron became like an oven, which boosted the scroll's power of assimilation.

As of now, nothing can go wrong. There's no way any unexpected development can occur with Xu Qing. He's going to die beyond the shadow of a doubt!

Li Mengtu could finally relax a bit. After kowtowing once more to the wooden building, he rose up into the sky and prepared to return to the Dao Immortal Sect. The immortal spirit energy there would be very helpful in his recovery.

After I'm back to normal, I'll come back. Xu Qing's soul will have been scattered into Deep Earth, and my legacy will return to me.

Li Mengtu gave one last look at the pill cauldron and the scroll inside of it.

The patriarch of the Li Clan had left that scroll painting behind before he passed away into meditation. Truth be told, most clan members only knew that much of the story. Few people knew the details. Common knowledge stated that the painting was a precious treasure of the clan, and that it came from a place called Deep Earth. That was their patriarch's home.[1]

They also knew that if someone could open it, they could unleash the power to seal a Lower Immortal. But Li Mengtu, who was only strong enough to crack it open by sacrificing some of his longevity, knew a bit more.

The body will turn to nothing. The soul will enter reincarnation. After being whittled away, the end result is... the spirit being scattered in Deep Earth.

Li Mengtu burst into motion and disappeared from the minor world. He had disturbed the peace of the minor world. It was now full of endless fire, as well as... constant rumbling sounds.

RUMBLE!

RUMBLE!

RUMBLE!

The sound of heavenly thunder seemed to come from beyond the sky, piercing into the world and becoming muffled rumbling sounds. It soon entered the dreams of all the people sleeping in the capital city.

Many people woke up with a start. Among them was an old man. He opened his eyes and then coughed softly.

To some extent, the sound of his cough surpassed the heavenly thunder. In an instant, the old man's mansion house filled with lamp light, and a host of servants rushed to attend to him. None of them dared to be even slightly negligent in their duties. Whether or not you got killed by lightning from heaven mostly depended on chance. Whether or not you got killed by the old man mostly depended on his mood. That was why his cough surpassed the heavenly thunder.

The old man wore an inner garment of the finest silk, which indicated he had a very high status. He had white hair, a face full of wrinkles, and plenty of age spots. But the prestige he had built over his years of occupying such a high position ensured that people who looked at him didn't even realize that he was on the verge of dying. All they could think about was his lifetime of astonishing deeds.

"What time is it?" the old man said in a raspy voice.

The dozens of servants present were all trembling. One of them said, "Lord, it's the fourth watch." [2]

The old man lay back down. "You're all dismissed."

The servants breathed sighs of relief as they backed out of the room. Soon the room was quiet again, except for the sound of thunder coming from beyond the heavens. The old man didn't close his eyes. He stared into the darkness of the room. He could feel that his life force was withering away, and he could sense how weak he was. Death was coming.

I'm old... but I still get the sense that there's something I've forgotten.

After some time passed, he finally closed his eyes.

This was the 79th year in the Heavenly Nobility calendar of the Great Tranquility dynasty. The capital city of Heavenly Nobility was known as Heavenly Treasure.

That old man was the immensely powerful Prime Minister Xu Jinfan, who had helped Emperor Heavenly Nobility ascend the throne after conquering twenty-five smaller kingdoms, and had thus given the emperor a powerful foundation upon which to rule. That night... the prime minister passed away.[3]

Thunder rumbled through the night continuously. It was almost like how the cycle of reincarnation ran continuously. However, when it came to the cycle of reincarnation, there were some people who were remembered by history, but most of them... were little more than passing ripples.

A good example was the person who was born that day in this world. He was a person named Xu Hong. His father was a merchant who was obsessed with becoming rich. In fact, the “Hong” in Xu Hong’s name came from an idiom that meant “rich businessman.”[4]

Xu Hong worked hard his entire life to make his father’s dreams come true. Instead of focusing on academics, he took over the family business at a young age. He followed his ideals. Days passed. Years passed. He was always kind and charitable, to the point where people started calling him a philanthropist.

Unfortunately, a scam perpetrated by someone close to him destroyed the family dream. And an epidemic destroyed his personal dream. The wealth that his family had built up ended up vanishing.

After losing his wife and children, he sank into despair. And then, as he was on his deathbed... someone wrapped him up in a tarp and threw him onto a pile of corpses. The fire... wiped him out of existence.

Was it all worth it?

Xu Shan wasn’t confused and felt unlucky. Trying to ignore his mounting headache, he looked at the burning corpses and spat out a mouthful of bloody phlegm.[5]

Around him on the road were shattered horse carts, mounds of gold ingots, trembling womenfolk, and greedy eyes peering through the flames at the women. He was one of the greedy ones.

He was one of the bandits of Cloudy Mountain, but that had never been his goal in life. He was Third Master Xu, who had lived a life of freedom! He was a jianghu wanderer who cared only about being free! But now he stayed on that mountain, robbing passing merchants, occasionally facing deadly situations. And in the end... others ate meat while he sipped plain broth.

He hated this kind of life. And his headaches just kept getting worse. It was a problem he’d had his entire life. When he was young, his mother had claimed it was his head growing bigger. He had believed her. But as he grew up, the headaches just got worse, and it didn’t seem like his head was growing any bigger.

He always got tricked. He always got the short end of the stick. He remembered that his mother ended up getting killed, and he was fairly certain he avenged her death... but he couldn’t be sure. He just remembered killing a lot of people.

After smacking himself in the head a few times, he bandaged his leg and thought about the bodyguard who had landed a saber blow on him before dying. The bodyguard had very nearly inflicted a deadly blow, and thus, Xu Shan felt unlucky.

I need to just pick a time and leave this place. Then I can find a doctor and figure out what's wrong with my head.

As Xu Shan was thinking about such things, he heard laughter in the distance. A moment later, someone threw a woman down in front of him. The person who had thrown her down was the vice-chief of the bandits.

“Hey, Third Idiot. You did pretty good today. How about I reward you with this tramp?”

Xu Shan shivered. For some reason, the words caused his head to stop hurting. Breathing somewhat heavily, he eyed the trembling woman. Now that he thought about it, being a bandit wasn't that bad after all.

Looking at the vice-chief, Xu Shan said, “Uh, thank—”

A rock flew out of nowhere and hit Xu Shan in the head. The painful force of the blow sent him staggering backward a step.

The vice-chief laughed mockingly. “Still want her?”

There was a lot of laughter from the other bandits.

“Nah, that's fine...” Xu Shan said with a smile, trying to look like he didn't care. But in reality, his headache had just gotten a lot worse. It hurt so bad that he either needed to kill someone... or kill himself.

The bandits got everything in order and headed back to their camp. On the way there, Xu Shan suddenly jumped in front of the vice-chief. As the vice-chief laughed mockingly at him, Xu Shan tried to stab him with his saber. He missed.

What came next was a tempest of pain. In the end, he was stabbed over and over like a rag doll, until he was soaked with blood. Despite the fact that he was about to die, he laughed. Then everyone gasped. That was because just before dying, he managed to get a big mouthful of meat.

And that meat came from the vice-chief's throat.

The world blurred. As it did, Xu Shan suddenly realized that his headache was gone. A saying had just popped into his head out of nowhere.

The world is a tavern for living beings.... But what's it mean?

Xu Shan was no scholar. He had no idea what the saying meant. And before he could put much thought into it... his life ran out.

1. Things click together here. The “tu” character in Li Mengtu’s name is the same character that means “earth” in “Deep Earth.” Remember that Meng means “dream.” So the interpretation of the characters in his name seem to imply “dreaming of Deep Earth.” All of this is additionally thought-provoking considering that previous chapters have seemingly implied that Deep Earth is the home of the characters of the author’s other novels. ㊦

2. Assuming the night watch system works like ancient China, there would be five watches covering the night, with the first watch either starting at sundown or at a specific time around something like 7 p.m. So the fourth watch would be the deep night a few hours before dawn, probably something like 3 or 4 in the morning. ㊦

3. Xu Jinfa: Xu is the same surname as Xu Qing. Jin means “gold/metal” and Fa means “law/magic.” ㊦

4. Xu Hong. Xu is the same surname as Xu Qing. Hong means “swan, goose, great, large.” This is a sort of fancy-looking character. To be specific, the character usually refers to the swan goose (Anser cygnoides), which is a large goose native to Mongolia, Northeast China, and the Russian Far East. However, the meaning attached to this name is different, as is explained in the narrative. ㊦

5. Xu Shan: Xu is the same surname as Xu Qing. Shan means “mountain.” ㊦

Chapter 1129: The Timescape is an Old Guest

Chapter 1129: The Timescape is an Old Guest

In the minor world in the shrine hall in Li City was a wooden building. It had a utilitarian interior. There was a desk, a chair, and a wooden cot. In addition, there was some calligraphy hanging on the wall.

“Like a pious guest, he searched for a temple that might not exist.”

Fire still burned outside. The scroll painting in the pill cauldron was being assimilated by the sea of flames, causing it to glitter with mysterious light. It sounded like there was a voice coming from inside the scroll. It was very faint.

“What... did I forget? Was it worth it? That same saying again? Maybe I should have someone to help me send a message out of here.”

The voice faded away into the crackling of the fire.

The fire burned hotter and brighter. As a result, the roof above the clay pot was bright red. The medicinal liquid was getting hotter and more viscous. Occasionally bubbles would rise to the surface and pop, causing a medicinal aroma to fill the simple wooden room. The room wasn't very large, but it did have several cabinets full of medicinal ingredients.

In the middle of the room were two people. One was an old man. One was younger.

The old man wore a navy blue robe and had long white hair. The passage of time had left his face numb, and he currently sat in a rocking chair looking out at the setting sun. It was hard to tell what he was thinking about.

The young man looked at the old man for a while. Eventually, he couldn't hold back from speaking.

"Master, what's next?"

"What do you mean, what's next?" the old man responded.

"In the story, sir! You just said you forgot something, and wondered if you regretted something. And then you said 'that same saying again?' What saying are you talking about? If you need to send a message out, I can do it!"

The old man looked at the medicine in the clay pot. "The medicine has been decocting for long enough. Split it up and make the deliveries."^[1]

The young man quickly got a ladle and started scooping the medicine out of the clay pot and into a nearby medicine box. Then he ran toward the door. Just before he stepped out of the medicine shop, he paused and looked over his shoulder.

"Master, once I've delivered the medicine, you have to tell me about that saying, alright? I'm so curious! And I can definitely relay the message. If you tell me that saying, then I'll tell you a secret!"

The old man nodded.

Brimming with anticipation, the young man ran out into the city with the medicine box.

As the old man watched the young man disappear in the distance, his gaze went slack. "What was that saying.... I can't remember."

The night had passed. The young man never came back. Some people said that he ran into an immortal who took him away. Others said that he was devoured by the night. In fact, for the rest of that old man's life, he was never seen again. It almost seemed that it had all been in the old man's imagination.

For the ten years that went by until he passed away, the old man would occasionally think back to that little apprentice he had, and his impression of him seemed to fade each time. That was because his life was mostly focused on trying to remember that saying. It was as if the saying existed in his memories, yet was buried so deep he couldn't find it.

But then, on the day he died, when his memories turned into ashes that drifted out into the mortal world, he remembered.

The world... is a tavern for living beings.... But what's the next part?

The old man never got an answer. Time had taken his life. It had taken his spirit. And the only thing left behind in the world was a corpse that ended up buried in the ground.

Within the flowing of the timescape, the corpse and the ground merged until they were the same.

Outside, time passed. The world changed. What had once been a little city turned into ruins. And the ruins became a wilderness. It was hard to say how much time passed....

One day, a hoe rose up into the air, wielded by a person. It plunged down into the dirt of the wilderness. The wild areas were being cleared for cultivation. Crops were sown, and a village sprang up.

The person tending the land led a boring life. He started young, but eventually grew up and then became an old man. Just before dying, he told his family that he had once been an important government official, a rich businessman, a bandit in the mountains, and a doctor. And he had always been buried in this area. He explained that, in this life, he wanted to again be buried in the same spot. That way, he could buy some extra time for his future self, and also ensure that his spirit lingered longer before dissipating. His final words seemed very fanciful, to the point where no one believed that he was telling the truth.

But in the end, it didn't matter, as he was indeed buried in the ground there. He was such an ordinary person that he was like a drop of water in a sea. And when that sea dried up years later, no one would ever remember that one drop of water.

Springs came. Autumns went. The village turned into a walled city.

A few years later on a winter evening, a middle-aged cultivator arrived on the wind. He was a rogue cultivator who belonged to no sect or clan. But he had taken advantage of an opportunity to enter a hidden dimension and acquire a legacy.

That legacy was a discarnate soul. In order to acquire the full legacy, he needed to fulfill the desires of the discarnate soul. And the discarnate soul had led him to this place.

Upon reaching a certain patch of ground, the discarnate soul flew out of the cultivator and turned into a young man. The young man looked at the surrounding lands. He looked at the walled city.

Things had changed. The little city from before was much bigger now. What had once been a medicine shop was now a school.

The young man looked at everything and thought back to a night years ago when his very first Master had told him a story. That had been a very long time ago, and he had wondered if he would be able to recall all the details.

He had been taken away into the cultivation world. He had grown up and lived his own life. He had experienced sorrow, joy, love, and hatred. He had reached the highest heights, but he had

ultimately perished, becoming a discarnate soul. Years passed, yet he eventually realized that there was one thing that seemed forever fixed in his memories. And it was the scene from that night.

He still wanted to know about that saying his Master had mentioned. It was because... back then, there had been no time for him to explain to his Master that before coming to study at the medicine shop, he had heard that saying in a dream.

He wasn't sure why, and now... he had come back to find out. It seemed that the saying his Master had mentioned was very important.

My spirit has mostly dissipated. And this discarnate soul won't last for much longer.... I'm quite convinced that if I don't get an answer before I'm gone... then I'll be gone for good.

He found himself looking at the school. There was a single teacher and seven young students. Evening had fallen, and the students were bowing farewell to the teacher. The teacher smoothed out his robes and prepared to leave. But before he could, one of the students returned and stood in the doorway.

The teacher stopped in place and looked over at him.

The student bowed. "Teacher, I have a question, and I don't have time to find the answer myself. Since you happen to be here, sir, I was hoping you could clear things up for me."

The teacher took a moment before answering. "Go ahead."

The student looked up with pitch-black eyes and said, "Teacher, do you know what reincarnation is?"

The teacher frowned slightly. "An extraordinary person like you is asking ordinary old me about reincarnation? Really?"

The student shook his head, and the darkness in his eyes faded a bit. He looked confused. "I used to think that reincarnation is about recurring lives. When one life ends, another begins. But then I started getting the sense that reincarnation isn't about that. Is it possible... that I've met people who are actually reincarnations of myself? It's all very confusing. Teacher, I really hope you can help me understand. I guess... I guess any explanation would help."

The teacher closed his eyes and said nothing for a very long time. In fact, about an hour passed. Evening had turned into night, and the darkness in the student's eyes was mostly gone. At that point, the teacher opened his eyes.

"I don't really know what reincarnation is," the teacher said. "But if I had to, I would describe it in two ways.... It's like a boat crossing a deep ocean. Or the process of searching for radiance and light in the midst of darkness and gloom. It's something you do that comes with a price. In other words, going through repeated reincarnations is like slowly erasing yourself."

"Now, as far as the situation you just mentioned, that of encountering people who are actually reincarnations of yourself, well, it seems to me that it might be your own way of trying to save yourself."

“Give up on being erased slowly but surely, and choose instead to live one blazing life. Maybe that’s how to find the radiance and light. But if you don’t find that radiance and light, then in the end, your spirit crumbles into ashes.”

The student stood there blankly for a long moment. But then his eyes glittered with understanding. He thought back to his past, and all of a sudden, he heard his Master’s words in the moment before they parted.

Bowing his head, he quietly said, “Many thanks. I understand now. So, it turns out my purpose is to tie the timescape to reincarnation. I need to deliver that saying to you, sir. *The world... is a tavern for living beings....* Please, sir... you need to say the next part. This is our last chance. Thankfully... you still have plenty of life left to live.”

After the words left his mouth, the darkness in the student’s eyes disappeared. The discarnate soul was gone.

The student woke up looking confused. Then he saw his teacher in front of him and he started to get nervous. Quickly bowing, he turned and ran off.

The teacher stood there looking somewhat dazed. It was as if scenes from his past reincarnations were suddenly being unsealed within him.

What had the prime minister of the Great Tranquility dynasty forgotten just before he died? Philanthropist Xu had died full of regrets. What he regretted wasn’t how his life turned out, but rather, that he had failed to recall that forgotten memory. That regret turned into pain, a pain that remained in the head of the bandit Xu Shan. That pain cleared right before Xu Shan died, because he had remembered the saying. Sadly, he didn’t have time to think about it. All he could do was pass it to the doctor. The doctor searched for his entire life, but sadly, some power was interfering with him. As a result, he only recalled the saying right before he died. Thankfully, he had made preparations. That young man became the thread linking timescape and reincarnation. The person who tended the land was willing to turn himself into the nutrients necessary to buy time for his future self.

Then the young man came. Before dying, the young man understood everything. He accomplished his mission. He delivered the saying. He gave them to the teacher.

The teacher was thirty-seven years old that year. He still had plenty of life left to live. Time slipped by. Thirty years went by in a flash.

The teacher was old. He still lived in the walled city, but he already had one foot in the grave. His students had long since gone their separate ways. Death neared, but no one came to visit him. The teacher didn’t care. As he lay on his wooden cot looking out the window at the evening sky, he recalled many things.

“Government official. Businessman. Ruffian. Doctor. Commoner. Cultivator.... Different reincarnations and different experiences. Different lives. I guess.... The world is a tavern for living beings. And the timescape is an old guest. Here I am in the timescape, still nothing but a guest. But my eyes aren’t closed any longer.”

A stream of violet light emerged from the teacher's chest. It spread out to cover him. It filled the world. His scattered spirit blossomed.

The teacher closed his eyes.

Xu Qing woke up.

The cycle of reincarnation did not end. However... he was no longer a boat drifting aimlessly across a deep ocean. He had his hand on the rudder. He had become a ferry pilot. He was now heading in the direction of order. Time was his oar as he proceeded forward through the timescape.[2]

He proceeded forward to the origin of the scroll painting.

1. The clay pot is obviously a medicinal decocting pot. To decoct is to 'extract the essence from something by boiling it.' A lot of traditional Chinese medicines are made this way, and the traditional decocting pots are often designed to be able to both boil the medicine and then pour it out. Some other kinds of traditional pots don't have a pouring spout, though. Here are [a few pics](#) of what they look like. 🍵

2. Way, way back in [chapter 2](#), I mentioned that the word in the title of the novel was a poetic word that generally means "time," but that I was rendering it "timescape" for specific, unmentioned reasons. Well there were a handful of reasons. They included: information from the author; my experience translating this author's work; educated guesses; hints in the chapters that had been written at the time; a hunch. Well here we are over 1000 chapters later, and lo and behold there is a passage in which the common word for "time" is used in the exact same sentence as the term I'm rendering "timescape," and they are obviously referring to different things. Granted, this chapter had not been written when I made "timescape" my translation choice. But among the reasons for not using "time" as the translation choice was that I was convinced that there would come a chapter just like this, in which both terms are used in the same sentence to refer to different things. If you rendered the term in the title as simply "time", then the above passage would read "time was his oar as he proceeded forward through time." Of course, we still do not have a fleshed out definition or description of what the "timescape" is. What's more, they are seemingly being used as synonyms, near-synonyms, or at least similar. The author loves to do this, in other words, take two synonymous or near-synonymous Chinese characters or words and use them together contrastingly. Anyway, couldn't resist pointing out that my instincts were right, and the word in the title of the novel, which I am rendering "timescape" is indeed something unique and different from the common word for "time." This will happen more in later chapters. And now, it's *time* for me to stop talking about this. 🍵

Chapter 1130: Eight Extreme Daos Connected to Life

Chapter 1130: Eight Extreme Daos Connected to Life

Within the void, the fleshly body was the ship, with the soul on board. The ship sailed onward.

It was a very, very long journey. Memories of the past were there, including those of a government official, a businessman, a ruffian, a doctor, a commoner, and a young man.... It seemed very ordinary. This was how things worked. This was reincarnation. This was life.

But it would only seem ordinary to someone caught up in it, because they wouldn't be able to see deeply into what was really happening. If one could step back and look at things more objectively, they would see the five elements.

Xu Jinfa had been the prime minister, which meant he was nothing more than a government official. But for his entire life, he had used astonishing methods to promote the interests of the royal dynasty, and commanded countless troops. His honor was like metal, his power was like metal, his military strength was like metal, and his destiny was like metal. His life represented metal.[1]

Then there was Xu Hong, who dreamed of becoming extremely rich. He was kind and charitable on top of being wealthy, and he even traveled the world. But in the end, fate is a fickle thing, and his money disappeared. His wealth was like water. Water flows between two extremes: floods and droughts. And there is also the saying "the ideal is to be like water." And thus, his destiny was like water. His life represented water.[2]

The ruffian Xu Shan had the character for 'mountain' in his name, but that did not relate to earth. Instead, it harkened to forests. His fate was like duckweed, his youth was like rotten timber, his mature days were like brigands in the greenwood. He ended up hiding out in the forests in the mountain, with a destiny like decaying wood. He was foolish and full of rage, always allowing the world around him to affect his emotions. He would rather die on his feet than die in disgrace. His life represented wood.

The doctor Xu Yu practiced medicine for the public good. He was benevolent, using heaven and earth as the cauldron to refine all medicinal herbs. He used his body as the fire, and his life force as the fire. It was like the inner fire of the vermilion bird, which safeguarded the brilliance of life. When the wind and the fire left his life, his heart was destroyed. And the fire and wind only returned upon his death. His life represented fire.[3]

The commoner Xu Kun lived an ordinary life. He was honest and quiet, living a rustic fashion, the sun beating down on his back. Yet he never felt that heat, and even wished that all days could be long like those in summer. His head touched the sky, his feet were planted on the ground, and as he lived his life, he accumulated the essence of earth. His life represented earth.[4]

The young man and the discarnate soul of the cultivator were actually the same person. He was responsible for passing on a message, like a thread connecting everything. Thus, the fire of the doctor and the earth of the commoner encountered the true ego. He stepped over the timescape. That was his fortune.[5]

"Now I only lack space..." Xu Qing murmured. "And the reason is that this path is incomplete."

With reincarnations behind him, and the source of reincarnation ahead, he simply proceeded and observed. He did not lose himself in it. He was like a guest, watching lives come and go.

It was a formless path. He saw men and women. He saw old people and youths. He saw temples. He saw the jianghu. All sorts of scenes passed before his eyes. It was impossible to say how long it

went on. He couldn't remember how much time had passed. He walked on and on down the path, observing, until at a certain point he stopped walking. His gaze hardened as he looked at a reincarnated version of himself that was... an actor.[6]

Actors will play many roles throughout their lives.

The day before, bells chimed and drums gonged. The actors took to the stage with their faces painted, their sleeves flicking. Today, banners snapped in the wind as the heroes and villains of the show were revealed.

One face could be a man or a woman depending on the makeup, and could portray the outcomes of many lives. There is freedom in playing a role, and one can die with no regrets.

It was the same as that play we call life. From ancient times to modern, the countless stories of many mortals are told in play and song. Who could determine the truth of the person who existed beneath the painted mask? And after enough time passed, was it even possible to distinguish the truth from the fantasy?

After songs were finished, and the actors wiped the makeup off their faces, they would walk out with a heavy heart. They would think of the emotions they had brought to the past lives and future lives, drifting like a dream on water, silently passing by with hardly a trace....

In the end, sighs would echo out from the audience.

"There are many roles to play, so don't think him to be in despair...."

"It's hard to see clearly...."

Songs of joy and sorrow could make the listeners gaze at each other in a daze, as if time is sliding past in a blur. Memories ripple, dreams come, and in the end, it just turned out to be millennia of plum blossoms floating in an illusion.

That was a play, from beginning to end. That was life, from birth to death. That was a dream, from the moment of sleep to the moment of awakening.

Xu Qing woke up. Within the void, he murmured, "This is no play. This is life within time.... People live and die. Plays have beginnings and endings. But the difference with life and death is that it's different from waking out of a dream. There are endless possibilities, and it's impossible to investigate them all.

"In that case, what happens if you surpass reincarnation? What happens if you walk out on life? When the dream concludes and I reach the end of the painting, what will be waiting for me?"

He already had the answer. That was because he had traveled through reincarnation until he reached the very end of the painting, which was also the origin of the painting. It was the ultimate foundation of the scroll of reincarnation. It was simply an image.

Li Mengtu had only opened the scroll painting by a crack. But as of now, Xu Qing had seen the entire image.

It was a crystal, submerged in primal-chaos. There in the endless void, it shone with matchlessly dazzling light. And it had been broken up into ten irregularly shaped parts.[7]

The parts scattered. And eventually, they appeared in Deep Earth.

This was an image of Deep Earth, and it was the very same broken stone that the Celestial Ancestor had been gazing at, back when Xu Qing originally gained enlightenment of the Eight Extreme Daos. It was a heaven-rending, earth-crushing scene. And it was now clearer than before! [8]

I never would have guessed that this scroll contains this image. It's a violet-colored crystal.

It looked exactly the same as his own violet crystal. Xu Qing sank into his thoughts. He now realized how to leave this place. He had passed through the reincarnations of this scroll and reached the very end.

All he had to do was take another step, and he would be gone from the scroll. But his gaze was fixed upon the ten pieces of the crystal. Some time passed, and then his eyes shone brightly.

Being sealed in this scroll can mean death. But it can also mean good fortune! I'm walking the path of the immortal because of that crystal broken into ten pieces. And this time, I could see it much more clearly than before. I can see... the correct dao for myself!

Having reached this point in his train of thought, Xu Qing didn't hesitate for a moment. He sat down cross-legged and sent out his divine will and even his soul. Like a shooting star, they approached the shattered crystal. In the blink of an eye, the cycle of reincarnation started again.

This time, it was not the reincarnation of a person.

He was an asteroid falling from the sky, and he landed on a planet called Heaven-Fate. He had no idea where he came from.

As time passed, his mind began to work, and he vaguely recalled past lives. Unfortunately, the details weren't clear. All he could remember was a desert.

He spent most of his time looking at the planet. He saw countless living beings there, living out their destinies. And whenever he pondered his past, he recalled the story of the desert.

It's too bad I can't remember much. No matter how hard I try, all I can do is think about the sand and that river. Who are they? I'm confused.

As I sit here in the timescape thinking, the people of Planet Heaven-Fate seem to notice me occasionally. Sometimes they think I'm nothing special. Sometimes they believe me to be inauspicious. Occasionally, there are times when they think I'm a holy object, and they come to worship me.

Time slips by, bit by bit. I don't care about all of that. I thought my whole life would be like this.

Eventually, a cultivator from beyond Planet Heaven-Fate comes here and finds me. He seems really happy. He takes me away from Planet Heaven-Fate to a continent called Heavenfire. It's a massive place with seemingly no end.

I'll never forget that the continent has a huge volcano. The volcano... takes up ninety percent of the Heavenfire Continent. He takes me there and throws me into the mouth of the volcano, where I fall into the lava. He uses the intense heat to refine me. Eventually I become a lump of iron.

The cultivator who brought me here uses the power of the volcano to forge me into a very sharp sword. He takes me to a place called the Primeval Forest where he uses me to chop down the oldest tree in existence.

It's revenge.

The cultivator is hurt. He takes me away, and many years later, perishes. As the years pass, I run into other sword-wielders. Without exception, all of them perish unexpectedly. Yet again, people call me inauspicious.

The last person to wield me takes me to a black river full of death. He wipes out my spirit and throws me in. I sink down into the river. My spirit dissipates. I become part of the mud of the river.

But my aura has a nourishing effect on the river, changing it, making it more majestic and turbulent. Before dying, I hear someone speaking to me.

"In this way, fire restrains metal, and metal gives birth to water."

I didn't used to be called Guyiding Tri-Month. My name came because I saw something within time. It was a drop of rain falling in the third month of the Yiding year of the ancient Gu calendar.

The raindrop was confused, but eventually someone called it Guyiding Tri-Rain. Eventually, the raindrop grew intelligent and became a lake. Many years passed, and it turned into the North Sea. I saw all of that, and thought it was great. So before it was born, I used the name.[9]

"After you're born, I'll give it back to you."

My life has also been dramatic. I once devoured a sword that had been used for endless slaughter. The baleful aura of that sword nourished me greatly. As I flowed through the starry sky, it helped me eradicate a gigantic volcano. Many times, that's how fate works. It's because of karma. One day, a group of almighty experts came. They were riding a very special boat that entered my life force. [10]

That boat is connected to me by destiny. I cannot bear to destroy it. Seeing that its discarnate spirit is about to depart, I nourish it, giving it a chance to recover.

Unfortunately, I have no idea what those almighty experts are planning to do. They send the boat into the volcano I had destroyed, in the hopes that it would cause the volcano to recover. The volcano erupts, but it can't bury me. That said, the ash from the volcano is a tribulation that turns me into

water vapor. Eventually, I became a rain that nourishes all living beings. I can just barely hear a voice speaking.

“In this way, earth restrains water, and water gives birth to wood.”

I am born in a desert. A great rainstorm hits, which bestows me with life force and intelligence. The moment that intelligence appears, I understand what loneliness is.

So I change karma. It weakens me, but I get my freedom. And thus, many more like me come into being around me. Gradually, the river disappears, and an endless forest takes over.

The place eventually gains a name. The Primeval Forest. My people grow strong, make contact with the outside world, gain enlightenment of heaven and earth, and learn how to practice cultivation.

I grow weaker, spending most of my time in slumber. Sometimes in my sleep, I glimpse ancient times. I watch as the people live their lives, being happy and sad, showing gratitude and getting revenge. I see kingdoms rise and fall. I see one species after another falling into destruction at the hands of my people.

Eventually, a cultivator from a vanquished species takes hold of a special sword and seeks revenge. He slaughters my people. He stands in front of me.

The moment I see the sword, I know that another tribulation is coming to me. I chose to go along with it. I perish by the sword.

In the tens of thousands of years in which my spirit is gone, my corpse is used to make a boat.

I want to refuse. But they tell me I'm the only one that could be the special material for the boat. It was the only way to travel along a river called Guyiding Tri-Month. By traveling along that river, it could absorb the power of the river as a blessing. And that would give me the chance to wake up.

I believe it. But what actually happens is that they use my dilapidated body to ignite a dead volcano. Around that time, I heard someone say something.

“In this way, metal restrains wood, and wood gives birth to fire.”

I'm born in the starry sky. I ignite a black hole, which becomes my body. I turn into a volcano. People call me Heavenfire.

Fire is my life force, and also my personality. I howl constantly. One day someone comes and throws an asteroid into me. I refine the asteroid into metal, which is forged into a sword.

I used to think that life was wonderful, and that, like the fire that makes my body, it will last forever. But then a river comes out of the starry sky, black and full of death. It covers over me and extinguishes me. That is my tribulation. No matter how I howl and fight back, it does no good.

Many years later, a boat comes and ignites me. I wake up. After countless years of silence in the timescape, I erupt, sending ash to fill the sky. My fury covers everything. As my fury rages, I hear someone speaking from some unknown location.

“In this way, water restrains fire, and fire gives birth to earth.”

I am the ash spewed out by a volcano. I settle down and become the earth. The moment I’m born, a vast river comes to exist. That is my greatest and proudest achievement.

Within the silt of the river is an iron sword. I look at the sword as the timescape passes by.

My life is boring and dull. Time passes, and gradually I fall asleep. After a while, I wake up, and realize I’ve become a desert. Rain falls, nourishing the plants, which slowly suck away my life force. In the boundless time that has passed, I provide nourishment to the sword. It gradually turns into a rock.

In the end, all of my life force is sucked away. Right before I die, I send my last bit of power into the rock, sending it out into the starry sky as an asteroid. It becomes a shooting star that goes away to parts unknown.

But I’m pleased.

Because it carries me into reincarnation, allowing me to be restored. I don’t think my next life will be so boring.

I close my eyes. As my consciousness blurs, I hear someone speaking.

“In this way, wood restrains earth, and earth gives birth to metal.”

1. The “Jin” character in Xu Jinfu’s name means gold or metal. It’s the same character as the “metal” from the five elements. Also, when it talks about him commanding “countless troops,” it uses an idiom which also has that same character in it. 金

2. The saying “the ideal is to be like water” is from the Dao De Jing. 水

3. Xu Yu: Xu is the same surname as Xu Qing. “Yu” means “brilliant, glorious.” And incidentally, this Chinese character has the fire radical in it, which means that one of the main components of the character is “fire.” 火

4. Xu Kun: Xu is the same surname as Xu Qing. “Kun” is one of the Eight Trigrams, specifically, the one that represents earth. The character also has the earth radical in it which means that it contains the character for earth. 地

5. The word I’m rendering as “fortune” is YET ANOTHER word that basically means fate/luck/destiny. It’s a common word, but interestingly, it contains the character for “time” in it. 時

6. The Chinese word for actor here could be applied to modern-day entertainers, but in the context, as is made obvious by subsequent description in the text, it's referring to the actors who play in traditional Chinese operas. If you're interested in that topic, here's the [Wikipedia article](#). ㊟

7. Primal-chaos has been mentioned a few times in this translation so far, but it occurred to me that I've never explained what it is. Since it's relevant in this passage, here is the dictionary definition of this term: Chaos (according to folklore), the primeval state of the universe; the original state of the universe in Chinese mythology. ㊟

8. The scene with the Celestial Ancestor was in [chapter 1079](#). ㊟

9. Guyiding Tri-Rain is an important character in *I Shall Seal the Heavens*. She originally appeared by name in [chapter 89](#). The explanation of her name is the same as the explanation in [chapter 95](#) of that novel. The North Sea was first mentioned in [chapter 44](#) of that novel. ㊟

10. There were LOTS of comments in this chapter about this boat. A large number of Chinese readers think that it's the boat of Old Man Extermination, who is a recurring character in the works of Er Gen. I also saw some comments speculating that the "group of almighty experts" are the MCs of Er Gen's other novels. I was thinking the same thing. However, those comments were not highly upvoted, leading me to the conclusion that this theory was not widely supported by a lot of readers. Besides, there's a lot more to come after this paragraph and subsequent chapters that will give further evidence/clues about what's going on. ㊟