

Beyond the Timescape

Chapter 1131: The True Ego Emerges, Creating Space-Time!

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“These are the eight extremes!”

Xu Qing opened his eyes. The moment his soul emerged from the broken crystal in the image, his mind and heart filled with understanding.

Thinking back to when he had gained enlightenment of the Eight Extreme Daos, he remembered the white-haired cultivator he had seen in space-time. That cultivator’s Eight Extreme Daos were different from his own. But the five elements were the same, and had been used to create dharmic likenesses of himself.[1]

As of now, Xu Qing had gained reincarnated lives to make five elements bodies. And the five elements bodies had become likenesses of natural law. In that manner the five extremes of the five elements reached the highest level of completion.

As such thoughts swirled in Xu Qing’s mind, five dharmic likenesses appeared around him.

The first clone was an old man wearing a government uniform. He held an iron sword in his hand, and his expression was dignified and awe-inspiring. Honor. Power. Military strength. Such things gathered, becoming the life force of metal. And that metal became a dharmic likeness. It was none other than Prime Minister Xu Jinfa!

Next came the second clone, the businessman Xu Hong. He wore expensive clothing and had a kind face. Surrounding him was a black river that swept in all directions, pulsing with astonishing power. The life force of water became the dharmic likeness of water!

Next came the third clone, who was the bandit Xu Shan. He was clearly of the jianghu, with a wide grin, standing atop an enormous tree in a forest. He had one hand pressed against his head, ferocious eyes, and a wild expression. A strong life force of wood sent ripples into the void as the dharmic likeness of wood appeared!

Finally were the fourth and fifth clones.

The fourth was the doctor Xu Yu, who held a volcano in his hand. It sent out raging fire that could destroy the world, which covered him in the life force of fire. The fire became a dharmic likeness of fire.

The fifth clone was the commoner Xu Kun. He had a body that seemed like it was made of countless grains of sand and dust. It was very heavy, and the moment it appeared, the void trembled. The life force of earth was the foundation, and thus the dharmic likeness of earth appeared.

Five likenesses from the Eight Extreme Daos appeared. Their auras surged, sending out immense pressure that was equal to that of Xu Qing's true form. Xu Qing turned to look at them. The five likenesses looked back. More enlightenment flooded into him.

The principles of mutual augmentation and suppression of the five elements form the cycle of reincarnation. Can reincarnation be the eighth extreme...?

After a moment of thought, he shook his head.

Reincarnation is a mysterious thing, but there's another dao to pick. Something that contains reincarnation but also surpasses reincarnation. And that is what I originally selected for my eighth extreme!

Xu Qing's eyes shone with determination as he cast aside the idea of using reincarnation as one of the daos. His eyes fell on... the sixth and seventh of the ten pieces of the broken crystal.

They were space and time!

His soul moved, heading directly toward the fragments that represented space and time. It entered. And then...

Reincarnation formed. Living beings were born. Karma descended. The timescape shifted.

I'm looking. I just don't know what I'm looking for. It seems like this is my mission, because I'm not complete. Maybe I exist, maybe I don't.

I exist because I exist everywhere within the starry sky, the world, the living beings, and all the people. Living things are constantly moving and changing. There is order. That proves I exist. And my will is what causes the people to have perception. I am like a river flowing into the unknown. Flowing in between many things and events. Flowing through the past of the living people, through their present, and through their future. I even affect the stars and the universe. Whether in the dark of night or the light of day, whether in reincarnation or karma, whether in natural laws or magical laws, I am there. If I am silent, everything is still. If I rise up, the epochs fluctuate.

But at the same time, I don't exist. And that is because I can be felt but not truly seen. In fact, in many cases, I only exist in the mind. I am believed to be a beginning, an unknown start. It is said that before then, there was nothing. Therefore, it is believed that nothing before me had any meaning.

After living things came into existence, there was me, and that gave meaning to me.

Yet others believe that I don't actually exist within the natural laws of the universe. That I'm simply a concept formed in the minds of the people, something that they use to describe things moving quickly or slowly. Even more people think that I'm an illusion created by the people.

Therefore, there are always people trying to decide if I really exist or not. They try to sense me. To explore me. To contact me.

But I actually don't care what people believe. I don't care if I exist or not. Because what they want, without exception, is to control me.

As a result, I have many names. Some people call me 'time.' Some people call me 'hour.' Some people call me 'minute.' And there are many, many more. But those are all names made up by them. Not me.[2]

But I don't care. I've been searching. Searching for something that I'm not sure exists. I used to think that during this boring, fruitless search, I wouldn't encounter anything noteworthy.

But I run into some people. Some very special people. They are very strong. So strong that they can see me. So strong that we become friends.

There is one who would chat with me sometimes, and asks me if he picked a good-looking flower.[3]

There is one who sits in a boat in front of me, sighing softly.[4]

There is one who asks me what predestination is.[5]

There is one who wants to give me a promissory note.[6]

But the one who accompanies me most often is a person who likes to wear black clothes. I frequently sense him in front of me, staring into nothing. He, like me, watches all the living beings, and observes the unbounded nature of everything. At one point, he reaches out to affect everything, returning it all to the past, to restart everything. Then again, and again after that.... Countless restarts. I didn't really understand. But then he tells me that he is bringing his wife back to life. I wish him well.[7]

Eventually, they all disappear. I'm left alone, flowing onward. Without end. Searching. Always searching.

Eventually I see a butterfly. The butterfly says that its name is Harmonius Morus Alba.[8]

Actually, the butterfly had appeared before in the past, but I never paid attention. This time, the butterfly flies right up to me. It tells me about something called the kosmos, which is constantly searching for the timescape.[9]

The kosmos and I have encountered each other many times. We have come face-to-face many times. We have failed to meet countless times. In the end... the kosmos understands that the two of us are one.[10]

When I exist, it exists. When I am exterminated, it is exterminated. And yet, the two of us are like ink and water that can never truly meet. Neither can find the other.

Only the butterfly can see it and see me. And thus, only the butterfly can be the fate that governs our encounters.

The butterfly asks me to step onto its back, because the kosmos is also on it. I do. And then... I finally see the kosmos. The kosmos sees me.

And then....

The timescape swells, living beings spread, the butterfly comes, the kosmos appears.

At that moment, the connection between space and time is complete. It forms space-time!

It is....

The kosmos stands, the timescape rises, the true ego emerges, creating space-time. [11]

Xu Qing's mind awoke. The eighth extreme had appeared within him. Deafening rumbling echoed from inside.

After a long time passed, Xu Qing opened his eyes. The moment he did, everything within his field of view rippled and distorted. Nothing was clear.

But when he focused his mind on looking, things became clear. Within his thoughts, he could see the past, present, and future of all beings. He could see their inner nature. It was all clear and there to see. From life to death. From beginning to end.

Astonishingly, every living being in reincarnation had countless versions, which were the overlapping images of time and space. They all became transparent. Nothing could obstruct the view of them. He could see their inner nature, their bones, their souls, and their reincarnation. It was even possible to see everything in their bags of holding.

It was like omniscience.

He could even control the thoughts of the living beings, ensuring that they would make choices that conformed to his wishes. He could also see the space-time formed by the countless choices being made.

It was similar to fate.

It felt like looking down at a sketchbook that he could modify at will. And he also got the sense that his will could be sent to anywhere and everywhere. It didn't matter if it was the past or the future. Anytime. Any space. His will could pierce through all of space-time.

Omnipotence.

As that sensation struck him, he looked up, his mind spinning. Everything was clear now.

He saw the fire outside of the scroll painting. He saw the pill cauldron. He saw the minor world, and the city outside of the minor world. He saw the Fifth Star Ring that contained it. He saw all living beings. He saw all the people. He could tamper with it all.

Simultaneously, as the red aurora in the sky roiled, Xu Qing saw twelve figures. All of them appeared at the same time in the aurora, and they were looking at him. High above them, Xu Qing saw eleven majestic immortal palaces, within which were figures of radiant light. Further above that... was the most paramount entity in the Fifth Star Ring, seated cross-legged.

Next, he heard a voice.

“Canon is the root of the immortal, and foundation of killing gods. If you wish to grasp canon, you must first defend canon!”

A tremor passed through Xu Qing. He felt power so terrifying it was difficult to put into words, sweeping toward him, from all directions, from the void, and from all of the thirty-six higher star rings.

It reached him.

Instantly, Xu Qing truly understood. He knew why the supposedly omnipotent immortals actually were not omnipotent in the higher star rings. It was because those who wielded canon first had to defend canon!

Clearly, this type of thing normally would not have happened so soon to him. The reason was that his eighth extreme... had caused canon to be born in the moment it came to exist!

It was his own canon! The canon of space-time!

Xu Qing understood instantly. As he retracted his vision, the eighth extreme that had formed within him surged with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force. Rumbling sounds echoed out constantly within Xu Qing as an eighth world formed.

It was a world of space-time!

In the Dao Immortal Sect in the west, in the vast fields, something happened to the two poisonous plants in front of Poison Monarch. The one that had been wilted and drooping suddenly grew strong. It rose from death into life, reaching the most extreme level of life force possible.

And then, right in front of Poison Monarch, it just vanished. The other plant was now withered.

A bright light gleamed in Poison Monarch’s eyes, and he was breathing heavily. “You are the karma I’ve been waiting for!”

1. The scene with the Eight Extreme Daos was in [chapter 1079](#). The white-haired cultivator is Wang Lin from *Renegade Immortal*. ^{“61}

2. To be specific, the ‘hour’ and ‘minute’ here are actually the traditional/ancient Chinese timekeeping words used during the night watch. They are ‘geng’ and ‘dian.’ If you want to dig into the historical usage of those words, here’s a link to the [Wikipedia article](#) about it. I’m using hour/minute as translation choices because it makes more sense in English, and the specific time periods involved in the geng/dian system are not important in the context of the story. Plus, given how many people don’t read the footnotes, I prefer to keep the main text as easy to understand as possible. ㊦

3. Chinese commenter consensus says that this is... Bai Xiaochun, of course. Readers of [A Will Eternal](#) will know why. ㊦

4. Chinese commenter consensus says that this is... Old Man Extermination. Because of the boat, obviously. ㊦

5. This is clearly Su Ming from *Pursuit of the Truth*. It’s obvious because Su Ming’s name literally means “predestination.” So his name is basically outright stated here. ㊦

6. There is only one Er Gen character known for giving out promissory notes. Do I really need to say who? [Read his story here](#). ㊦

7. This is obviously Wang Lin from [Renegade Immortal](#). ㊦

8. Harmonius Morus Alba is a butterfly from *Pursuit of the Truth*. The translation choice comes from one of the characters being the character for mulberry tree, while the other being a character related to mutuality or, I guess, harmony. It’s a bizarre translation from what I can tell, but maybe there are reasons for the translation choice that I’m unaware of. I honestly have no idea how I would translate it, but definitely not in this way. In any case, just as with everything else from the other novels, I’m trying to maintain continuity with the existing translation choices. ㊦

9. The Chinese term I’m rendering as ‘kosmos’ basically just refers to ‘everything,’ in other words, the ‘universe.’ If you look it up in dictionaries or MTL, it will be rendered as something like “the earth, the whole earth, the universe.” I’m using kosmos with a K to distinguish it from cosmos with a C, since I use “cosmos” for another set of characters that’s not related to these. This term is very unique. It does not connect to any of the author’s other works, and in fact, has never been mentioned in any of them. ㊦

10. Another point to clarify is that ‘the kosmos’ is obviously being treated like a person here. However, the author uses the non-gender-specific “it” pronoun for it, which seems to indicate it’s somewhat impersonal, and not truly a person. That said, it’s conceivable that “the kosmos” should really be “Kosmos,” as if kosmos is a name for a person. My instincts, and Madam Deathblade’s instincts, are that it’s NOT a person. However, if it later comes to light that the kosmos can speak and think and is basically an actual person, I might come back to this part to capitalize kosmos. I could ask the author about this, but I’m something like 70% confident in my choice, and I don’t want to bug him unless something is really, really impossible for me to make an educated guess. ㊦

11. The wordplay here is slightly cooler in Chinese, because the word for “time” has two characters and the word for “space” has two characters. If you take one character from each, then put them together, it makes “space-time.” ㊦

Chapter 1132: What Is Canon??

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Xu Qing looked out beyond the scroll painting. He looked... in the direction of the Dao Immortal Sect.

His fleshly body had not reacted at all because of what happened there. But it was different when it came to his mind. There was a vague sensation that surpassed the level of the fleshly body, and existed in his thoughts.

Someone wants to take my dao?

He considered the situation briefly, then cleared his thoughts.

Right now, the most important thing for him was to stabilize his eighth extreme. The eighth extreme had appeared exactly as he had planned it to. But the birth of canon was definitely beyond what he had expected. It would forever change how he fought.

After the first seven extremes, this extreme would push him to an entirely different level. The first five extremes were the foundation. Time and space were like fuel. And when they ignited, it led to the creation of his eighth extreme. It contained reincarnation, karma, and everything else, to create the dao of space-time. Its arrival caused a realization to hit him.

It's a type of upgrade. It has nothing to do with the fleshly body, but rather, an upgrade to thinking and the soul.

He closed his eyes to sense the eighth extreme within him.

This is a space-time state that I can enter at will! Once I do, my fleshly body is external, while my thoughts surpass everything else, reaching a level of omniscience. While in that state, I can look at all living beings in the same way I can look at and modify a sketchbook. I can influence. I can fiddle. I can control.

As he thought such things, the eight extremes within him spread... and the feeling of space-time appeared again. He looked around and felt everything more deeply.

Fighting in this state will surpass anything I could have imagined before. No one can keep any secrets from me. Magical technique. Physical factors. Even thoughts, fate, reincarnation. The past and the future will even be transparent to me.

Before my enemy can even detect what is going on, I can influence his choices. Right and wrong. Life and death. All can be determined by my will. I could alter the magical techniques of an enemy, regardless of their origin or substructure. All with my will. I can go to any time and any place. In fact, I could go to the point where an enemy is born, and kill them then.

So, this is the power of canon, huh...? If it was in the lower worlds, this might not be on the level of the immortals, but it wouldn't be very far from it. But here in the thirty-six higher star rings, where something greater exists, canon, it forms a limitation. Canon....

When his own canon appeared, and the voice spoke from the void, a sudden, preexisting understanding of canon came to him. Part of it came from himself, and part of it came from the message delivered by that voice.

Canon surpassed natural and magical laws. It was the unknown and supreme power of the gods in the thirty-six higher star rings.

The thirty-six higher star rings belonged to the gods. And the gods could easily use that unknown and supreme power. It started out as godly authority. But after rising to the level of True God, it became godhood.[1]

They were born with the ability to acquire it. That was why gods were so powerful. After all, they were native to the thirty-six higher star rings.

Cultivators were outsiders, and didn't inherently qualify to acquire it. The qualifications were broken up into various processes. First came essence, then dao affinity. Next, by means of the process of forming an immortal embryo, they could absorb the nutrients of the star ring, and give birth to something similar to godly authority, which were the dao lineaments of cultivator authority. That was the way to tread that path.

However, though dao lineaments of authority were similar to gods and spirits, fundamentally speaking, they were not the same. The only option was to advance dao lineaments of authority until they formed canon. Then a cultivator could acquire personhood that was truly equivalent to that of a god.

Canon and godhood were on the same level!

It was by means of that complex process that cultivators in the thirty-six higher star rings could, with great difficulty, qualify to be like gods. In the final analysis, canon was the most definitive way for immortals to seize the origin of power in the thirty-six higher star rings.

Because there were so many complications in the process, it was usually only when a cultivator reached the Quasi-Immortal level and had an immortal embryo that canon might possibly appear within them. However, even that was an uncertain possibility, and came down to destined opportunities.

Normally speaking, it was only when the immortal embryo finished forming and turned into an actual immortal embryo... that canon would appear. There were two other ways that could cause canon to form earlier, or would allow someone to at least use it.

Those were legacies and magical treasures.

An example of the former was the legacy flower from the most recent round of the Trial of the Hunt. It was when a cultivator with their own types of canon would peel some off and deliver it to another.

As for the latter, they were called canon treasures. However, canon treasures usually weren't complete, and had low levels of canon force. Canon force was the way to measure canon.

Once canon formed, it needed to be expanded to completion, whereupon it would become an origin. That process was one of the essential factors in reaching the level of Immortal Lord. It was also for that reason that cultivators under the level of Quasi-Immortal needed destined opportunities to get canon....

If a cultivator with Imperial Sovereign battle prowess got it, then the difference between them and someone without canon would be massive. Even people with the same level of cultivation base would have battle prowess that was as different one from the other as heaven was from earth.

That was why Li Mengtu was willing to engage in a dao fight to the death with Xu Qing for that legacy. It was because having canon would place one at the absolute and ultimate peak of the Imperial Sovereign level.

Only other cultivators who also had canon would possibly stand against such a person. Anyone who didn't have canon had a lower level of personhood, and would have no chance. That was also why there were three laws that governed canon.

One: Canon belonged to cultivators, and was a symbol of immortals.

Two: A conflict of canon versus canon was a process leading to destruction. Whichever canon was destroyed first would lead to death.

Three: As canon was known to be paramount, the only thing that could destroy it was canon or that which was equivalent to canon, godhood.

What was more, it didn't really matter how many types of canon someone had. The specific number was linked to their personhood. That was even the case if someone commanded multiple types of canon. Multiple types of canon could only improve one's battle prowess. But to reach higher levels, one had to push their canon toward completion.

All of these thoughts were running through Xu Qing's mind. A moment later, he cleared his thoughts.

It's time to leave.

He looked up, but did nothing else but examine the void in front of him. The void rippled, then a tempest sprang into being, spreading silently. In an instant, it engulfed the entire world of the scroll painting. Everything blurred and then disappeared.

When Xu Qing appeared, there was no scroll painting in front of him. Instead, there was a pill cauldron surrounded by burning flames. The fire went out. It could do no more harm.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the fire had a spirit, and that spirit simply couldn't comprehend what Xu Qing was. All it could do was burn pointlessly.

Even the pill cauldron blurred within Xu Qing's field of view, as if it didn't even exist.

Xu Qing was standing in the minor world in the Li Clan, right in front of the wooden shrine hall. As he looked around he saw countless pasts and countless futures of this world. It was the same with everything, including the wooden building, and the calligraphy scroll.

Of great note... was that within the past of the wooden building's time, he saw a person. That person was different from this world. He only had a past, not a present or a future. And even that past was blurry, as if it were in the middle of collapsing. He was a middle-aged man clad in a green, sleeveless garment, and he was positioned in front of a table in the wooden building. He had a writing brush in his hand. He seemed lost in thought, as if he wasn't sure what to write.

"I'm not really sure how to write my dying words," he said coolly, not bothering to look up from the table. "Since you came here through time, Fellow Daoist, can you help me out?"

Xu Qing was silent for a moment. He looked at this person's crumbling past, and he saw Deep Earth. He saw Revered Ancient. And he saw who this person was. He sighed in his heart.[2]

The man in the green garment said nothing further.

After a while, Xu Qing spoke. "Like a pious guest, he searched for a temple that might not exist."

Having said that, Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed. Then he looked away, and everything disappeared. The world was back to normal. Xu Qing looked up at the sky. Up there, space-time was in flux, unlike everything else in the area.

Before long, that area revealed the image of Li Mengtu of the past, coming to put the scroll painting in the pill cauldron. Xu Qing reached out, and the image turned into a stream of light that entered his hand. All of Li Mengtu's life trajectories then became clear in Xu Qing's mind. He followed one such trajectory and took a step forward.

The world melted, and the void became a road. He walked away, leaving no traces behind.

The entire minor world was silent.

However, after Xu Qing left, there was a sigh in the space-time that had once existed there.

Every generation, and in fact, every person, ends up searching for a different type of temple. Back when I left, I went my own way and walked my own path. I used to think I found what I was looking for here. But the reality is that I didn't. I now see that I was not strong enough to walk my path. But now that he's appeared, I have the feeling... that he is the temple.

The voice faded away. The calligraphy on the wall in the wooden building blurred and changed into something else. It was a single saying.

"I think I found it."

The moment those words appeared, it was as if fate throughout the Fifth Star Ring stirred. However, the effects were not wide-spread. They only touched on the living members of the Li

Clan. All of those people, including Li Mengtu, remembered the words in the calligraphy scroll in the ancestral shrine hall. But right now, those memories changed.

The aurora in the dome of heaven rippled. The eyes of the twelve heavenly inspectors glittered, and intangible threads spread out from them, as if they were seeking information.

Beyond them were the eleven immortal palaces. Nine were the same as always, but two of them glittered brightly as dazzling magical symbols formed in their vicinity.

Then a boundless voice spoke from high above.

“This space-time is already determined, and cannot be altered. But given the latent power of this canon, immortals cannot seek information from it.”

The twelve heavenly inspectors in the aurora bowed their heads, and the threads coming off them snapped.

After some consideration, the two shining immortal palaces chose to give up.

The calligraphy painting in the wooden building blurred again as the words went back to the way they were before. The memories of the members of the Li Clan also reverted to their previous state.

1. Godhood is a term that has not come up yet in this novel. It does have other real-life definitions, but I’ve previously translated this term as ‘godhood’ in xianxia. What’s more, it combines one of the characters from the term I’m rendering ‘personhood’ with the character for ‘god.’ So it fits in neatly with the established nomenclature of the novel so far. ㊦

2. There were many commenters in Chinese whose speculations aligned exactly with my own. Quite a few people thought that this person is Lord Li from *I Shall Seal the Heavens*. For those of you who have read ISSTH, you might remember that Lord Li had powers related to time. What’s more, he kind of just disappeared from the ISSTH universe with little explanation. This has always stuck in my mind because A) I wondered about that whole thing and B) RWX specifically asked Er Gen about Lord Li. RWX mentioned a theory about what happened to him, and Er Gen gave a vague response that didn’t answer the question. Again, this is all speculation at this point! However, considering that we know the founder of the Li Clan came from “Deep Earth,” it certainly seems within the realm of possibility that Lord Li from ISSTH, whose surname is the same Li, could be this person. Of course, Li is the second most common Chinese surname, so there are lots of other people throughout all of Er Gen’s works who are surnamed Li, and even other clans that use the surname. So, again, this is all speculation. For all we know, this theory could be shot down in a few chapters, or a few dozen, or a few hundred. Or there could never be a clear explanation. I also know that Er Gen likes to leave some things unexplained to let the reader rely on their imagination to decide what’s going on. ㊦

Chapter 1133: Xu Qing Arrives in Space-Time

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In the sky over the west, the aurora was like a flowing, rippling river. It was as crimson as blood, staining heaven and earth red, but at the same time, making everything dazzlingly beautiful.

Looking up at it, Xu Qing thought, *That's also a type of canon.*

Before, he had simply thought of the aurora as a unique feature of the astronomy of the Fifth Star Ring. But now... it looked different to him. The aurora had countless magical symbols in it, and as they interacted, they formed numerous natural and magical laws, as well as essence and traces of numerous daos. In fact, their interactions even created dao lineaments. All of it nourished the living things and guided the path of cultivation.

It's the Fifth Star Ring's version of a heavenly dao. Actually, it surpasses the heavenly daos. It's materialization of canon that protects the cultivators' system of cultivation in this star ring. And I imagine that if the Fifth Star Ring tried to expand by waging war on other star rings, it would flow to the battlefield as well. It's symbolic of the entire Fifth Star Ring.

Before, Xu Qing had been unable to perceive those details, but now he could. What was more, he could now see the twelve stars in the aurora! They were twelve, majestic figures, indescribable and impossible to see clearly.

Those are the twelve heavenly inspectors.

Xu Qing knew that those twelve Lower Immortals were incarnated as stars, and that they could move about within the aurora, to safeguard the areas they oversaw, and to inspect heaven and earth.

In the Fifth Star Ring, there were obviously a total of sixteen immortals that had been dispatched from the Immortal Capital. There was one immortal each in the east, south, west, and north, plus the twelve in the aurora. Of course, that didn't mean that there were *only* sixteen Lower Immortals in the Fifth Star Ring. The ferry pilots were also immortals. Besides, there were Lower Immortals in other parts of the Fifth Star Ring star ring as well, not to mention... those in the Immortal Capital.

That was why everyone in the Fifth Star Ring wanted to get to the capital.

Time passed....

Xu Qing looked away from the aurora and scanned his surroundings. He was currently strolling along very calmly. He passed some plains. Time rippled. Plants grew, then withered. It was the same with living beings. The birds and animals on the plains were struck with unusual feelings. In one moment they felt terror, next, they felt blank. After Xu Qing left, everything went back to normal.

He passed some mountains. The mountains blurred as if they were being erased. Then they became clear. The cracks in the rocks behaved similarly. As Xu Qing passed, time and space were thrown into chaos. The cultivators in all the sects and clans there were filled with alarm.

Xu Qing was clearly moving slowly, but in their eyes, he sped by. At the same time, they couldn't see him. It didn't matter how they looked around or studied their environment, they were unable to perceive him. All they saw as a shadow obscuring the sky as it passed by.

It was as if they were living in a painting, and Xu Qing was outside the painting, casting his shadow onto it. He was something that surpassed their perceptions and imaginations.

When I enter my space-time state, my personhood goes beyond what they can perceive.... It's similar to how I couldn't see the inner nature of the aurora before I possessed my space-time state and canon. Back then, I was the same as these people. I couldn't comprehend higher levels of personhood. But because of canon and my space-time state, I do qualify to 'see' those things.

Xu Qing thought about these things as he went on his way. He passed through many areas, bringing astonishment to one location after another. However, he didn't interfere anywhere, because after leaving those places, everything went back to normal. The things that were happening stirred his thoughts and helped him get used to his current state.

He had gradually come to realize that in his space-time state, his soul and his thoughts were much freer. Though he could be restrained by higher levels of canon, compared to before, he was vastly freer.

At the same time, he realized that he couldn't stay in this state for very long.

It wasn't that his space-time state wasn't sufficient to the task, but rather, his fleshly body had limits. In fact, he got the feeling that if he didn't have a fleshly body, he would be able to stay in this state forever.

But he did have a fleshly body, and therefore, his space-time state could only last for a specific time. His fleshly body had almost become superfluous at this point. If he kept his mind and soul in the space-time state for too long, his fleshly body would deteriorate. His life force would fade away, and he would lose his connection to himself.

Having come to this realization, he focused his space-time thoughts on his fleshly body. As a result, he saw the many possible futures of his fleshly body. In most of them, his fleshly body gradually ceased to become a part of him. And eventually, it faded away into heaven and earth.

All of the immortals I've seen have fleshly bodies, not just incorporeal wills. What's more... you need a fleshly body to become an Imperial Sovereign. Becoming a Quasi-Immortal requires an immortal embryo. That's how you achieve immortal ascension.

In that case... what is this current state of mine? There must be an explanation. Maybe unleashing my eighth extreme brings me so close to transcendence, pushing my personhood so high, that my fleshly body can't keep up. And that's what leads to this situation.

Xu Qing continued to analyze the matter as he went along.

The key to resolving this issue is to get to a higher level as soon as possible. Once I become an Imperial Sovereign, everything should work out. Or at the very least, things will get a bit better. To get to the Imperial Sovereign level, a Smoldering God needs to have at least nine worlds. And that means I need to get a ninth extreme....

Xu Qing proceeded in the direction of Li Mengtu. He was in no hurry. Had he been, he could have arrived in front of Li Mengtu in a single step. Instead, he chose to travel slowly.

For one thing, he wanted to acclimate to his eighth extreme and think about what to do going forward. Additionally, he could tell from Li Mengtu's dao lineaments that he was involved in a deadly battle.

It was a fight between two clans. The two sides were going all out, and some significant injuries had already been inflicted.

Li Mengtu was going to be the deciding factor in victory or defeat. He was currently locked in combat with an old man who was a late Imperial Sovereign. The fighting was intense, but the tide of the battle could reverse at any moment, turning predator into prey.

Xu Qing wasn't interested in getting involved.

During the dao fight between himself and Li Mengtu, Xu Qing had noted how upright and principled Li Mengtu was when fighting. It was different from most other fights Xu Qing had witnessed. As a result, Xu Qing treated him in like kind.

Xu Qing took his time getting to the fight, and arrived as it was nearing its end. Moving in a manner that the vast majority of cultivators wouldn't be able to comprehend, he arrived in the mountainous valley where the two clan members were fighting.

He sent his soul into space-time, concealed his fleshly body, and sent his thoughts into the valley. By entering in that manner, he was not visible. No one could perceive him. The only thing someone might sense... was something like a shadow.

It wasn't a shadow cast on the ground. Rather, it was a shadow that covered everything, regardless of space or time. Whether someone was in the past or the future, the shadow was there. It touched life force itself. As the shadow passed, the cultivators from both clans shivered, and their hearts filled with uncontrollable terror.

Up in midair, Li Mengtu's expression flickered.

The old man he was fighting looked around, his eyes narrowed and his heart pounding with fear. All of a sudden, he backed up as fast as he could. Like everyone else present, he couldn't see Xu Qing. He could only sense his shadow. But at the same time, he was unlike other cultivators in that he understood a bit about canon.

He was like a blind person who couldn't see color, but understood about its existence. The big difference was that color wasn't dangerous to a blind person. But this old man knew that canon could be deadly. That was why he didn't hesitate for an instant to flee. He knew that an almighty being with canon could kill him with a mere thought. All he could think to do was get as far away as possible.

Meanwhile, Li Mengtu took a deep breath as he looked at the shapeless and formless shadow. He also knew what he was dealing with. He had no canon, and therefore, had no way to perceive someone who did have canon. But just like the old man, he was aware of what was going on. What was more, even though the legacy in his forehead wasn't complete, making it impossible for him to use it, it also gave him a certain level of 'sight' when it came to canon.

All of the other cultivators present were only able to sense an invisible shadow. But he could see something blurry and distorted, and was even able to make out a very vague outline. It was as if this shadow was outside of the world itself, looking at him.

Heart pounding, he clasped hands and bowed. “I am your humble servant, Li Mengtu. I’m not sure who you are, Senior. What noble errand brings you here?”

“Our dao fight isn’t over, Fellow Daoist Li.” Xu Qing’s voice shook space-time, creating a tempest that swept through the mountains like heavenly sounds.

When Li Mengtu heard the words, he was shaken to the core. His expression was first one of incredulity, and then it became something complicated.

Voice hoarse, he said, “Xu Qing?”

At almost the same time that Li Mengtu spoke his name, Xu Qing stirred space-time.

The power of space-time swirled noiselessly around Li Mengtu. Instantly... Li Mengtu’s injuries from his battle with the old man vanished. He was back at his peak state.

“You said before that dao fights are not about mercy or grudges,” Xu Qing said. “And my success with canon is connected to you by karma. So, do you wish to continue where we left off?”

Li Mengtu bitterly closed his eyes for a few breaths of time. When he opened them, they shone with determination and obsession.

“Canon.... I know it’s paramount beyond everything. With the legacy incomplete, I have never been able to experience it. However, I’ve never been a person to fear death. The only thing I fear is falling short of my dao. This dao fight... will end with my death. But I’m still willing to battle!”

Filled with determination, Li Mengtu shot toward the blurry outline that he could ‘see,’ looking very much like a moth rushing to the flame.

Chapter 1134: Great Daos are Like Clear Skies

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Virtually no one could see the dao fight occurring in the valley. The members of the Li Clan who were present had their life forces covered by a shadow, so everything around them was pitch black.

It was the same with time and space. They became an isolated instance of space-time, and could be no more seen than a blind person could see color.

However, far in the distance, there was something watching the battle. In the fields of the Dao Immortal Sect, Poison Monarch was observing an empty space right in front of him. Previously,

there had been two poisonous plants there. One had turned into light and disappeared, while the other... withered into ashes.

Obviously, Poison Monarch wasn't just looking at the representation of the events playing out. His gaze penetrated space-time, allowing him to see what was happening in the valley. A meaningful smile had played out on his face.

"Gaining enlightenment of my legacy was enough to connect to me via karma," he said softly. "But now you're going to kill my apprentice? In that case... the moment the legacy is complete, the karma will truly materialize. After that, I can use that karma to take away your dao and never return it. The Immortal Paragon said we couldn't seek information. But the karma I will reap was sown before that."

Poison Monarch's voice wasn't audible in the valley. But Li Mengtu's battle spirit was burning brightly. It became a sea of fire that engulfed the surroundings. As a result, he became like a shooting star flying out of the sky. He was a fierce beam of light that headed directly toward the shadowy outline that he could just barely 'see.'

He moved faster and faster! As the fire burned, it consumed, not just his fleshly body, but also his cultivation base and life force. The only thing it left behind were his dreams.... They became what drove him. His obsessions.

Li Mengtu had not lived a life that could be considered one of radiance and light. But he was upright and honest, especially when it came to dao fights. He respected the concept of the dao. Therefore, he would not allow his own dao heart to be tainted. Nor would he bow his head.

From the time he was young, he worked hard at cultivation. He strove to reach great heights. He strove to look down on everything. He strove to reach the most paramount of all things, which was canon. He wanted his clan to recognize him. He wanted his Master to recognize him. He wanted the whole world to recognize him....

His bloodline didn't come from a Fifth Star Ring cultivator. But that didn't reduce his desire to search for the dao. And he was not inferior in any way to any of the other Shining Stars from the Fifth Star Ring. He was the one who ensured his clan rose to prominence. He could rise to the highest heights, and enter the place that everyone yearned for constantly. The Immortal Capital!

He knew that, as of this moment, his actions would be considered laughable to most. But he didn't care. He had never feared death. What he had feared... was falling short of his dao. The true measure of one's life wasn't its length.

Therefore, he rushed right toward the flame. Even though he knew the flame would burn him, that was his choice. To fight.

The struggle for this legacy was connected to his very life force. He knew that the moment Xu Qing arrived, the ending had been foreordained.

Right now... it would be an honor to die for his dao. It would honor the sweat and blood he had shed to get to this point. It would honor the obsession that had driven him for most of his life. It

would honor the aspirations of his clan. And it would honor all the other people who had perished at his hands in other dao fights.

He charged forth!

It was like a flower blooming in the dome of heaven. But sadly... dreams often end up as nothing more than a sigh in the heart. His magical techniques, his divine abilities, and everything else in his power... were all incapable of doing anything to that shadowy figure.

Xu Qing stood there, seemingly beyond the heavens, in a different aspect of space-time. No matter what attacks Li Mengtu launched, they didn't touch him. His death curse caused wild colors to flash in heaven and earth, and caused the entire area to fill with an astonishing aura of death. Demonic monsters seemed to rise up everywhere, as if a ghost city had risen from the depths of the Yellow Springs. Howls of anguish echoed everywhere. But then... it was all meaningless.

None of it touched his enemy. It couldn't affect his enemy's karma. Li Mengtu was like a person in the middle of nowhere, alone, screaming at nothing.

His authority of lightning made noise. The sea of lightning spread. But it was pointless. His binding revelation didn't give him the slightest information about his enemy. It was as if they existed in different worlds. He called on the immortal flood, causing the aurora to drop down. But what came down was really just a representation. An illusion.

That ability would be very effective if used by someone with canon. But to someone without canon, it was as *unrealistic as flowers in a mirror or the moon in the water*.

He tried using Flowers in Mirrors on Xu Qing. He tried unsealing the god in the spell formation within him. But the god's hand grasped onto nothing. In the past, it had been terrifying with its magenta skin and writhing tentacles. But it was a severed hand, and it only had godly authority, not godhood. It was no longer ferocious. The mutagen and the chanting were no longer so gruishing. Only bitterness remained.

Li Mengtu went all out. He burned everything, even his life force. But he couldn't do a thing to Xu Qing. He couldn't make any contact with that blurry figure. This was how the dao worked.

A person in a painting could jump up and down, get mad, and launch any number of attacks. But it wouldn't do anything to someone outside the painting. In the end... great daos were like clear skies that could never be surpassed. He could only launch furious attacks over and over, in a meaningless cycle. He wanted to break out of the painting. But... he had no way to do so.

In the end, all he could do was walk back to where he had started, turn to the blurry outline in the valley, and stare bitterly.

Finally... Li Mengtu closed his eyes. When he opened them, the bitterness was gone. Taking a deep breath, he struggled to calm down.

"I apologize," he said, "I lost my head."

“It’s fine,” Xu Qing said calmly. From beginning to end, he had not launched a single attack. He knew that in many ways, canon was the qualification that Li Mengtu lacked. Without it, he could never leave the painting.

After a moment of silence, Li Mengtu said, “The dao fight is over. In the different levels I’ve climbed through in this life, I’ve had dao fights with all sorts of opponents. Every time I won a victory, I would ask my opponent if they had any final desires. And I would always try to fulfill them. You don’t have to do that. But I’d still like to state two desires.”

Not waiting for a response from Xu Qing, Li Mengtu just continued speaking. “The first relates to Daoist Qingyang from the Qingyang Dynasty. For years, their clan has been at odds with my Li Clan, and they nearly wiped us out of existence once. For quite some time now, I’ve been trying to find Qingyang criminals and do away with them. Sadly... Daoist Qingyang got away this time. If at all possible, I hope you can kill him.”

Li Mengtu sat down, took out a jug of alcohol, and drank deeply. “My second desire is to go to a certain place. It’s a pocket realm.

“Legend has it that there should be twelve Immortal Lords in the Fifth Star Ring, not the current number of eleven. Supposedly, back when cultivators first took over the Fifth Star Ring, the highest-ranking Immortal Lord turned traitor for unknown reasons.

“That Immortal Lord was named Aurora, and was thus referred to as Immortal Lord Aurora. Supposedly, the Fifth Star Ring’s aurora is connected to him somehow. After he rebelled, the Immortal Paragon personally killed him. When his spirit fell to the ground, his canon became the aurora.

“The spot where his spirit landed came to be called the Fallen Immortal Moors, here in the western planetary system. The moors are full of random spirit lakes that spit out secret keys all over the west. When a total of forty-nine of the secret keys have been sent out, the moors open up the way to the immortal palace.

“All cultivators in the Fifth Star Ring think of the immortal palace as a place of good fortune and destined opportunity. It only opens every few decades, and the next opportunity is coming soon.

“Each of the forty-nine secret keys is designed to allow two people to use them. I had hoped to go in to seek good fortune, but now it seems that won’t be happening. I just hope that you can do so, and do even better than I would have. That way, I will be of some aid in you achieving your dao, and will not have died meaninglessly.”

With that, Li Mengtu opened his left hand, within which was a small jade fish. He put it down in front of him.

“This is the secret key I got.” Li Mengtu took a deep breath and looked at the blurry outline. “I wish you success in achieving your dao, Fellow Daoist!”

His left hand then turned into a claw. Reaching up to his forehead, he dug down into the bone, piercing into his soul and life force to grab the half of the legacy flower he had acquired.... He plucked it out. Upon pulling it out, his forehead had a gaping hole out of which gushed his blood and life force.

“Take it!” He threw the legacy flower out so that it hovered in front of Xu Qing. Finally, Li Mengtu waited there cross-legged, his head bowed as he waited to die.

Xu Qing looked at the legacy flower for a time, then reached up, not to take it, but to place his hand on his own forehead. He pulled softly, and the flower petals disappeared from his forehead and appeared on his palm. With the use of the space-time canon of the eighth extreme, he peeled the legacy flower away from himself without causing any harm. Then he waved his hand, sending it toward the flower Li Mengtu had tossed up into the air.

The moment they made contact with each other, they merged as one. Twelve flowers formed a perfect circle, completing the legacy. He flicked the flower, and it became a beam of light that shot back to Li Mengtu and sank into his forehead.

Li Mengtu shivered from head to toe, and the life force that had been vanishing instantly returned. His eyes snapped open and he looked incredulously at Xu Qing.

“You—”

“That dao won’t benefit me,” Xu Qing interrupted. “And it was already your karma. Since you know how significant canon is, you should just take it. As for the people you want dead, kill them yourself.”

Xu Qing then turned and left.

Li Mengtu sat there in the valley, watching Xu Qing depart. Suddenly, he reached up to his chest, pushed his hand down, and then extracted some of his life force essence. He threw it up into the sky.

“Xu Qing, my life is yours to use freely!”

Xu Qing caught the life force essence, and without pausing for a moment, continued on his way with a wave at Li Mengtu.

Li Mengtu remained behind, thinking about what had just played out.

“This is the grace of a great dao,” he murmured.

Back in the Dao Immortal Sect, Poison Monarch watched it all play out, and his face turned grim. He exhaled, and all the plants around him quietly crumbled into ashes that turned into fierce wind. As the tempest raged around him, Poison Monarch closed his eyes. A short time later, the tempest died out. Poison Monarch stood there quietly, looking off into the distance, his eyes narrowed.

Is this a case of generosity? Or is it derision...? Either way, this makes it impossible for me to take his dao. And actually, the opposite occurred... he took what I set up and used it to achieve his own dao! Interesting. Very interesting.

Chapter 1135: Fallen Immortal Moors

Chapter 1135: Fallen Immortal Moors

The moment Xu Qing removed the mark of the legacy flower, a sensation of relaxation entered his heart and mind. It filled his entire body from head to toe. It was a case of the dao being not so far away, and his person feeling both empty and not empty. Having taken away the karma of the legacy flower, Xu Qing's dao was no longer connected to the outside.

His action sent a message to the person who had wanted to take his dao. That message was... I'm not giving it! He rose into the sky and disappeared over the horizon, his black hair flowing, his green garment swaying.

The total number of canons one has can affect the battle prowess, but there are limits to that. Otherwise, nobody would take one of their own canons and put it into a legacy. The Lower Immortals who put canons into their legacies obviously know that. What really determines their level is the completeness of their canon, not how many they have.

In other words, as far as I'm concerned, I have no need for other types of canon. What I need... is to push my canon of space-time to the limit, and make sure it's complete!

Xu Qing looked up at the distant crimson aurora.

The canon of space-time has its foundation in the five elements. Time and space are the platform. With that foundation and platform, it can definitely be said to be profound. I can't be the only person to have gained enlightenment of space-time. Truth be told, the moment I succeeded... I understood the truth.

There have been others before me who walked this path. That said, there aren't many. What's more... none of them walked it all the way to the end. Some just stopped. Some changed their dao. Right now, this path has no source.

As he traveled, he thought deeply about everything. He was getting the feeling that if he could gain even deeper enlightenment of space-time, then even if he didn't form a ninth extreme, he would still be able to use canon to push his cultivation base past the breakthrough point. He could still form his ninth world and become an Imperial Sovereign!

But how do I gain deeper enlightenment...?

As he continued along through space-time, he sent his soul out to search for clues and answers.

Seven days later, he came to a stop. Space-time was stirring.

Some distance ahead of him was a mountain with seventeen peaks, all of which had cisterns of clear water on them that resembled full moons. Next to each pond was an eight-sided pavilion, each of which had a geographical design on the floor. This place... told a tale of geography, which was why these seventeen pools of water were called the Geotale Cisterns.

The cisterns were surrounded by strange and fantastic plants that exuded immortal spirit energy that built up over the years. Within that powerful energy, images of people would occasionally appear, engaged in all aspects of life.

The place became known for that strange phenomenon. Throughout the years, mortals who stumbled upon this place would sink into a dream state and wake up confused. But the place was not harmful. As such, it had been maintained over the years, and cultivators often came here to search for their dao.

Xu Qing looked at the place and recalled the information from Yunmen Qianfan's bamboo scroll.

The scroll also included a legend about the designs on the floors of the pavilions. Supposedly, they had been put there by an almighty being who once traversed the length and breadth of the Fifth Star Ring. His dao related to measurement, and the designs on the floor described the geography of the star ring.

After the passage of much time, people gradually ceased to see the designs on the floors of the pavilions. All they could see was a smudgy blur that meant nothing to them. The reason was that the designs had slowly been absorbed into the water of the cisterns.

However, every time when one vortex-day turned into another, people could look into the water and use their inner longings and obsessions to form a clear view of their inner world. That was one reason why so many cultivators would come to this place to practice cultivation. This place could purify the heart and spirit, and push them to a higher level.

Xu Qing proceeded with many thoughts in his head.

Upon reaching the first mountain peak, he walked to the edge of the cistern and saw the projected images of the living beings going about their lives. It was like a real world, with people growing and dying, with all of the emotions of life on display. Upon nearing, the plants that had become people all stopped moving, then turned and kowtowed to Xu Qing.

The spirit energy here really is strong.

Xu Qing nodded, then stepped over to look at the geographical design on the floor of the pavilion. Shortly after, he shook his head slowly.

Not my dao.

Next, he went over and looked at the dao projections in the water of the cistern. At first glance, everything was blurry. At second glance, things cleared up. The image it created was incredibly clear.

Xu Qing looked quietly for a time... then shook his head. He needed no third glance. This place did have a dao, but sadly... it wasn't the one he was looking for.

Xu Qing went to the second mountain peak, and then the third. Ultimately, he went to all seventeen. He got nothing out of it, and eventually left the place.

It took the rest of the month to get to the Cloudmire Basin. It was south of the Geotale Cisterns, and was surrounded by towering mountains. There were so many clouds inside that they were like smoke.

The ground was a mire of silky mud that was the perfect place for plants to grow. In fact, there was a fantastic flower called a 'cloudmire lotus' that grew there. Its petals were like clouds, and they emitted a fantastic fragrance. The information in Yunmen Qianfan's bamboo scroll claimed that the lotus could purify one's soul and make it easier to comprehend the daos of heaven and earth. As a result, immortal cranes guarded the area. The entire place seemed like an immortal paradise.

When Xu Qing entered the Cloudmire Basin, he gently stroked the immortal cranes, and as their gentle cries filled the air, he took a petal from one of the cloudmire lotuses.

The petal floated on his palm like an illusory cloud. It was true that the flower had a purifying effect on the heart and soul. But Xu Qing's heart was already solid, and did not need purifying. Though he did have obsessions, none were things that could be purified by the flower. He stayed for three days before leaving.

He went south, going farther than a mortal could travel in a hundred lifetimes. Even an Imperial Sovereign would need a month to get there. He was going to the Fallen Immortal Moors.

The lands there were expansive and green with vegetation. The aurora in the sky had seven colors, almost like a rainbow. That and the stunning clouds created a dreamlike atmosphere.

It immediately attracted Xu Qing's attention. Scenery like this wasn't common in the Fifth Star Ring, as the aurora was usually red. It was only in this place that all sorts of colors lingered in it.

That was why Yunmen Qianfan's bamboo scroll contained a story about the aurora. Legend had it that this place was the source of the aurora.

Xu Qing looked thoughtfully at the moors and the colorful rainbow.

Then he considered what Li Mengtu had told him about Immortal Lord Aurora.

Supposedly, that Immortal Lord had once been the leader of all the other Immortal Lords, except that he rebelled and was killed by the Immortal Paragon. His canon was taken and turned into the aurora, while his spirit fell in this place. That was the origin of the name of the Fallen Immortal Moors.

The moors were filled with vegetation and what appeared to be meteorites. The biggest of the meteorites were like mountains, while the smallest were as big as beans. All of them radiated bright light and pulsing energy. The aura here was very ancient.

The meteorites did not come from beyond the heavens, at least according to the legends. They were left over from the days when the Fifth Star Ring was compacted down. And they contained mysterious power.

As Xu Qing looked at them, his eyes shone. Though his fleshly body was not reacting much to this place, as his thoughts spread out, he could sense something unique.

There's a rancorous will here.... That will stir the spirit energy, causing it to form a sea.

He continued walking, passing one meteorite after another. Some he would touch with his fingers. He would use divine will to look at others. And some he would peer at via space-time.

Those he touched were empty! Those he studied with divine will were empty! Those he looked at with space-time were also empty! Upon realizing that, Xu Qing stopped walking.

So, an Immortal Lord perished here.... This could be the dao I need.

Eyes narrowing, he continued. He walked along, seeking enlightenment from the blowing wind and the peace that surrounded him. Inside, his heart sank into an ethereal emptiness.

Eventually, when he was nearing the very middle of the Fallen Immortal Moors, he suddenly sensed friction, as if something was resisting his onward progress. Eventually, he couldn't go forward. The friction became like the tolling of a bell, echoing within space-time.

The emptiness was shattered, and his thoughts awoke. Looking up, he saw that just ahead of him was an enormous stone stele, its surface covered with magical symbols. He had no idea where it came from, but he could sense its grandeur.

Eventually, Xu Qing looked away from it.

It's a place that doesn't exist within this space-time.

He sat down cross-legged in this isolated place. He closed his eyes. He continued his search. The wind blew. The aurora flowed.

A few months later, people began to arrive at the Fallen Immortal Moors. They came from all directions, but their destination was the same: the stele in the middle of the moors.

Unlike Xu Qing, the friction forced them to stop much earlier. Therefore, they stopped and sat down at different distances from the stele. When they noticed Xu Qing, their expressions flickered, and they felt fear in their hearts. One reason was because of how close Xu Qing was to the stele. The other reason was simply the feeling they got when looking at him.

Among those people was one who was shaken to the core. In fact, his face seemed to drain of blood, and he immediately wished he could just turn around and leave. However, before he could put that thought into action, Xu Qing opened his eyes and looked at him calmly.

"Come here."

That person's heart started pounding, and he struggled to breathe steadily.

At the same time, a path opened up among all the people who had gathered, and it led right to Xu Qing. The words that had left Xu Qing's mouth were like the will of heaven. They were commands. As a result, everyone backed up. All the person could do was walk down that path as far as possible and then bow respectfully.

“Long time no see, Patriarch Diling,” Xu Qing said. This was the very same person he had encountered in the Desert of Time with Yunmen Qianfan. And the two of them had agreed to share one of the secret keys.[1]

Patriarch Diling smiled wryly. It had indeed been a long time since they had seen each other. But he had never guessed that when they met again, this person would have canon.

Patriarch Diling knew that he was in a very tenuous situation, and that his life wasn’t in his own hands. Now that he thought back, there were actually hints that things could end up like this, even back in the Desert of Time. After all, someone who could control a tempest of time was obviously not going to be an ordinary person. The chosen from his clan who had been turned into a statue was still in that state just outside the desert.

“If you’re not pleased with me, Fellow Daoist,” Patriarch Diling said calmly, “I can just give you the secret key.”

And as he spoke, he took out a jade bottle. Inside of it was a drop of blood. It was the blood of Patriarch Yunmen, and it contained the secret key. Placing the bottle down in front of Xu Qing, Patriarch Diling bowed his head and waited for an answer.

A moment later, Xu Qing calmly asked, “Where did this stone stele come from?”

Patriarch Diling looked up at the majestic stone stele. Not daring to try to deceive Xu Qing, he quietly said, “This is where Immortal Lord Aurora’s spirit fell. His immortal palace collapsed here as well. That stele... is the threshold stone of the Aurora Immortal Palace!”[2]

1. We saw Patriarch Diling for the first and last time in [chapter 1118](#). By way of reminder, Diling is pronounced sort of like “dee leeng.” ㄟ

2. In traditional Chinese architecture, especially in places like temples or official buildings, most entry gates will have a large threshold at the bottom, usually made of stone or wood. There are a number of different words in Chinese to describe this part of the door. In any case, you generally don’t step on it when entering the building. You step over it. Not only is it not respectful to step on it, but also, according to superstition, it’s supposed to keep out evil spirits. I was taught this by tour guides when I first visited China, and that explanation and custom was reinforced by other people after I moved to China. That said, I also saw plenty of Chinese people in China who had no problem just stepping right on the threshold. ㄟ

Chapter 1136: Enemies Meet

Chapter 1136: Enemies Meet

The spirit energy in the Fallen Immortal Moors was getting stronger. It rose up, affecting the sky itself, connecting even to the crimson aurora that swirled in the sky. As a result, other colors appeared. They mixed into something very vibrant.

This spirit energy was obviously special, and was the reason that the aurora over these lands had seven colors. It was dazzling and constantly changing.

It was also just barely possible to sense a majestic will awakening. That process of awakening affected the stone stele that Xu Qing was currently studying, causing it to glitter with bright light. The magical symbols on its surface flowed, almost like shining water.

The threshold stone....

Because of having canon, Xu Qing had higher thinking ability, and could study things more deeply. That helped him understand the reason for the seven-colored aurora, as well as the awakening will.

Though Patriarch Diling had only said a few words, that provided Xu Qing with a massive amount of information. Previously, he had only been aware that Immortal Lord Aurora had been killed by the Immortal Paragon, and that his spirit had fallen here. But now he knew that the ruins of an immortal palace were also present here.

In that case, was the Immortal Lord... actually completely killed?

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. He suddenly thought about what Yu Liuchen had told him back in Revered Ancient, about how True Gods were undying, and that as long as true name existed, could return. The only thing was that after returning, might not be the same. Regardless, their origin would be the same.[1]

If True Gods can do that, and Immortal Lords are equivalent to God Lords, then shouldn't they be able to do it too?

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment.

Around this time, Patriarch Diling offered some more information. "Whenever the Fallen Immortal Moors open up, there are actually two types of good fortune.

"The first comes from the dao and enlightenment of the spirit of Immortal Lord Aurora. As the highest-ranking Immortal Lord of his time, the enlightenment he gained is profoundly significant to cultivators like us. Some people develop canon here. Some people transform their canon into something much deeper. This type of good fortune can be very attractive even to Summer Immortals. And yet, for some unknown reason, Summer Immortals won't come here. People do say that when the moors open, there are Quasi-Immortals who go in to look for destined opportunities to reach the immortal level.

"The second type of good fortune are the immortal palace treasures. Although this place has been opened many times, the immortal palace was massive. Almost endless. So whenever it's opened, a different part of it is presented. If you get lucky, you can find precious treasures from the immortal palace, and some of them even have canon.

"Because of that, when this place opens, cultivators will come, regardless of whether or not they have Immortal Capital permission medallions. Nor does it matter where they are from or how old they are.

"The important thing is to have a secret key! There are forty-nine secret keys, and thus, ninety-eight spots to get in."

Patriarch Diling stopped talking and looked cautiously at Xu Qing.

Xu Qing nodded his head, then waved his hand, causing the jade bottle with the secret key to fly back to Patriarch Diling.

Patriarch Diling caught the bottle and breathed a sigh of relief that Xu Qing didn't want to just take his key.

After a moment of consideration, he quietly said, "Fellow Daoist, there's something else important you need to know about the immortal palace. It has eight worlds inside, and time moves differently in one."

Patriarch Diling's gaze hardened. "That information won't do much for me, because the first and second worlds are basically legendary. Very few people have ever gone into them. And apparently the first world is guaranteed to kill you.

"The vast majority of cultivators... choose the third world. And when you choose the third world, you don't go past it. Only people who have canon can get into the fourth world. Even though that bit of information won't do me much good... it might help you, Fellow Daoist."

Xu Qing could tell that Patriarch Diling was showing some goodwill, so he nodded. Then he indicated that he should continue. Xu Qing's nod caused Patriarch Diling to calm down a bit more. That was exactly what he had been hoping for.

"I don't know about the first two worlds, but I know that for every day that passes outside, 50 days pass in the third world. Supposedly, for every day that passes outside, 250 pass in the fourth world.

"As for the fifth through eighth levels, it's not possible for Imperial Sovereigns to enter them. Only Quasi-Immortals can. And when it comes to the time that passes, if the pattern from the third and fourth world applies... then for every day that passes outside, there will be 1,250 days in the fifth world, and so on. Sixth world, more than 6,000. Seventh world, more than 30,000. Eighth world... 160,000.

"If all of that is true, you can also deduce that 10 days pass in the second world, while only 2 days pass in the first world."

Xu Qing's eyes glittered. Hearing that time passed differently in the different levels gave Xu Qing quite a few more things to think about.

So, did this Immortal Lord Aurora have time powers when he was alive? If so, why was his canon connected to light...?

The more he learned, the more curious he was becoming about this spot where Immortal Lord Aurora's spirit had fallen.

Patriarch Diling noticed the thoughtful expression on Xu Qing's face and chose not to disturb him further.

Meanwhile, more cultivators were showing up. Everyone who had a secret key was obviously an extraordinary individual, and naturally... they were all powerful experts. At the very least, they had Imperial Sovereign cultivation bases.

And they didn't just come from the west. There were people from the east, south, and north as well. Their arrival caused rumbling sounds to fill the air, and made the aurora shine even more brightly.

There were a few who were more eye-catching to Xu Qing than the others. One reason was that they were people who had Immortal Capital permission medallions. Another was because they had fierce auras that weighed down on everything around them. Without doing anything, they filled everyone with feelings of indescribable terror. At the same time, those people all noticed Xu Qing.

The first person he took note of was a young man from the south, who was wearing a white daoist robe. He had beautiful facial features and eyes like stars. Most notable about him were his large ears.

"That's Jiang Fan," Patriarch Diling said quietly. "I heard that in the legacy phase of the Trial of the Hunt, he got a legacy with canon...."

Xu Qing nodded slightly. He had never seen Jiang Fan in person, but had seen a description of him in the map he had purchased. Jiang Fan's Master was the Quasi-Immortal Lan Yun from the Grand Immortal Mountain in the south. He had not yet practiced cultivation for 500 years, but already had an early Imperial Sovereign cultivation base. He had seven types of authority. At some point in the past, he had killed a peak Imperial Sovereign, getting seriously injured in the process. Because of that accomplishment, he was known as the number one chosen in the south.

As Xu Qing watched Jiang Fan coming over the horizon, he saw that he was traveling with a young woman, with whom he was chatting. Apparently noticing Xu Qing's gaze, he looked over. When they made eye contact, Jiang Fan's gaze hardened briefly. Then he smiled and nodded in a friendly way.

The young woman also noticed Xu Qing. She was dressed in a green silk garment and was very pretty. When she looked at him, her eyes were like floating mountains, giving her gaze tremendous weight. That was a sign of canon.

Xu Qing's facial expression remained calm. He needed no information from Patriarch Diling to know who this woman was.

She was Yuanshan Su, and because she liked to wear a green garment, she was known as the Green Silk Immortal Fairy. She was the other Shining Star from the south, with a cultivation base a bit higher than Jiang Fan, being in the mid Imperial Sovereign level. Based on the information from the map, he knew that she had fewer types of authority than Jiang Fan. She only had four.

Even as Xu Qing mentally reviewed the information, his gaze shifted to the north.

From over the horizon in that direction came two young men who were rather difficult to tell apart. Their auras seemed to be combined into one, and as they approached, frigid coldness spread out all around them. It caused some people to have difficulty breathing.

“Hordeslayer... and Rampart...” Patriarch Diling said in a quiet voice.

They were the Shining Stars from the north, and they were both from the Sword Immortal School.

Xu Qing’s expression remained placid as he reviewed the information about them from the map. Supposedly, when they were born, there were supernatural phenomena in the sky. Each had been born with a sword in hand, and has a preheaven sword body. They were both taken as apprentices by the heavenly inspector from the Sword Immortal School. From the moment they started practicing cultivation, they had dominated everyone in their generation in the north.

Clearly, after participating in the legacy phase, they had become even stronger than before! As they neared, and their frigid coldness spread, few people could perceive their substructure. But because of the thinking backed by Xu Qing’s space-time state, he could ‘see’ it.

Floating behind the two of them was a huge, ancient sword. It was a majestic sword, like the most amazing sword among all swords. And it was not something that ordinary cultivators could see. It was a manifestation of canon!

Even as Xu Qing ‘saw’ it, he sensed The Emperor’s Sword within him vibrating. It wasn’t willing to show subservience.

As Xu Qing placated it, Patriarch Diling was offering more information.

“Of the eight Shining Stars, four are here. There are still three from the east. I expect they’ll show up soon. And then there’s one from the west. Li Mengtu...”

From Patriarch Diling’s tone of voice, it was obvious that he revered the eight Shining Stars. At almost the same moment that he stopped talking, another person arrived.

He wore black clothes and had long black hair. His facial expression was cold, and he had twelve flower petals on his forehead. He was none other than Li Mengtu. When he arrived, the entire area seemed to devolve into darkness. That was also the power of canon!

When he arrived, Jiang Fan and all the other Shining Stars looked over with serious expressions.

Considering that Patriarch Diling was also from the west, he obviously felt like he was on the same side as Li Mengtu, so his tone of voice changed a bit as he said, “That’s the Shining Star from our western region! Li Mengtu!”

Even as the words left his mouth, his heart skipped a beat as he realized... that Li Mengtu had stopped in midair and was looking in his direction. And then... he approached.

Patriarch Diling’s heart was hammering in his chest as Li Mengtu neared and sat down next to Xu Qing.

“I figured you’d be here,” Li Mengtu said.

Xu Qing nodded and was about to respond when his eyes flickered with a cold light and he looked at the distant horizon.

A fiery cloud soared over the horizon, which turned into a young man with bright red hair. He was the very same person that Xu Qing had fled from when he was in the south, the one he had barely escaped with his life from by seeking refuge with a ferry pilot![2]

Scanning the area as he neared, he headed toward Jiang Fan. But when his gaze reached Xu Qing, he suddenly stopped in his tracks.

1. Yu Liuchen explained about True Gods in [chapter 998](#). ㊟
2. The young man with red hair tried to kill Xu Qing in [chapter 1109](#). ㊟

Chapter 1137: The Immortal Palace Opens

Chapter 1137: The Immortal Palace Opens

This young man with red hair was second only to the Shining Stars in the southern planetary system. And that single glance was all it took for him to recognize Xu Qing! He couldn't help but recall trying to chase Xu Qing down and kill him, only for him to escape by means of the ferry boat. But what came next was thunderous incredulousness striking his heart with immense force.

It was only natural... that he could tell Xu Qing was different now! He could not see canon, nor could he comprehend it. But the sensation from his cultivation base ensured that he was overwhelmed with a sense of deadly crisis that was difficult to put into words. It was a sense of danger that surpassed any sort of prickling sensation running down the spine. He went still, and so did his heart, his sea of consciousness, and his thoughts. At that moment he felt like he was facing his ultimate arch-nemesis! His face fell.

As for Xu Qing, his expression didn't change, but his eyes were as cold as ice, causing space to stir, time to ripple, and space-time to lock down.

When he fought the dao fight with Li Mengtu, it had been a clean fight. The winner would have been able to take the loser's dao. What was more, Xu Qing had greatly benefitted from the karma of Li Mengtu's ancestor. But considering his background, Xu Qing had eventually given up on that fight.

Things were different with this red-haired young man! Killing intent rose, and space-time opened up! Heaven and earth blurred. All things distorted. As Xu Qing entered his space-time state and his thoughts spread out, he remained seated cross-legged, but his shadow was already on the move through space-time.

The red-haired young man was eternally motionless, and clearly visible to Xu Qing. It was as if he had become a scroll painting. His past. His future. All of it was clearly 'visible' to Xu Qing.

Xu Qing lifted his hand and gently pointed his finger out. He was like a person looking at a painting and poking a hole in the canvas. As a result, the person in the painting, and everything around them, were ripped apart.

What happened in the real world was that the space around the red-haired young man collapsed, and time was thrown into chaos. His body was hit by a majestic, indescribable force. His soul had no way to flee, and issued a howl of anguish. No matter how hard he fought and struggled... he was completely and utterly powerless to escape or defend himself. It looked like he was just about to be destroyed in body and soul.

But then, his fellow southerner Jiang Fan looked up and sighed. “There’s no need to be so angry, Fellow Daoist. Whatever happened in the past, we can talk it out. It’s not necessary to use canon to hurt anyone.”

As the words left his mouth, a mist sprang up around the red-haired young man, completely covering him. It was as if ink had been splashed onto the painting. People without canon wouldn’t be able to see what was happening. But people with canon would have a clear view of the red-haired young man being covered by mist. That mist was beyond anything ordinary, and was, in fact, the power of canon.

As a result, Xu Qing lost sight of the young man. It was a case of: *“earth energy dispatched, heaven does not react, call the mist, the mist calls the gloom.”*[1]

Jiang Fan’s canon was that of gloom, and it manifested as a mist. With the gloom mist covering the red-haired young man, it was as if he didn’t exist. It was as if he had been plucked right out of Xu Qing’s space-time canon. The only thing that could resist canon was another canon!

It was Xu Qing’s first time experiencing a canon-versus-canon conflict. The mist rippled mysteriously. It was full of killing intent and death, and would cause most people to be filled with terror. But in terms of Xu Qing’s thoughts....

The canon of this gloom mist seemed gruish, but also somewhat weak.

Remaining seated cross-legged, Xu Qing calmly said, “This time is space for me. And this space is time for me. Disperse!”

He waved his hand casually and, ignoring the spreading mist, reached into the middle of it. That grasping gesture caused violent fluctuations in space-time. The fluctuations came from the past, causing the past to crumble. And the future became like a popping bubble. As space-time stirred, fluctuations came from different time periods. The fluctuations converged, and ultimately turned into... a space-time tempest.

As the tempest built in force, Jiang Fan’s gloom mist held strong for only a few breaths of time before it completely dispersed. When the earth energy was dispatched and heaven did not react, the mist formed. But if heaven did react, then the mist could not exist!

The red-haired young man appeared again. He was still within Xu Qing’s space-time exactly as before.

And now that Jiang Fan’s gloom mist was gone, Xu Qing reached out, and there was nothing to stop him. He grabbed the young man’s past, present, and future! And he crushed them viciously!

A cracking sound rang out into the ears of everyone present.

The red-haired young man shivered from head to toe. His defiant thoughts were scattered into eternity. His despair became empty. His past, and everything that existed there, collapsed into fragments. His future, and all the things that had not come, were shattered like a popping balloon.

What was left behind was his body, standing there alone in space-time. But without a past to sustain it and a future to guide it, the present... had no foundation. It could not exist. As everyone watched, the red-haired young man, including his soul, quietly crumbled into ashes. Then the wind blew, and the ashes were scattered into heaven and earth.

Silence reigned.

The cultivators present who didn't possess canon were all trembling. They had just witnessed a killing that they couldn't even comprehend. The only thing they did comprehend... was that canon was terrifying.

Thankfully, among all the Imperial Sovereign cultivators in the Fifth Star Ring, the amount who had canon or canon treasures were *as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns*.

Jiang Fan sat in the crowd, looking at Xu Qing with narrowed eyes. He had not interfered because of some deep relationship with the red-haired young man. In reality, the two were little more than acquaintances. The main reason he had interfered was because they were both from the south. Had he not been present to witness what happened, it wouldn't have mattered much. But he couldn't simply stand by while one of his fellows from the south was cut down.

Unfortunately, Xu Qing's canon... caused fear to rise up even in him. What was more, he had never heard any rumors of someone like this in the west.

And he had noticed earlier when Li Mengtu offered formal greetings. That was very thought-provoking.

Seated next to him was Yuanshan Su, who was looking at Xu Qing with glittering eyes. Her canon was like a distant mountain, and was extremely weighty.[2]

Xu Qing didn't react at all to the two of them staring at him, and instead, just closed his eyes to meditate.

In contrast, Li Mengtu's gaze was very aggressive as he glared at Jiang Fan and Yuanshan Su. As of now, it was very clear whose side he was on.

Jiang Fan still felt fear in his heart, but he smiled warmly, as if nothing had just happened. "That's a very impressive canon, Fellow Daoist."

Then he closed his eyes.

Yuanshan Su also smiled and looked at Xu Qing, her gaze weighty but full of interest.

Xu Qing ignored them.

The others present were in awe, and Patriarch Diling was feeling very excited. He knew that whether in position or status, he was far beneath the eight Shining Stars. What was more, though

he hadn't seen anything during the conflict of canons just now, he had been in a much better position to see the event than the other cultivators present. As a result, he was rejoicing inside. He was also very glad that he had chosen not to attack Xu Qing back in the Desert of Time. Otherwise....

Patriarch Diling took a deep breath, and his heart started to race. All of a sudden, he realized that this entire situation might be a great opportunity for him. An opportunity most other people could only dream of.

Lowering his voice, he respectfully said, "Exalted one, I just remembered something else about the Aurora Immortal Palace...."

He had changed the way he addressed Xu Qing without even thinking about it.

Xu Qing, meanwhile, looked at Patriarch Diling and waited for him to continue.

"Exalted one, like I said before, there are eight worlds in the Aurora Immortal Palace. The way to determine which world you're on is to look at the boundary stele. Each world has one, and it has the number of the world on it.

"Normally speaking, Imperial Sovereigns go into the third world. And that's where they stay. Only people with canon, or Quasi-Immortals, will go to the fourth world or beyond. Of course, the destined opportunities and good fortune improve with each level. Supposedly, if you can get into the eighth world, you'll get a destined opportunity leading to the Summer Immortal level! That's why Quasi-Immortals are so interested in this place!

"When the Fallen Immortal Moors open up, everyone starts out at the same place, the immortal foyer. From there, you have to select one of three paths.

"The first path is in the middle. Supposedly, it goes to a bridge.

"The second path is on the left, and it's a tranquil trail.

"And on the right, there's an endless black river. That's the third path.

"From ancient times until now, the Aurora Immortal Palace has only had those three paths.

"Remember, exalted one, you can't cross the bridge. Based on all of the written accounts, five out of ten people who go that way end up dead. The path to the left is dangerous, but eight out of ten people who go there have no trouble. It's the best option out of the three."

Patriarch Diling wasn't holding anything back, and was explaining all the details that he knew.

"What about the right-hand path?" Xu Qing asked.

The person to answer wasn't Patriarch Diling, but rather, Li Mengtu.

“Ten out of ten die,” he said. He looked at Xu Qing. “What this guy just said is true. The left-hand path is the only safe one. And the difference compared to the others is significant. The trail on the left goes directly to the third level. There is no chance of it taking you to the first or second level.

“If you go across the bridge, you’ll reach the second level. It’s dangerous, but there are more destined opportunities there. If you go that way, though, you can’t get to the first level. Taking the path on the right is the most complete of all paths, because you start at the first level. But no one has ever survived that.”

Xu Qing nodded and was about to ask another question when he suddenly looked at the stone stele up ahead. The surging spirit energy there had reached a deafening level, as if it were a raging tide. The wind kicked up. The spirit tide surged. In the shortest of moments, it covered the moors. From a distance, it looked like everyone present was being covered over by a sea of spirit energy.

At the same time, an incredibly majestic immortal palace appeared within the spirit sea. Dazzling colors spread out everywhere. Compared to it, all of the people present were like ants.

What was more, more cultivators were still arriving.

1. This passage is a line of text from the Erya, which is an ancient Chinese text that Wikipedia describes as “a dictionary, glossary, synonymicon, thesaurus, and encyclopaedia.” As the Wikipedia article itself says, it has not been fully translated into English. I couldn’t find a translation of this passage, although I didn’t spend too much time on it, as it seems to me the author simply used it because it mentions mist and gloom. Incidentally, the Chinese character I’m rendering as gloom is a sort of unique character referring to darkness, obscurity, night. It’s not commonly used by the author. 𠄎

2. Yuanshan’s surname means “distant mountain(s),” so there is some wordplay connection between her canon and her name. 𠄎

Chapter 1138: Come On In Here!

Chapter 1138: Come On In Here!

This immortal palace contained a certain number of worlds, every one of which was independent. How far you could go into any of those worlds, and how many worlds you could pass through, would depend on your own cultivation base, destined opportunities, and good fortune.

Outside of the immortal palace, overlooking the area, were two worlds hidden in the spirit tide. They were covered with ripples, making it impossible to be able to distinguish them clearly. The only thing visible were the colors black and white, blurred as if beneath water.

The main thing visible to the cultivators present was the immortal palace’s third world, which was clearly visible atop the spirit tide. It was a majestic, seemingly endless world, filled with innumerable buildings and structures. Dazzling light shone everywhere.

The buildings were apparently covered in spirit tiles made of immortal jade, which reflected the seven-colored light shining down from above. It was as if gemstones from infinite other worlds had

been brought here and used in the construction. Immortal cranes soared in the sky of the third world. They were obviously illusory, but it was still possible to hear their graceful cries.

The rumbling sound of the spirit tide merged into something like a song of nature.

Fantastic plants were everywhere, all of them vying with each other in terms of glamor and beauty. There were also projections of immortals that shimmered out of time itself to come into the view of those looking on. Though they were blurry, as they walked about, the spirit energy stirred around them in the most fantastic way.

Further off in the distance was a majestic figure who seemed to be holding up the entire third world. The figure's eyes were like furnaces that seemed capable of comprehending everything in existence. Vast numbers of cultivators had gathered in front of the figure, looking very pious, as if they were studying immortal magics and daoist truths.

The entire third world of the immortal palace was full of zither music, the sound of pages being turned as books were read. Everything was incredibly peaceful and harmonious.

Further back in the world was a mountain range that was obviously the border of the third world. Clouds swirled there, within which were visible various pagodas. Apparently, elite experts were hidden in seclusion in those pagodas, seeking to reach higher levels of cultivation.

Time was on the move. Soon the seven-colored light dissipated, and night fell. The stars came out. As a result, the glorious light of the immortal palace mixed with the light of the stars in the sky. It really looked like an immortal paradise in the world of mortals.

The crowd outside the immortal palace took in the scene and were shaken to varying degrees. This was the first time any of them had seen an immortal palace like this. That included Xu Qing.

As the spirit tide flowed and the immortal palace appeared, most of the people present began to glow with a starlight that was very similar to the immortal palace.

It came from the secret keys!

Xu Qing's secret key was the bamboo slip that Yunmen Qianfan had given him, and it was shining brightly. However, his gaze did not linger for long on the immortal palace. Instead, he was looking at the distant horizon. The moment the immortal palace appeared, a host of figures appeared.

Few of them had Immortal Capital permission medallions. After all, the requirement to enter the Aurora Immortal Palace was to have a secret key. It didn't really have anything to do with the permission medallions. That was why so many Imperial Sovereigns who weren't participating in the Trial of the Hunt would come here.

Quite a few of the people present were fairly well-known. They were people who had won glory in the past, but weren't necessarily as well-known as the Shining Stars.

That was especially true... of the Shining Stars from the eastern planetary system! The east was considered the most prominent of the four planetary systems in the Fifth Star Ring.

For one thing, three of the eight Shining Stars came from there. But also, there were more chosen there than any of the other regions. As of now, those three Shining Stars had finally arrived, and their manner of arrival was astonishing to everyone.

First came a killing aura. All cultivators who lacked canon just felt a mysterious uneasiness rising within them. It rose to an extreme level very quickly, affecting the minds and bodies of everyone present. As it spread, the baleful aura within the killing aura was stirred up, causing a black, wooden door to appear.

The ancient door slowly opened, and a young man stepped out of it, clad in black clothing. The moment he appeared, everyone reeled from the killing aura. It was as if this person... was an Imperial Sovereign made of pure killing energy.

He stood there looking at the immortal palace, not saying a word. As he did, the killing energy around him converged into a blade. It was a blade of canon that could be used in battle!

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. This matched one of the descriptions from the map, so he didn't need any information to identify this person.

He was one of the Shining Stars from the east, Sir Vilespirit.

Based on the description from the map, he was a rogue cultivator who rose to prominence by fighting duels to the death. He had a magic of devouring, slaughtered countless opponents, and cultivated a dao of vile devils. Back when he was a mortal, he joined a sect but eventually betrayed it. They chased him for a full sixty-year-cycle without ever catching him. Eventually he disappeared.

Some years later he resurfaced and joined another sect. Yet again, he betrayed them, and yet again, they chased him but never caught him. Over the years, the same thing happened seven times. He joined seven sects. He betrayed seven sects. Despite being constantly on the run, he managed to become an Imperial Sovereign, whereupon he went back and exterminated all of the sects he had betrayed.

He had climbed mountains of corpses and swam through seas of blood, and that was how he achieved his dao of slaughter. Later, he fought one of the other Shining Stars from the east, and they ended up in a draw. That was how he ended up being listed as one of the Shining Stars.

His canon is not from his cultivation. He has a canon treasure!

When Xu Qing looked at Sir Vilespirit, he could clearly see a broken saber inside of him.

"Yuanshan Su's canon comes from her clan's patriarch," Li Mengtu said in a low voice. "Their clan is the number one clan in the south, and they have deep reserve powers. Although their patriarch isn't a Summer Immortal, only a peak Quasi-Immortal, he still has his own canon. Jiang Fan is like me; he got his canon as a legacy from his Master.

"As for this other guy, I've heard of him before. He cultivates a dao of devils that requires him to betray his sect in order to stimulate the precious treasure he has, which contains canon. The heavenly inspector in the east basically looks the other way when it comes to him."

Xu Qing gave a slight nod, then looked up into the sky.

Ripples flowed out and light expanded. Then a person stepped out of the light. He was cultured and refined, almost like an elegant scholar. A warm and genial aura spread out from him, which allowed the cultivators affected by the killing energy to recover their senses.

He was the third Shining Star from the east... Zhou Zhengli. Hailing from the Zhou Clan in the east, his name matched his reputation. He was chivalrous, kind, charitable, and was respected by countless cultivators in the east. Upon arriving, the first thing he did was glance at Sir Vilespirit. His dao was the polar opposite of Sir Vilespirit's, and both wanted to put an end to each other.

Sir Vilespirit snorted coldly. Ignoring Zhou Zhengli, he strode directly toward the immortal palace and disappeared inside.

Zhou Zhengli's expression didn't change. Looking away, he clasped hands to the crowd, smiled at Jiang Fan and the other Shining Stars, nodded to Li Mengtu, and even glanced at Xu Qing. He nodded, then headed toward the immortal palace. However, before entering, he suddenly stopped in place and clasped hands to the sky.

Xu Qing and the Shining Stars all noticed the same thing, and also looked toward the sky.

All of a sudden, nine new stars had appeared among all the other stars there. The stars swirled around until they made a ring. Shining brightly, they drifted down and formed a person out of nothing. He wore a utilitarian daoist robe, and his hair flowed freely down his back. He was handsome, with cold eyes, and there was something about him that seemed almost emotionless. The moment he appeared, he stepped in the direction of the immortal palace.

He walked right past Zhou Zhengli. Zhou Zhengli kept his head bowed. Only after Sir Star Ring was inside did Zhou Zhengli follow.

The reaction to Sir Star Ring's arrival surpassed that of any of the others. Jiang Fan and Yuanshan Su, as well as Hordeslayer and Rampart, all had very serious expressions on their faces. They were the next ones to enter the immortal palace.

Only then did everyone else who qualified to enter start making their way forward with determined looks.

Li Mengtu took a deep breath, and his expression was very serious. "Sir Star Ring! He's the highest ranking of the eight Shining Stars, and is widely recognized... to be the strongest Imperial Sovereign in the Fifth Star Ring!

"He comes from the Star Ring Pagoda in the east, and was bestowed with the name Star Ring, making him this generation's Sir Star Ring. His cultivation base is actually beyond that of a late Imperial Sovereign. He has nine types of authority, and his true level of strength is unknown because of how rarely he acts in public. In the one public battle he had fought, he had challenged a Quasi-Immortal Grand Emperor. Thanks to that fight, his name is known far and wide. And that was before he got any legacy. Xu Qing... I bet you can see something about him, can't you?"

"He gained enlightenment of canon before he got his legacy," Xu Qing said calmly.

Li Mengtu nodded. “He was the first person in our generation who didn’t use his Master’s legacy to gain enlightenment of canon. You, Brother Xu, are the second. Based on what I’ve heard, when his Master offered a legacy, Sir Star Ring refused to take it. He said that he doesn’t like using things that belong to others. His name is a symbol, so he could accept that being given to him. But when it comes to canon... he prefers his own.

“His canon is extremely mysterious. In fact, I don’t even know what it is. But I do know... that he beat a Quasi-Immortal! That shows you how strong it is! After all, there are some Quasi-Immortals who don’t have canon. But... the vast majority will pay any price to at least get a canon treasure. Otherwise, they can hardly qualify to be called Quasi-Immortal here in the Fifth Star Ring.”

Li Mengtu got to his feet and looked at Xu Qing. “Brother Xu, shall we go in? The immortal palace is open now. As for the Quasi-Immortals, they have a different way of entering. They go right into the fourth world. Theoretically speaking, we won’t even be able to see them or interact with them.

“Since we do have canon, we might be able to make it all the way to the fourth world. But by that time, the Quasi-Immortals will surely have gone to higher levels.”

Hearing that, Xu Qing nodded. “Alright.”

Standing, he joined Li Mengtu to head toward the immortal palace. Patriarch Diling followed, and all three entered together. Soon, there wasn’t a single person left outside.

Inside the immortal palace, in the second world hidden in the spirit tide, there was a strange place that was pure white. It didn’t feel like space or time existed there. Everything was white.

There was an imp trudging along within that whiteness. The imp had a sword in his hand. Turning around, he put his hand on his hip and proudly said, “If you’ve got what it takes, you monster, then come on in here and kill me!”

There was no response. Looking very pleased, the imp turned to leave. All of a sudden, he turned and looked off into the distance.

“Huh?? My son is coming?”

Chapter 1139: Inside a Fairy Tale

Chapter 1139: Inside a Fairy Tale

The wind blew from distant parts, driving the tide of immortal energy throughout the immortal palace. It eventually reached the immortal foyer, where it streamed past the gathered cultivators.

The immortal foyer was an enormous platform of black stone stele covered with moss and lichen. It emanated a simplistic and ancient feeling, so that when you stood on it, you felt like you had gone back in time. Located in the middle of the platform, it had written information about the three paths. Unfortunately, it was so old that the information was barely legible.

There were currently a few dozen cultivators in the foyer. Everyone who entered the immortal palace had to pass through there first before picking one of the paths.

As Xu Qing, Li Mengtu, and Patriarch Diling appeared, the other cultivators became beams of light that shot toward the left-hand path. When they neared, they lost their powers of flight and were forced to drop to the ground. Warily maintaining distance between each other, they proceeded on foot.

The path they were entering didn't have much mist. It was almost like a different dimension that was actually darker than the immortal foyer. A light rain was falling there, and the ground was muddy. Clearly, a lot of people had walked onto that little trail. It was quiet and shady. But the rain just kept falling and falling, as if it were slowly devouring the cultivators there.

Xu Qing looked at that path but didn't move toward it. Instead, he studied his surroundings.

First, he examined the stone slab that made up the foyer. He could tell that it was a real, corporeal object. The mist was the same. It felt humid, and when it landed on him, it created water droplets on his garment. The immortal energy was also real. Even just standing here, Xu Qing could sense his cultivation base benefiting. He could also hear music playing. It seemed to be coming from the area that had been visible from the outside, deep in the immortal palace where the dao was being discussed.

Xu Qing looked up. When standing in the immortal foyer and looking inside, the immortal palace was so enormous that it wasn't possible to see the end. All he could see... was mist covering everything in front of him.

Within that mist there was a bridge. It looked like there was someone on the bridge, slowly proceeding through the mist.

"That's Sir Star Ring," Li Mengtu said. "When we arrived a moment ago, I saw him walking in that direction."

At this point, there wasn't anyone else with them in the foyer. Everyone else had already picked their path to enter the immortal palace.

Li Mengtu glanced at Xu Qing. "Which path are you planning to select, Brother Xu? If you take the trail, we can go in together."

Patriarch Diling looked eagerly at Xu Qing to find out his plan.

Xu Qing said nothing for a moment. He looked at the figure disappearing on the bridge, and thought back to what Patriarch Diling had told him earlier. "I think I'll take the bridge."

Patriarch Diling was shocked.

Li Mengtu wasn't. He looked deeply at Xu Qing, then clasped hands, bowed, and went to the trail on the left. Inside, he sighed. It wasn't a sigh for Xu Qing, but rather, himself. As one of the Shining Stars, he wanted to push his limits. But he also knew... that with his legacy canon, it wasn't likely that he would survive the bridge.

From ancient times until now, people who can cross that bridge have been as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns. To survive it... you have to have gained enlightenment of your own canon. You can't rely on the help of a legacy.

Li Mengtu disappeared into the distance. Patriarch Diling seemed to want to say something, but was hesitating to do so. Ultimately, he chose the trail. The two of them were soon gone.

Xu Qing was the only person left in the immortal foyer. And then... he didn't actually pick the forward path! Turning with shining eyes, he looked at the path on the right!

The right-hand path was full of such dense mist that you couldn't see anything inside of it. The only thing visible was the seething mist. But there was something else... and that was the sound of running water.

The right-hand path was a black river that led to certain death. Though the words on the stone stele had faded with time, the information had not been lost forever. The most important details about the Aurora Immortal Palace had been passed down by word of mouth over the years.

That was how Patriarch Diling knew so much about the place.

I can sense canon tugging me in that direction....

From the moment he came to the immortal foyer, Xu Qing's space-time canon had enabled him to sense some sort of space-time resonance with the right-hand path. It was almost like something calling to him. That resonance, that tugging, that call, was clear in his mind, and it led him to one conclusion. A dao with a similar source as his own was in that direction.

I got the sense early on that the Fallen Immortal Moors don't exist within space-time. After the palace opened up, that sensation got even stronger. And now it's obvious that... this place has a space-time canon that's the same as my own!

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. In any other situation, it would be extremely dangerous for something like this to happen. Facing the same origin... would be difficult to survive. It would come down to the stronger of the two devouring the weaker. But since Immortal Lord Aurora had already perished, it was a different story.

But his canon was obviously the aurora. Don't tell me that if you push space-time canon far enough, it becomes aurora? Or is it that... Immortal Lord Aurora changed his dao?

Xu Qing thought about it. In the end, he came to the conclusion that since the space-time canon he could sense didn't seem to have a source, the most likely explanation was that Immortal Lord Aurora had changed his dao.

Soon, a look of determination appeared in Xu Qing's eyes. If he wanted to push his space-time canon further along, he needed to gain enlightenment of the inner nature of this right-hand path. The two ways to do it would be to seek enlightenment himself, or to study the traces left behind by another person who had gone down that path. Both options could be considered a destined opportunity.

A moment later, Xu Qing hastened forward and stepped into the mist of the right-hand path. An instant later, he disappeared. The only thing visible from the outside was swirling mist.

Now, the mist was the only thing Xu Qing could see. It covered the sensory organs of his fleshly body, as well as the senses provided by his cultivation base. As Xu Qing went forward, the sound of running water eventually disappeared. Everything was pitch black.

It was impossible to determine if he was in the middle of some mist, or if he had entered the water of a river. Everything was just black.

There was nothing dangerous. Just deep, endless darkness.

Time seemed to lose meaning. He had no idea how much of it passed. Keeping his guard up, he proceeded through the pitch black until he reached the end of the path. It was still completely dark. Because everything was pitch black, all he could tell was that he had reached a wall that blocked his way forward.

Magical techniques couldn't pierce through it. Divine abilities couldn't break it. His fleshly body was useless. After probing the seemingly invisible wall for a time, and doing a few tests, he closed his eyes and tapped into his eighth extreme. He entered his space-time state....

Everything opened up. His thinking became clear. It was as if he had surpassed the darkness inside. He had emerged from the painting. But using the thoughts of his space-time canon, what he could see... was only a dot of darkness.

It was a dot that was immeasurably large. And there wasn't just one. There were innumerable dots of darkness, connected together to form a string.

There was something intangible pulling at him, and now he perceived that he could only go forward or backward, not to the left or right. His thinking also revealed to him that the thread of black dots did not have an element of height. It was the same with each individual dot.

Nothing existed on either side of the thread, as if the thread itself were the most paramount entity in existence, and didn't tolerate the existence of anything else. If you tried to look to either side of the thread, everything rippled until the distortions started to affect you personally.

Xu Qing with his space-time canon could see something a bit different. It was as if he was looking at... infinite remnants of shredded space-time. And if he looked for too long, he started to feel increasingly unwell. This was a bizarrely simple world.

After a while, Xu Qing opened his eyes.

With my space-time thinking, I can leave this black dot. But my fleshly body can't.

When in his canon state, his fleshly body was definitely his biggest weakness. However, he now had an idea of what to do. If he had to use the state in a fight, he could just deal with the withering effects. As long as the fight ended quickly enough, there would be no long-term effects. As for his current situation, he couldn't do any significant exploration in a short time.

After thinking for a bit, he put his fleshly body in the Sageheaven Pagoda. It would be safe there for the time being. There would still be some side-effects. What was more, the safety wouldn't be absolute. What was more, he couldn't stay away for too long. If he did, his body would still wither away.

Having made the necessary arrangements, Xu Qing's space-time canon thoughts were not restrained. He gently pushed against the wall in front of him. He went through it instantly.

And then... he allowed the force of this bizarre world to pull him forward. He wanted to see what was at the end of the thread.

Time really didn't have any meaning here. Or perhaps it was most correct to say that time didn't even exist. Space became a thing of the past. The only thing that existed was forward momentum.

Thankfully, Xu Qing wasn't the only one here. At a certain point, he saw something else in a similar state as his own. It was a medicinal decocting pot that had grown four limbs and a white beard. It looked extremely freakish. It stood on the thread, and a medicinal pill would occasionally fly out from it. They would land on the black dot, whereupon they would turn black.[1]

The decocting pot sensed Xu Qing, as it smiled warmly and said, "Welcome to the fairy tale!"

Then it pointed off into the distance and said nothing further.

Xu Qing continued on his way and soon encountered a second freak. It was an octopus whose every tentacle had a face on it. Each face had different expressions, but all were cursing and swearing. Upon sensing Xu Qing, all of the faces started crying. Xu Qing looked at the crying octopus and wasn't sure what to make of it. He finally just kept going forward.

Eventually, he saw a finger with the head of a lion.

It was calling out, "Run, run...."

He saw a frog that thought of itself as a fish, and was swimming around. When it saw Xu Qing, it trembled and then remained in place, unmoving.

Xu Qing ran into eleven freaks, all of which reacted to him in different ways. The eleventh freak was the last.

It was an old woman in black clothes, with a walking stick in her hand. Her face was huge, while her body and limbs were very small. Her expression was ferocious as she reached out, grabbed a black dot, and chewed it up in her mouth.

After catching sight of Xu Qing, she grinned. "Nice death. Nice death."

Xu Qing didn't respond. A moment later, he left. He wasn't sure how much longer he continued onward, but he didn't see any more freaks. Eventually, he reached the end of the thread, where he found a mirror. Countless black dots were all lined up and entering the mirror. They vanished.

Xu Qing looked thoughtfully at the mirror.

Countless black dots form a thread, and that becomes a linear world. Now I'm starting to get a sense of what Immortal Lord Aurora's space-time canon state was. As for those eleven freaks....

Given Immortal Lord Aurora's status, the fact that there were eleven freaks made him think of the eleven Immortal Lords in the Fifth Star Ring.

This place must have formed from Immortal Lord Aurora's thoughts as he died! That's why everything is so weird....

Xu Qing further considered the fact that Immortal Lord Aurora had been killed by the Immortal Paragon.

I wonder if all of this has something to do with the Immortal Paragon's canon. What is that canon...? All of a sudden, Xu Qing thought to what the first freak, the decocting pot, had said.

Fairy tale?

1. It's only been a few chapters since I shared the pictures of the decocting pots, but here's the [link to the pictures](#) again. 📷

Chapter 1140: It's Him....

Chapter 1140: It's Him....

"Welcome to the fairy tale!" thought Xu Qing as he focused his senses on the world around him. He couldn't say for sure what the Immortal Paragon's canon was, but it seemed likely it was something close to what he had been thinking. As for the specifics....

I'll probably find out more when I get into the immortal capital.

Stowing all of his questions and suspicions, he focused on the mirror ahead. It looked like an ordinary mirror. It wasn't fancy in any way, nor was there anything special about it. It seemed just like any other mirror you would expect to find in someone's house in the mortal world.

The thread of black dots just seemed to be feeding endlessly into it. After a black dot entered the mirror, it would disappear. There were absolutely no reflections in the mirror. There was only... pure white.

Is this the exit of the first world?

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. After considering the situation for a time, he headed straight toward the mirror. He experienced no obstruction, and went in very smoothly.

However... as soon as he entered the mirror, his thoughts trembled. And that was because what he saw in front of him was an endless thread of black dots. He was still in the first world. He had not left it. From the look of it, he had gone back to the beginning.

Up ahead... he saw no mirror, just the thread going on and on. It was the same behind him. There was only one way to find out what was going on. He started moving forward. Eventually, he encountered the freaks. Then he found the mirror again. He entered it. And... went back to the beginning.

It was a cycle. He tried to break the cycle, but was unable to. He went to the mirror and then tried to sink into one of the dots, and enter the mirror that way. He went back to the beginning.

Immortal Lord Aurora must have had space-time canon. It's the same dao as my own. But his space-time canon works differently. I rely on the five elements merged into space and time. That's how I produced space-time. I went about it a different way, by producing something from nothing. And that led to further developments and change. In that case... perhaps there's another way for me to get out of here.

Xu Qing focused his thoughts on the thread.

What if I became one of the black dots? It would be like stepping into a painting instead of just looking at it. Then my thoughts could be part of the world as I experienced everything happening.

Then I would be part of the cycle. I would really be going through it instead of just observing. There are risks, but I could still try it!

After considering the matter for a while, he caused his thoughts to descend until he was inside the thread as one of the countless dots.

He became part of the world. He instantly felt something completely different. Any concept of up or down were peeled away. Any concept of left or right were similarly gone. None of them existed any longer. He quickly forgot about them. It was as if the privilege of going up, down, left, or right had never even existed.

All he could do was follow the tug forward, and send his fate ahead. At the same time, having lost any concept of up, down, left, or right, it was only natural that he lost any sense of height. And thus, he lost the 'sight' of his canon.

He was 'flat.' The black dots were 'flat.' Therefore, his thinking was also 'flat.'

As a result, he couldn't see. There was only forward and backward. Those were the only things he could faintly sense. It was a much more limiting sensation than anything from before. All Xu Qing could do now was allow himself to be pulled forward.

Gradually, his thoughts began to grow disorganized. It was as if the power of thought wasn't permitted. He was slowly being erased and assimilated by the world.

But Xu Qing chose not to resist. He relaxed his thoughts and let everything happen. He just went along with the world. He had no idea how much time passed. Time had long since lost any meaning.

His thoughts gradually scattered as he was pulled along through the endless world. And then, as a black dot, Xu Qing encountered the freaks. However, the order they appeared and the way he perceived them were different.

Using his limited thinking to 'look' at the freak, he saw countless circles. They got increasingly smaller, and as they swirled around each other, they almost resembled fingerprints. They seemed to have no beginning and no end, and they completely occupied Xu Qing's senses going forward and backward.

That was how he sensed them in this lower realm of existence. He wasn't able to sense anything beyond that. Being in this lower existence meant that he had no way to sense the true appearance of a higher existence. As a result, higher existences imparted the sense of being creators.

It was very shocking. It was so shocking, in fact, that it overturned everything else. Even voices became a source of shattering chaos.

"Run, run...."

The arrival of the voice brought a sense of collapse. In the form of a black dot, Xu Qing passed by this particular freak. It was like traveling through death itself. Some of the black dots were actually peeled away and destroyed, but they were always replaced by other black dots.

Luckily, Xu Qing was never destroyed. Eventually, the destructive voice faded away. He proceeded onward.

Later... he heard crying. This time, he didn't see anything. But the crying entered his limited thoughts. The crying made him feel like he was melting. Strangely, though, he felt no fear or regret. Without him even realizing it, his emotions had vanished.

So, it's not fortune. It's payment and offset.

Xu Qing's thoughts were weakening. Many of the black dots disappeared within the crying. He proceeded onward.

Eventually, he heard the sound of running water and the frog. That sound caused Xu Qing to lose even more of his perceptions and thoughts. Soon, the only thing left behind was confusion.

In that manner, he went further and further down the path.

Xu Qing couldn't remember what happened after that. His fleeting sensations were the price he paid to proceed. He gradually became increasingly powerless and increasingly tired. Thankfully... even the weakness and exhaustion ceased to exist. And then, finally, he heard a voice.

"Nice death. Nice death...."

The voice came with a power that was impossible to resist, which invaded him and took away his name. Normally speaking, the nameless him should have continued onward toward the distant mirror. He should have entered it and left this world. But the power that took away his name violated procedure and came back.

It emanated an evil aura that became a powerful invasion. And when it landed on him, it sought... to thoroughly erase him! It wanted to completely take away all that remained of his weakened thoughts.

However, in that moment of crisis, when the nameless him was about to disappear completely....

The voice of an old man echoed through space-time.

“Tell me about nightcorpse morning glory.... Kid, you answer.”

When the voice came, time stirred and space rippled. A space-time tempest built up in Xu Qing’s thoughts, rumbling loudly. And it dredged up a name that had long been hidden in his memories.

The Kid!

That name became a support. An anchor!

The Kid’s weak thoughts began to fade away, but then a deafening sound erupted. It was like thunder, cracking loudly, the sounds of heaven. His thoughts once again began to expand. It was like a tsunami.

Next, without even thinking about it, the Kid began to recite some words that he couldn’t ever possibly forget.

“Nightcorpse morning glory, also known as toxic mountain rootmottle, refers to the stalk and root of feverfew veined turtledove chrysanthemums. It is a woody vine-type plant found in ravines of the Corpse Mountains, usually in chilly streams or jungle thickets. It’s astringent but feels warm in the mouth. It also imparts a sensation of decay. It’s particularly useful in protecting against drafts and inducing perspiration. That said, it’s extremely toxic, and is a typical example of the polarity of yin and yang in medicinal plants.” [1]

As the words left his mouth, the Kid’s scattered state began to reverse. The perceptions he had lost began to come back, slowly but surely. Before, he couldn’t ‘see’ at all. But now, his sight was slowly returning!

The old man’s voice continued.

“What are the symptoms of overdose?”

The storm raged inside Xu Qing, and he instinctively said, *“Symptoms include stomach pain, dizziness, and hallucinations. If the toxin isn’t counteracted within fifteen minutes, the result is death.”*

“How do you counteract the toxin?”

“Induce vomiting and pump the stomach. Then use a combination of egg whites and redthorn stamens, treating the symptoms at noon when the sun is bright. The treatment time should last for no more than an hour, and should continue for three days.”

Xu Qing's trembling voice seemed to be coming from outside that tent so many years ago.

The old man's voice contained a smile as he said, *"Well done!"*

Xu Qing wanted to 'see' in that moment, but the pull forward was so strong that all he could do was allow his thoughts to be dragged closer and closer to the mirror. Yet his thoughts were astir. Although the exit was right in front of him, he couldn't bear to lose this opportunity. He wanted to go back again. He wanted to once again enter space-time canon to 'see' the person who had spoken those words.

"Don't be silly. Remember what I told you...? The world is a tavern for living beings. And the timescape is an old guest. As long as we don't die, we'll meet again. By now, you've already made something of yourself."[2]

The voice faded away, and a gentle force appeared, landing on the black dot that was Xu Qing, and pushing him forward. Xu Qing got closer and closer... until he was right about to enter the mirror. At the last moment, he looked back.

Just barely visible outside the mirror was a medicinal decocting pot with a white beard and a faint smile. The smile was very warm and kind. The facial features. The smile. They were like something from a lifetime ago, but at the same time, like something from yesterday.

Scenes. Experiences. Just like the past.

1. Nightcorpse morning glory came up quite a few times in early chapters. The details of the plant, as stated here, were mentioned in three specific chapters, all of which were pivotal chapters. Specifically, they are [chapter 25](#), [207](#), and [352](#). 📖

2. These words echo what happened in [chapter 29](#). 📖

Chapter 1141: I'm Aurora

Chapter 1141: I'm Aurora

Xu Qing smiled. He had many questions. He had many suspicions.

For example, why had Grandmaster Bai been in Revered Ancient? Why had Grandmaster Bai actually died? And also... how had he become a medicinal decocting pot in the thoughts of Immortal Lord Aurora? What was more... how could it be that Grandmaster Bai's memories and will from Revered Ancient were in a world that formed when Immortal Lord Aurora died?

There were no answers to such questions. Nor was that important right now.

What was important... was that the voice had said the same thing that had been said so many years ago. *'As long as we don't die, we'll meet again.'*

Today, in this world, they had met again.

As a result, Xu Qing was very happy. In fact, it had been a very long time since he felt this happy. It was as if he had unintentionally abandoned the emotion of happiness a long time ago....

Feeling very comfortable, he laughed and 'looked' around. He suddenly realized that the concepts of left and right were now permitted. As a result, even in his low state of existence, he could sense what was around him.

And yet... all he could 'see' was distorted chaos. That was because although the world had the concepts of left and right, everything was still flat. When being flat and looking at flatness, all one will see is a haze. There was no concept of height.

But the emotion of happiness kept getting stronger, bolstering his perceptions and becoming the totality of everything.

Something is off about this....

As happiness filled him, Xu Qing realized that something unusual was going on. He wanted to suppress the emotion, but it didn't seem like the world would permit it. Therefore, all he could do was be immersed in happiness as he tried to restrain it. In the end... Xu Qing chose to activate his space-time canon.

He wanted to see this world clearly. Only in that manner could he understand it and find a way to leave. An instant later, his eighth extreme erupted.

It was like a mist had been cleared, and Xu Qing rose to a higher level. His thoughts had been upgraded. The world entered Xu Qing's thoughts and became incomparably clear.

It was a white world inside the mirror. The black dots entering the mirror from outside were rapidly growing bigger. They were no longer dots or a thread. They were returning to their original state, which meant that they had... torsos, limbs, and heads. They were becoming... shadows.

And they were not pure black. Although the world was white as far as the eye could see, there were also colors within that world. They were colorful shadows that made the world resplendent.

All of the shadows in this world seemed to be brimming with happiness. It was as if they had no anger in them at all. No sadness. They were completely free and at ease. Some were singing. Some were crying out in joy. Some were sleeping. Some were running around. Interestingly, there were no orange shadows.[1]

Yet that didn't seem to bother any of the shadows, who were simply immersed in happiness. The world had no mountains, rivers, or any other things.... There were only the innumerable colorful shadows.

Upon seeing this, Xu Qing checked himself to see what color he was. He was green.[2]

The first world has countless black dots making a thread, with no concept of left, right, up, or down. This second world has left and right, which makes it seem freer. However... it doesn't have the concepts of up and down. And that's because this world is a mirror. And mirrors... are flat.

It's like a scroll painting. And I'm in the painting. When inside the painting, if I look around, everything seems like a blur. But if I look at the painting from outside, it looks like a world.

Only the emotion of happiness is permitted, presumably because of the style of the painting. The theme is happiness, so all the living beings here are endlessly happy. In that case... how do I leave?

After a while, he made a decision. He dispelled his space-time state, and his thoughts returned to that of a green shadow. And he immersed himself in the world of happiness.

He was waiting. Waiting for orange to appear.

Time passed, although it was impossible to say how much. As his happiness grew greater, the number of shadows in the world seemed to reach a critical point. Xu Qing was waiting for orange.

"The monster is coming!" a shrill voice shrieked. All of a sudden, deafening rumbling hit the world with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force. All of the shadows felt it. At that moment, the theme of the painting was altered, and happiness turned into terror.

Orange was coming. It spread without end.

Xu Qing's emotions flipped on end, and he felt terror filling him. Without any hesitation, he activated his space-time canon so that he could 'see' again. What he saw... was that a huge shadow had come to this world of white. The shadow was wearing an orange robe and had a vicious-looking mask. It seemed boundlessly wicked and evil.

In one hand it held a bucket, and in the other hand it held a paintbrush. The bucket was orange, and was full of orange paint. The brush was colorless.

It suddenly lunged at the nearby shadows. It moved so fast that the shadows couldn't react or fight back. The monster swished the paint brush, and the color was extracted from the shadows.

As a result, the shadows became blank. They then seemed to fuse with the world. Countless dots were disappearing. Apparently... they were going back to the first world!

From the perspective of the world, this really was a monster. He came, took away the color, took away the life, and sent everything back to the beginning.

But it didn't happen to all the shadows. Occasionally... some of the shadows had unique characteristics, and their color wasn't extracted by the monster. Instead, he would dip the paintbrush into the orange paint and... would paint those specific shadows orange. Next, the orange shadows would fall into the bucket.

Xu Qing was one of them. The moment he was painted... his space-time canon was suppressed! He could not fight back or resist. But he was permitted to exist.

What happened next shook Xu Qing deeply.

There was a city inside the bucket. An orange city. There were shadows inside, all of them orange like Xu Qing.

The moment Xu Qing entered, he became a resident of the city. At the same time, he realized he felt very sleepy. That sensation surpassed his canon, thus making it impossible to sustain his space-time canon state. And he also couldn't resist the sleepiness.

That was because... in this orange-colored city, the shadows were only permitted to do one thing. Sleep, and then dream. There were different dreams, all of them like fairy tales. And they combined to create a complete world of fairy tales.

Xu Qing was no exception. Within that orange city, he closed his eyes and began to dream. The dreams came and left one after another within his thoughts. It was a cycle with no end. There was no true awakening.

But occasionally, Xu Qing was able to think about why all of this was happening. Gradually, he managed to imagine Immortal Lord Aurora, and try to look at things from his perspective. He tried to think about why a world like this would have been created as he died.

Eventually, he developed a theory. The orange city was probably a metaphor representing the Immortal Capital. In that case, who was the monster....?

Now he had a goal. Time passed. It was hard to say how much. Nor was it possible to say which spring of which year had come to the timescape. But within Xu Qing's dream, a white-colored imp appeared. The imp's body was made of threads. He had a very large head that made up half of his entire body. There were three words written on his head.[3]

Other than that, his body was very simplistic. He was carrying some five-colored paint as he carefully snuck into Xu Qing's dream. He said nothing. He just stood in front of Xu Qing and snapped his fingers.

CRACK!

A thunderous boom filled Xu Qing's mind. Xu Qing's will stirred, and he woke up briefly.

Seeing that, the imp grinned and then pointed at the words on his face. Then he pointed off into the distance before pointing at the five-colored paint. Finally... he looked at Xu Qing in anticipation.

Xu Qing took advantage of the temporary lucidity to analyze the imp's facial expressions and actions. An explanation quickly became clear to him.

I'd say there's an eighty to ninety percent chance that this big-headed imp is the last surviving scrap of will left behind by Immortal Lord Aurora before he died.

Xu Qing looked at the three words on the imp's big head.

I am Aurora. [4]

Has it shown up because I have space-time canon? Or does it appear to everyone who makes it to the second world? Regardless, Immortal Lord Aurora made this second world, and now he's explained how to leave it. It's all about that five-colored paint. Using a color that's different from this world amounts to ... an act of rebellion!

The imp seemed to sense what Xu Qing was thinking, as the anticipation on his face grew more intense.

Xu Qing inwardly shook his head.

If this is really Immortal Lord Aurora, then... he would definitely hate the Immortal Paragon. And that means that when he created this world, the exit method is going to reflect his choice back then.... That said, I don't seem to have any other options right now.

Eyes narrowing, he reached out, grabbed the five-colored paint, and began to paint himself with it. All of a sudden, he shivered as he changed from orange. He was now covered with five different colors. The city filled with rumbling sounds, as a powerful howl rippled through it. All the light dimmed.

And then, the endless orangeness turned into a massive hand that shot down from the sky toward Xu Qing!

The excited imp finally spoke in a shriek, “The monster’s coming, son. RUN!”

As the words left the imp’s mouth, he whipped his hand out in front of him, drawing a circle that he jumped into. Xu Qing didn’t hesitate for a moment. He jumped right in after the imp. The circle disappeared.

An instant after they were gone, the huge orange hand arrived and snatched down onto the spot Xu Qing had occupied. A howl of rage echoed out.

All of the sleeping orange shadows in the city woke up, startled. An instant later, they were all flying out of the orange bucket to the outside world, where they scattered.

The whole world was being painted orange!

And the chase had begun!

1. There are different Chinese characters for the color orange. In this case, the character used is the most common one. Just like in English, it’s exactly the same character from the fruit of the same name (except that the character for ‘color’ is added to it). 橘

2. The Chinese character used here to describe his color is the same character from his name. This character can be interpreted in different ways. It can be green, blue, cyan, blue-green, and sometimes even black depending on the context. Based on translating thousands of Er Gen chapters, I can tell you that he most often uses this character to describe green things. There is another character more commonly used for the color green, but he very, very rarely uses that character. For instance, when he describes rainbows, and lists all of the primary and secondary colors in them, he will use this character as the color between yellow and blue. He also uses this character to describe the green color of plants and vegetation. As such, I default to translating this character as green, although I’ll use other interpretations in other circumstances, for instance Violet and Cyan from this novel. 青

3. In Chinese it says there are four characters, but they work out to three English words. 青

4. In Chinese, ‘aurora’ is made of two characters. I haven’t mentioned it up to this point because it isn’t really relevant but aurora is literally “extreme light.” That’s the same “extreme” character from the Eight Extreme Daos. As for “light,” the interesting thing is that this same character is in the term I’m translating as “timescape.” Again, there is no indication this is relevant in any way. There are only a few thousand Chinese characters that can be used to make a vastly larger amount of words, terms, idioms, etc. so having shared characters between different words is nothing unusual. ❹

Chapter 1142: Escaping the Fairy Tale

Chapter 1142: Escaping the Fairy Tale

The second world was like a painting, and now it was split into two parts. One part was orange, and it was spreading. The other part was white, and it was being painted.

It was like a chase.... Something like an orange sea roared as the monster within it raged wickedly. As the orange sea spread, a five-colored shadow sped away from it.

That five-colored shadow was Xu Qing. He was fleeing with all his might. The orange sea behind him howled dangerously. He knew that if he slowed down even a bit, he would be devoured by the sea.

The imp with the three words on its head was also running, but he seemed very calm. Matching Xu Qing’s speed perfectly, he ran along and said, “Hurry up! The monster’s coming!

“Yo! Monster! If you’ve got what it takes, speed up! If you can eat my son, I’ll admit you’re pretty amazing! Come on! Pull out your best tricks. Beat my son to death. Beat him to death!

“Son, why are you running so slowly? You listen to me, if you get caught, then daddy won’t save you.”

The imp’s voice was quite annoying to Xu Qing, especially when combined with the howls of the monster. He felt provoked.

The orange sea chasing Xu Qing seethed with even greater intensity. And then it transformed, becoming an extremely ugly and vicious-looking xuanwu turtle. Xu Qing’s face fell, and he barely managed to avoid being snapped up by the xuanwu turtle.

“See? SEE??” the imp shrieked. “What did I just say? Hey, monster, you’re a real bastard!”[1]

The monster seemed to get angrier. Then the xuanwu turtle transformed into an orange toad. It was covered with orange sludge, and its croaks were like thunder. It would occasionally jump forward and occasionally spit out orange muck. It was a lot more ferocious-looking than the turtle from earlier.

The fleeing Xu Qing felt greater pressure than ever, and on a few occasions he barely avoided being caught by the toad. The danger he was in only seemed to get the imp more excited.

“That’s right. That’s right! You really are an ugly toad, you bastard turtle! You’re evil. Hideous! Can you do anything else but spit stuff out of your mouth? If you’ve got what it takes then spit it a bit farther, why don’t you?”

Xu Qing’s scalp went numb. And then the orange sea seethed, and the toad disappeared. In its place came... a huge sea cucumber. It spat out a very long stream of orange paint that covered everything as it shot toward Xu Qing.

The imp was ecstatic. “You headless, faceless weirdo! You really transformed into something appropriate this time. You have a body that’s covered with spikes but is totally limp! Most outrageous is that you’re actually peeing in our direction! Get out of the way, son! The bastard turtle is angry! It’s trying to cover us in pee!”

It seemed there was no escape from the orange paint that was falling onto them. The imp reached out, made another circle, and jumped in. Xu Qing followed. When they reappeared, they were somewhere else. The imp put his hands on his hips and shook his head.

“My son ain’t scared of that! You missed, loser!”

Xu Qing was at a complete loss for words. No matter how the monster changed, the appearance was ugly and evil. It seemed obvious it was a representation of the imp’s rage and hatred toward the Immortal Paragon. At the moment, Xu Qing wasn’t going to bother wondering why the imp kept calling him ‘son.’ It was becoming very obvious... that the imp was off in the head.

The orange sea howled and raged. But it didn’t transform again. Instead, the monster walked out of the sea, whereupon a rain of blood began to fall in the world. The monster started chasing Xu Qing.

The imp screamed. “He’s angry! He’s really angry!”

The monster suddenly flung the bucket in its hand, and orange paint filled the sky. It spread out so thoroughly above Xu Qing that there was no possibility of evading it. In fact, the imp drew another circle... only for it to fail. Everything was affected, making escape impossible.

The furious monster thrust the paintbrush in its right hand directly in Xu Qing’s direction.

The sudden danger caused the imp’s eyes to open wide. “The monster is really pulling out all the stops!”

The imp blurred. It was made of threads, which unraveled as it blurred. It was using some move that Xu Qing couldn’t comprehend to disappear without a trace.... Xu Qing frowned, but then relaxed and just looked at the orange paint overhead and the paintbrush sweeping toward him. He refused to believe that the imp had come to get him only to get him halfway away. That didn’t seem like something Immortal Lord Aurora’s rancorous will would do.

That means there’s still a chance to escape.

Xu Qing just stood there, and ultimately, he was proved right. Even as the paintbrush and the orange color neared, a line appeared in the empty spot right in front of him. A head stuck out of it. It was the imp. He looked at Xu Qing for a moment, then drew something with his hand.

What appeared right in front of Xu Qing was... a sundial! Then the imp mimed the motion of turning the sundial back. And finally, he looked at Xu Qing in anticipation. This was clearly a test.

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed. The orange paint and the paintbrush were closing in, so there wasn't time to sit around pondering what to do. His space-time canon suddenly erupted and he reached out and spun the gnomon. If he didn't have canon related to space-time, his action would have resulted in nothing at all. Only someone with space-time canon, or with a space-time canon treasure, could do something with that sundial.

When Xu Qing took action... everything spun! The paintbrush and the paint went backward.

The imp's expression became one of extreme excitement. "Son, you really are my son!"

Even as those words left the imp's mouth, the monster roared. The roar was so terrifyingly powerful that it ripped space-time to shreds and shattered the sundial. The orange paint and the paintbrush returned.

This time, the imp didn't flee. Instead, he roared with laughter.

"Bahahaha! My son isn't scared!"

He strode in front of Xu Qing, blocking him from the monster, his face full of excitement and pride. As he put one hand on his waist, a cape appeared on his back. And his right hand... suddenly had a sword in it. It was a strange sword, as it was surrounded by numerous threads that represented its astonishing sword light. As for the cape, it swirled despite there being no wind. At the same time, a proud song could just barely be heard in the air.... All of this indicated... what the imp truly represented!

"Let the glory of justice shine down on my son!" the imp said loudly, raising the sword up and slashing it down on nothing. Justice split the world apart. Sticking his chin up, he tossed something to Xu Qing that looked like a jade slip made of threads.

"Son," he said coolly, "get out of here. You can leave now. You've escaped the monster. From here on out, you can roam wherever you wish!"

Xu Qing accepted the jade slip, turned, and fled into the rift. As he did, he heard the imp speaking behind him.

"Go! You've made the decision to go, so why stay? I said for you to go! From now on, there won't be anybody to take care of you. Whether you live or die, it will all be up to your own destiny....

"From now on, your path is your own to walk.... If you fall down, nobody will be there to lift you up. No one will laugh and tousle your hair and offer encouragement. From now on, nobody will protect you. You have to learn how to protect other people. From now on, you... are going to have to grow up. From now on, you won't be in a fairy tale...."

Although the imp was clearly smiling, it sounded more like he was crying.... The orange paint and the paintbrush never fell. The monster no longer looked angry. He looked kind. Finally, there was a sigh. And then one more thing was said, though it was impossible to say if it was the monster speaking, or the imp. Maybe it was both.

“So, what is rebellion, my son...?”

The voice faded into obscurity.

After Xu Qing entered the rift, something different appeared in his senses. It was height.

The world in front of him returned to normal. There were seven colors in the sky. The spirit energy was strong. Immortal sounds drifted in the air, and nearby immortal pavilions shone dazzlingly. This was... the immortal palace!

Xu Qing was no longer a five-colored shadow. His fleshly body was back from within time. His eyes were open. He was in the third world.

Taking a deep breath, he thought back to what he had experienced in the two previous worlds. He had gained a lot of enlightenment. Whether it was the substructure of those two worlds, or the stories hidden within the fairy tales.

First came Grandmaster Bai, and then came everything he had heard as he left. He looked down at his hand, which held a jade slip. It was the jade slip the imp had given him in the second world. Originally, it had been made of the same threads that made up the second world, but now... it had gained height, and he could feel it. It was a real jade slip!

He scanned it with divine will. There was nothing inside of it. It was empty. He had no idea why the imp had given it to him. Suddenly, he found himself thinking back to the words he had heard as he left the second world.

That monster represented the Immortal Paragon. And the imp was Aurora. On the surface, it seems like Aurora was a rebel, and the Immortal Paragon was chasing him down to kill him. But based on the last thing I heard, I feel like there's a deeper meaning.... It felt like I was hearing a father talk to a son.

Xu Qing didn't say anything.

There's definitely more to the story of Aurora and the Immortal Paragon. Considering this jade slip comes from a lower level world, it must be remarkable in some way.

After some thought, Xu Qing took a deep breath and prepared to put the jade slip away. Just as he did... a crafty voice suddenly spoke from the jade slip.

“Hahaha! Did you really believe me, son?”

1. There is some wordplay here, as the word I'm rendering as 'bastard' in this context also is a word that means turtle. 🐢

Chapter 1143: Let Me Finish Talking!

Chapter 1143: Let Me Finish Talking!

Xu Qing's facial expression remained the same as usual. The insolent voice seemed to contain the marvelous ability to summon a mental image of the speaker. In his mind's eye, Xu Qing could see the imp with the three words on his face, smiling very complacently.

"Senior," Xu Qing said calmly, "you didn't use me as the carrier to sneak yourself out of the second world for the mere sake of making fun of me, did you?"

The jade slip glittered. The imp cleared his throat. "Sheesh, you're still mad? I'm the last scrap of will left behind by Immortal Lord Aurora when he died, a thought that existed in the second world. I needed your help to get out, and time's limited. There's a lot to do.

"So, of course I didn't do it just to make fun of you. Calm down, son. Calm down.

"By the way, I'm not asking for a free ride. Look, if you were dealing with somebody else, you might not have made it out of the second world. Am I right, or am I right? How about I answer some questions as a way of saying thanks for taking me out of there?

"You're wondering about my canon, right? I can explain. Basically... I had the same space-time as you a while back. I got about halfway through completing it before I realized it was just too hard. I couldn't go all the way. I'm telling you this because I hope that you can continue past where I left off. Welp, that's all, son. Bye-bye."

Cracks snaked out across the surface of the jade slip. The cracks spread, and an instant later, the jade was completely covered with them. In the end, the jade slip collapsed into ash. It was as if it wasn't permitted to exist.

Xu Qing frowned. The explanation he had just received seemed perfunctory at best. As for the jade slip disappearing.... Xu Qing couldn't sense anything unusual in the area. And he hadn't been the one to cause the jade slip to shatter.

What's it aiming to do?

Xu Qing looked around for a moment. Suddenly, his heart lurched and he looked down at the palm of his hand. In that spot... the jade slip was quietly forming anew. Along with it came the insolent voice of the imp.

"Hahahahahahahahaha! I bet you were feeling all depressed, weren't you? You were cursing me for being perfunctory, and were then feeling completely and utterly disappointed. You were thinking about all the difficulty you went through just now, only to be rewarded with a few casual words. Am I right, or am I right?"

Xu Qing didn't say anything.

"At a loss for words? I guessed right, didn't I? Hahahahaha! Alright, I'm going to throw in a few more speculations. I bet that after I came back and said what I just said, you're probably thinking that I'll give you some sort of special legacy, or maybe tell you some juicy secrets.

“Ahem. Well, let me tell you. YOU. GUESSED. WRONG! The truth is that... I got nothin’ for ya! Hahahahaha! Bye-bye, son!”

The jade slip again crumbled into nothing.

Xu Qing frowned, but was actually feeling a bit more relaxed. This version of Immortal Lord Aurora was obviously off in the head. And it seemed like it was probably the right choice for the Immortal Paragon to kill him. Putting the subject out of mind, he looked at the palace hall up ahead.

Looking at the immortal palace from the outside, it seemed peaceful and harmonious, like a flourishing world. But it looked very different now. The hall was bleak and dilapidated, and the ravages of time were clearly seen. Some areas were in complete ruin, with nothing left there.

It’s been opened many times, and the successive waves of cultivators mostly come to the third world. It seems logical to conclude that seventy to eighty percent of the treasures and legacies are gone by now.

The only reason there are still some left behind is that the immortal palace is gargantuan. Add in the fact that it opens from a different spot each time, it makes sense that there are at least some things left to take. That said, the third world isn’t important to me. What’s important... is that I have enough canon to get into the fourth world!

As Xu Qing pondered these things, he continued on his way. His plan was to look around the third world for the entrance into the fourth world. As for the vanishing jade slip, he wasn’t inclined to waste time thinking about it.

However, his disregard for the jade slip seemed to have an unusual effect. He had hardly walked forward ten paces when the jade slip formed again in his palm. And the voice spoke again....

“Hahaha! I’m back! Now, let me make a few more guesses. I bet you’re thinking I’m off in the head. You were probably saying some mean things about me, maybe that the Immortal Paragon did the right thing when he killed me. Well, I—”

Xu Qing clenched his hand into a fist. A cracking sound rang out, the jade slip crumbled into ashes, and the voice was cut off. Xu Qing walked through the palace hall and looked off into the distance.

Except... the jade slip formed again. This time, before the imp could even begin speaking, Xu Qing forcefully crushed the jade slip again.

Next, he floated up into the air and cast his senses out. Although this was only one part of the immortal palace, it was still huge. Although it wasn’t on the level of a major world, it could definitely be considered a minor world.

Xu Qing’s senses revealed to him that there were innumerable palace buildings, numerous towers, spirit gardens, and the like.... There were even mountains and rivers. The structures were all in disrepair. Walls were falling down and warding spells were dysfunctional. Most of the mountains were crumbling and the majority of the rivers were dried up.

There were some locations that weren't in such bad shape. That said, there were clearly warding spells that were still working. What was more, black threads would appear and disappear unpredictably in midair, slashing around and cutting anything they touched.

There were different climates in different areas. Some places had rain. In some places, there were constant earthquakes. Other locations had lightning and some were filled with tempest winds. Occasionally, certain areas would disappear, then reappear suddenly.

All of the interactions caused pure chaos. A person might be in one spot, then take a few steps forward and find themselves in a completely different location. Overall, the areas around Xu Qing were in a state of constant flux.

He eventually sensed some cultivators. Some were on their own, others were working in pairs or groups. They were scattered throughout this part of the palace, searching for destined opportunities. Xu Qing's quick scan revealed that none of the Shining Stars were present. That included Li Mengtu. The vast majority of cultivators present did not have canon.

It seems like there are fewer people than there should be....

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he realized he couldn't sense Patriarch Diling's aura. He looked off into the distance.

There must have been some intense fighting before I got here. Either that, or there's a way to get to more distant locations. That would make sense. The immortal palace has been opened enough times that people have surely figured out some of its secrets. Presumably the members of the Shining Stars are in the fourth world.

By linking certain details of his surroundings with the complete image of the immortal palace that he had seen earlier, he was able to determine that it was the eastern section of the palace.

From what I remember, there was a dao sermon going on in the east.

Even as he thought about such things, he again clenched his hand into a fist, and the sound of a shattering jade slip echoed out. After that, he flew off into the distance. Along the way, the jade slip worked very hard. It reappeared over and over again, only for Xu Qing to crush it over and over again.

All the while, the imp kept talking.

"This is outrageous, son. You—"

CRUNCH!

"Agh! Let me talk! I—"

CRUNCH!

"Agggghhh.... Let me finish talking—"

CRUNCH!

After about two hours of exploration, Xu Qing finally paused before crushing the jade slip.

“Wait! Stop!” the imp shrieked. “If you keep crushing me I’ll die! Look, I can help you. I can give you some advice! As long as you’re in this pocket realm, you can just call out, ‘Big Poppa Aurora!’ and I’ll give you a chance to get some advice about canon!!”

Face completely expressionless, Xu Qing prepared to crush the jade slip again.

“Senior!” the imp yelped. “You can just call out, ‘Senior,’ okay? How about that?”

Xu Qing thought about it and then nodded. “Deal.”

A sigh drifted out from the jade slip. Then the imp resentfully said, “But you have to promise not to crush me anymore. I just don’t get it. It’s like... you’ve actually got a lot of experience doing this kind of thing.”

Xu Qing ignored the imp as he pierced through the chaos to the spot where he’d seen the dao sermon going on. Sadly, there was nothing but rubble there. It wasn’t much of a surprise. After searching the area quickly to confirm there was nothing there, he decided to find someone who could tell him how to get to the third world.

Before he could, the imp laughed coldly from the jade slip. “What the hell good do you think it’ll do to go searching around randomly? Don’t you know what the third world is all about??”

Xu Qing had been about to crush the jade slip. However, the second sentence that had just been uttered proved to be its salvation.

“Oh? What is the place all about?” Xu Qing asked.

“Beg me to tell you!” the imp demanded proudly.

Without the slightest hesitation, Xu Qing said, “I beg you.”

“Huh?” the imp blurted in shock. “B-b-but... what about your integrity? What about your backbone? How could you resort to begging so easily??”

Xu Qing’s expression didn’t change as he looked at the jade slip. He had already started to get used to the imp, and truth be told, he did have relevant experience. He basically had to treat the imp in the same way he treated his Eldest Brother.

“You’d better prove yourself trustworthy,” he said coolly, and he squeezed the jade slip.

The imp seemed to sneer as he said, “Alright, I’ll tell you. To cultivators without canon, the third world is a place of destined opportunities and good fortune. But that stuff is all superficial.

“The really good stuff only comes later, starting in the fourth world! You see, you can only get into the fourth world if you have canon. BUT! If you want to get into the fourth world, then you

basically have no choice but to use the third world. The fourth world is one of identity. And that's what you have to get while you're here in the third world: identity!

"That's because the fourth world is actually set in the past. Whatever identity you get in the third world, you take it with you into the fourth world. Simply put, when you get into the fourth world, you return to the Aurora Immortal Palace of the past! And that's where you can get some really amazing destined opportunities. So, to summarize, identity is the important thing here!"

Xu Qing was understandably surprised. "How do I get this 'identity' you speak of?"

The imp seemed very pleased with himself as he proudly replied, "I'm not telling you!"

Chapter 1144: A Treasure in South Heaven

Chapter 1144: A Treasure in South Heaven

Upon realizing the imp had gone back to its insolent way of talking, Xu Qing clenched his hand into a fist. A loud crunching sound rang out. The jade slip shattered.

Xu Qing sat down cross-legged in the dao sermon area and waited patiently. Eventually, he felt a familiar sensation in the palm of his hand as the jade slip yet again formed anew.

Xu Qing paid close attention to the process. It started out as a dot in the middle of his hand. Then more dots appeared until they formed a thread. The thread rippled and distorted, grew larger, and eventually created a flat surface that resembled the jade slip as it had looked in the second world. It seemed to be absorbing something marvelous from the world around it, as it eventually gained true height. And then... it became a real jade slip.

Xu Qing paid very close attention the entire time. Truth be told, this wasn't the first time he had studied it as it formed. He had done the same thing on the previous occasions. After multiple inspections, he felt that he had a basic understanding of what was going on.

The jade slip is an object that starts out as nothing but turns into something. For it to come from the second world into this place, it obviously needs space-time canon. But this use of space-time canon differs from how I use it. It almost seems like... the power of imagination?

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. His space-time state relied on the five elements as the foundation. *By making the five elements part of space and time, I can form space-time on a macroscopic level. But Immortal Lord Aurora is taking the substructure of something from a lower-level world on a microscopic level.*

Even as he pondered such things, the imp spoke from the newly-reformed jade slip, sounding flustered and exasperated.

"That was going too far! Can't you even let me finish talking?? It's not like I said 'I'm *definitely* not telling you!' Can't you at least give me some face here, huh? I mean, aren't you ashamed to act like this? I did help you get out of the second world, didn't I?? You heartless thug!"

Xu Qing listened carefully to everything the imp said, and had to admit it made sense. Therefore, he put the jade slip down, took a few steps back, straightened his robe, and then clasped hands with great respect and bowed deeply.

The imp was once again stunned.

After bowing, Xu Qing picked up the jade slip firmly in his hand and said, "Please tell me!"

The imp seemed to be at a loss for words. He could sense that Xu Qing was holding the jade slip with enough force that it wouldn't take much for him to crush it.

Why does it seem like he's even calmer than before he bowed to me...?

The imp was starting to realize that it was very, very difficult to figure out what this person was thinking or what he would do.

This guy doesn't care at all about face! He'll beg left and right. He'll even give me face by bowing.... He's obviously got his own way of thinking.... He can bow in respect, then kill with complete calmness. And all the while he's thinking very clearly. How do you even deal with a person like this, especially when he seems to be taking things so seriously? Agggghhhhhh! This is so annoying!

The imp was feeling a bit angry, but was scared of being crushed again, so he snapped, "You can just die, die, DIE!"

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed.

"I'm not talking about you!" the imp hastily explained. "I'm talking about those whoresons who broke into my house. Check it out: for years those whoresons have greedily burglarized me! They've stolen almost all of my stuff.... They even take away the flowers and plants! Even the floor tiles! And they break everything else down into pieces...."

"Luckily, one of my toys from when I was a kid is still around. How about you help me get that toy back, and I'll tell you how to get that identity. In fact, I'll even help you get a really good identity. What do you say?"

The face of the imp appeared on the jade slip, looking at Xu Qing with great anticipation.

"The little thing is on Mount South Heaven. It's not around here, but I have a way to get you there. Hurry up and decide! I can sense a few burglars getting very close to it, even as we speak!"[1]

"We're getting very close, Fellow Daoists."

Four people were getting very close to the summit of Mount South Heaven. Three people were walking up ahead, while one person followed them.

The person who had just spoken was the one in the back. He was a middle-aged man with a silver geomantic compass in his hands and an unkind face. He wore a black garment embroidered with

silver, and had a gold crown on his head. As he hopped from boulder to boulder behind the other three, he kept a close watch on them.

At the same time, he would occasionally tap the geomantic compass, causing crisp sounds to roll out and creating distortions in the air. He was clearly reminding them of who was in charge. The other three cultivators would shiver in response.

Of those three, two were men, and one was a woman. One of the men was of average height but somewhat pudgy, with thinning hair and a haggard face. Next to him was a middle-aged woman with a nice figure and a pretty face. However, she had sallowness and jaundiced eyes. Her hair was coiled into a neat bun, and her daoist robe was well-maintained. However, the color in her eyes made her seem a bit grish.

The last person was a very skinny old man with a slightly hunched back and a full head of white hair. He had been in good spirits earlier, but now he looked exhausted, and he looked older than ever.

If Xu Qing were here, he would recognize the old man immediately. He was... Patriarch Diling.

He and the other two cultivators all had grim expressions on their faces, and even grimmer hearts. Obviously, they were here against their will. They wanted to fight back, but were powerless to do so. The reason was that there were three threads connecting their souls to the geomantic compass. As a result, they had lost their freedom, and were now little more than tools under the control of the man in black.

Patriarch Diling thought back to everything that had occurred and ground his teeth. After getting into the third world, everything went smoothly at first. He quickly parted ways with Li Mengtu, as he had his own plans and arrangements ready to go. Moving very cautiously, he got close to his target destination.

Thanks to some information from the Yunmen Clan, he had identified the location of a special medicinal plant that had a high likelihood of pushing his cultivation base through several breakthroughs. The medicinal plant was located in a secret spot that the patriarch of the Yunmen Clan had discovered many years ago. Unfortunately, he had been ill-prepared to take it, so the information was recorded and passed on to later generations. Ultimately, it ended up in the hands of Patriarch Diling.

Right before he was about to succeed, an Imperial Sovereign came along with a canon treasure. Not only did that Imperial Sovereign take the medicinal plant, but he also captured Patriarch Diling and suppressed his soul. On the way from the east to this mountain, the Imperial Sovereign ended up capturing a total of seven cultivators using his special method.

As they went up the mountain, the Imperial Sovereign forced his captives to explore the path ahead. Up to this point, four had died in the process. Now, the only ones left were Patriarch Diling and the other man and woman. And all of them had sustained serious injuries.

Patriarch Diling was getting very anxious, but couldn't think of anything to do. *We'll reach the summit soon. That's where I'm headed. Of course... once we're at the top, he'll kill the three of us to keep us quiet!*

The other two were thinking the same thing. All they could do was intentionally go forward as slowly as possible in the hopes of buying time. Unfortunately... buying time wasn't going to help. All three knew full well that the black-robed man with the geomantic compass had no reason to fear them.

Of all the people who had come into the immortal palace, the only people he needed to worry about were the Shining Stars or other cultivators with canon treasures similar to his own. Everyone else... was on a lower level. Therefore, no amount of struggle by the three cultivators amounted to anything.

"Hurry up! We're almost there!" The black-robed man struggled to suppress his excitement as he looked up through the heat toward the summit of the mountain.

This was not his first time coming into the immortal palace. It was his second. The first time had been years ago when the south part of the palace had opened up. Back then he had been a mere early Imperial Sovereign. He had been ignorant and cautious, but had unexpectedly come across a destined opportunity. He had found the world that this mountain existed in.

The moment he did, he saw a lake at the top of the mountain, floating atop which was a paper boat. Unfortunately, when he landed at the bottom of the mountain, he found that the place was covered with too many dangerous warding spells, making it impossible to reach the top. In the end, he'd had no choice but to leave.

Over the years, he couldn't stop thinking about the paper boat in that lake on that mountain. After doing some research into the history of Immortal Lord Aurora, he found out more information about it. And he had confirmed one important detail. That paper boat was a canon treasure! And it was very powerful!

From that moment on, he had started making preparations to come back and get the paper boat. He had paid a huge price to borrow a canon treasure from another powerful cultivator, and had used it to capture some other cultivators and force them to scout the path up the mountain. Now he was very close to reaching his goal. The thought of his imminent success caused him to laugh.

"I have to thank the three of you for your assistance," he said jovially. "I just need you to keep working hard. By the way, don't overthink things. Once I get what I want from the top of the mountain, I'll set you all free."

Patriarch Diling and the other two captives said nothing. None of them believed what the black-robed cultivator had just said. In fact, even as the black-robed cultivator spoke, he tapped the geomantic compass, causing their souls to shiver. All three of them rushed forward with greater speed.

And thus, time slipped by.

If you could slowly shift your field of vision from that scene to a higher elevation, you would find mist and clouds swirling in front of you, obscuring your vision. The people on the mountain, and even the mountain itself, would get much smaller. Soon, you would see the whole world surrounding the mountain. The reality was that the entire world was that one single mountain. And it was surrounded by mist.

As you kept going up, you would reach a certain height that formed the upper boundary of the world. And if you went past that, you would eventually see a colorful fresco. It was located on a wall in a palace hall in the south part of the immortal palace.

The hall was relatively intact, and the walls were all covered by an amazing fresco. The fresco depicted a cloud-covered mountain. That mountain was named South Heaven.

Xu Qing appeared in the hall and stood in front of the fresco.

“See that paper boat?” the imp said excitedly. “That’s the toy I was talking about.”

Xu Qing nodded and stepped into the fresco.

1. In *I Shall Seal the Heavens*, ‘South Heaven’ was an important location. The same characters are used here. As I’ve said in other contexts with other words, that doesn’t necessarily imply a connection. The characters are fairly generic. ❷

Chapter 1145: Fourth World Identity

Chapter 1145: Fourth World Identity

The thick mist made it impossible to see clearly. It was easy to get lost, difficult to determine one’s position, and hard to follow any set route. This was a world inside of a fresco.

But Xu Qing’s facial expression remained the same as ever. Upon entering the fresco, the feeling he experienced thanks to the mist and fog wasn’t something new to him.

This is like a combination of the characteristics of the second and third worlds. Put precisely... it’s like something in between the second and third worlds, a unique place with a sky inside of a sky. A world inside of a world.

Xu Qing looked down and activated his space-time canon. His thoughts rose to a higher level, and dropped down into the mist, taking his fleshly body with him. He pierced through the mist for a while. The mist thinned, and eventually, it didn’t block his line of sight anymore.

An enormous mountain appeared in front of him. It was pitch black and had no man-made stairs on it. There was no vegetation growing on it, leaving it bare and stark. It was almost like... the spine of this world.

However, there were many warding spell fluctuations pulsing in the mountain. In fact, there were so many that when he tried to put a number on them it wasn’t possible. The warding spells made a terrifying force that would make it impossible to get onto the mountain and climb to its summit unless you had canon.

“This is the place,” the imp said excitedly. “This is the place! Hurry up and get moving, son. My little treasure is on the summit.”

Xu Qing knew that it wouldn't be easy to change the imp's speech patterns. After all, he had crushed the jade slip over a hundred times, and no matter how polite the imp got afterward, he would eventually revert to his previous ways.

Xu Qing could only frown and refuse to be bothered by the imp's annoying and confusing manner of speech. After studying the area below, he took a step forward, and that step propelled him to the foot of the mountain.

"Hmm?" Xu Qing's eyes glittered as he landed at the foot of the mountain. He had been stepping toward the summit, but some force prevented him, and now here he was at the bottom. *What an interesting mountain.*

The imp laughed derisively. "This place was my secret hideout. The defenses I left behind have weakened over the years. But if you think you can just go right to the top of the mountain, you're sadly mistaken. Now hurry up and start climbing. You have space-time canon, so even though you can't get to the top instantly, you shouldn't have much trouble going up."

Ignoring the imp, Xu Qing first studied his surroundings. He even took time to analyze some of the hidden warding spells using his space-time canon way of thinking. Only after he had a clear idea of what he was dealing with did he start moving.

He stepped onto the mountain. The moment he made contact, ripples spread out from beneath his feet. The mountain shivered, and a warding spell sent a blast of heavenfire right toward him. However, when it reached him, it went right through him, as if he didn't exist.

After sensing that, Xu Qing proceeded on his way. Each step forward caused the mountain to tremble more violently. However, he clearly existed at a higher level; no matter how the warding spells reacted, they couldn't touch him. He started walking faster and faster as he headed toward the summit.

The mountain trembled and warding spells erupted, sending out furious shockwaves, angry winds, seas of fire, and invisible swords. Space shattered. Chaos even appeared in time. The power of the warding spells created a mountain-toppling, sea-draining force.

But Xu Qing walked through it all as calmly as if he was strolling through his backyard.

The black-robed cultivator near the top of the mountain quickly noticed what was happening. He looked over his shoulder, and then his face fell. He couldn't see Xu Qing, but he could see the warding spells further down the mountain being thrown into chaos. And that caused his pupils to constrict and his heart to race.

Someone else is in here with me. That's why this is happening.... Which one of the Shining Stars is it?

The man struggled to breathe steadily, all while anxiety built up within him. Using his canon treasure, he could see that a terrifying aura was approaching through the erupting warding spells. There was no time to analyze the situation. The black-robed cultivator immediately used his geomantic compass to urge Patriarch Diling and the others onward at a faster rate.

At the same time, he used his canon treasure to send a black thread into the shockwaves from the warding spells below.

Meanwhile, Patriarch Diling and the others also sensed the disturbances caused by the warding spells. Unfortunately, they did not have canon treasures, so they had no way to 'see' what was happening, and no way to sense the incoming aura. That said, they didn't really need any of that to guess at what was going on.

"Someone's coming!"

"From Master Daonull's expression and actions, you can tell that someone strong is coming through the warding spells!"

"We have a chance to survive this after all!"

Despite being under the control of another, all three were starting to get excited. They didn't care who was coming or what exactly happened. At the very least, a variable had been thrown into the equation. And in life-or-death situations, variables meant opportunities.

Even as hope rose up in the hearts of Patriarch Diling and the others, the black-robed cultivator sent the black threads flying from the geomantic compass and into the terrifying warding spell shockwaves.

Those black threads came from a canon treasure. Though they didn't look very special, their power was real. Only canon could be used against canon. Obviously, the level of the canon treasures was very important.

What happened next... caused the black-robed cultivator's expression to change dramatically.

A cracking sound emerged from the warding spell fluctuations and filled the entire world. The sound caused Patriarch Diling and the others to shiver from head to toe. At that moment, when the control over them lapsed, they all instantly took advantage of the moment to use self-detonations to free themselves.

Blood sprayed out of the mouth of the black-robed cultivator, and an expression of shock covered his face as he sensed the terrifying aura emerging from the warding spell fluctuations.

Unfortunately, he had nowhere to run. He could surrender. But surrendering wouldn't necessarily ensure his survival. Besides, he was reluctant to let all of his years of preparation be for nothing. So his other option... was to go for broke!

Eyes filling with madness, he ignored the fact that Patriarch Diling and the others had broken free. Turning, he shot toward the summit of the mountain as fast as he could move.

If I get a second canon treasure, I can turn this whole situation around! With two canon treasures I could probably have a chance of getting away alive from one of the Shining Stars!

With such thoughts in mind, he became a blur of afterimages that shot toward the summit.

Unfortunately... Xu Qing could move through space-time, and was much faster. All it took was an instant for a massive amount of warding spells to erupt. But Xu Qing just went through them as if they were nothing. He passed by Patriarch Diling and the others to quickly appear... in front of the black-robed cultivator. He stepped onto the summit.

The bystanders couldn't see what was happening.

But the black-robed cultivator had a canon treasure, so he could 'see.' He was gasping for breath, and his eyes were bloodshot. He had prepared for a long time for this. He had gone through countless trials and tribulations. But now, just when his goal was in sight, someone else beat him to the top of the mountain. It was time to throw caution to the wind.

Gripping his geomantic compass in one hand, he performed an incantation gesture and pointed at Xu Qing with the other. Instantly, five black threads shot out from the compass, each of them about as thick as a finger. They were like five black serpents.

The moment they appeared, they were surrounded by distortions, as if they didn't even belong in this world. They shot toward Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked coldly over his shoulder. Space-time erupted. Ripples spread through time, cutting the five black threads in half.

Time stirred, creating distance.

If you thought of the black threads as streams of water, then Xu Qing's space-time canon was a massive river. The two forces slammed into each other. And then... space-time raged and the streams were wiped out. The five black threads disappeared without a trace.

A loud cracking sound rang out as the geomantic compass began to crumble. The black-robed cultivator trembled from head to toe, blood oozing out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth as he staggered backward.

It seemed like he wanted to keep on fighting, except... the severed black threads from the geomantic compass turned into a face. The face looked at Xu Qing briefly, then turned around and devoured the black-robed cultivator in a single bite. A shriek of agony rang out.

After that, the face of black light vanished. The cracks on the surface of the geomantic compass disappeared, and the compass dropped onto the ground. Everything went still. All that was left behind was a single sentence echoing within Xu Qing's space-time.

Deliver that thing to me here in the fourth world. I'll take it personally.

The words contained terrifying mightiness that others couldn't hear, but which echoed loudly in Xu Qing's mind and heart. He quickly took the geomantic compass. Then, shivering, he emerged from within space-time and looked up at the canopy of heaven above the mountain.

Meanwhile, someone rushed up toward Xu Qing from below.

"Exalted one!" Patriarch Diling was obviously very excited to see Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked away from the sky. After scanning Patriarch Diling, he sent a gentle force out to heal him. Turning, he looked at the lake, and the paper boat floating atop it. It was white and very peaceful. It wasn't moving.

"How do I get it?" Xu Qing asked calmly.

“Heh heh. You’re really dang cautious, aren’t you? And here I thought you would just reach out to take it.” The imp cleared his throat, and then the jade slip floated up into the air. It vanished, then reappeared on the paper boat. The jade slip shone brightly. The boat shivered, then blurred, then turned into a handful of threads that shot into the jade slip. An instant later, the jade slip was back in Xu Qing’s hand.

“Not bad,” the imp said from inside, sounding very pleased. “Not bad at all. After all these years, my toy still isn’t broken. It still works!

“You got what you want,” Xu Qing said quietly. “Now you can explain about the identity I need to get from the third world and into the fourth.”

The paper boat canon treasure was impressive, but Xu Qing didn’t want it. His space-time canon was where his dao lay.

The imp cleared his throat. A projected image of him appeared above the jade slip. Stretching, he looked complacently at Xu Qing and insolently said, “Didn’t I tell you when we first met? Your identity is that of... my son!”

Chapter 1146: Young Lord of the Immortal Palace

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Scowling, Xu Qing reached out and crushed the jade slip. Then he flicked his sleeve, taking Patriarch Diling and the others with him out of the fresco of Mount South Heaven. Once outside in the hall, Patriarch Diling and the others knew their lives had been saved. All of them bowed excitedly in thanks to Xu Qing.

“I am your humble servant Madam Spiritmoon from the Tianyue Clan in the northern planetary system,” said the female cultivator. “Many thanks for your help, Fellow Daoist. If you ever travel to the north and need any help at all, I’ll be at your call!”

As for the middle-aged cultivator, he took a deep breath and gravely said, “I am Zhang Shiyi from the School of the Enlightened Spirit in the south. I’ll never forget how you saved my life, Fellow Daoist. No matter where I am, all you need to do is call for help, and I’ll do everything in my power to rise to the occasion!”

There was no question that they would have died were it not for Xu Qing’s arrival. Their gratitude was sincere and heartfelt.

Finally came Patriarch Diling, who was extremely excited. “Exalted one, I’m so glad we’ve been reunited.”

All of a sudden, he remembered something important. “The exalted Li Mengtu looked for you to no avail. He finally went to the fourth world. But he wanted me to explain a few things to you. If you’d like, I can convey his words now.”

Xu Qing nodded.

“The exalted Li Mengtu wanted me to explain that some things about the entrance to the fourth world have changed this time around. In the past, all you needed to do was display your canon, and you could easily get into the fourth world.

“But this time, there are more specific requirements. Based on what the exalted Li Mengtu has uncovered, you have to obtain a special identity! Therefore, he wanted me to explain, not just the place to go to get to the fourth world, but also the manner in which you can secure an identity. He also wanted me to tell you his identity there.”

Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed.

“The entrance to the fourth world is located in the northern part of the palace, in a sea. The name of that sea is ‘North.’” Patriarch Diling was trying to quickly explain all the information he had. “There’s a gateway in the North Sea. As for your identity, you can get one in the North Sea. You just get an identity medallion there. As for which identity you get, it will depend on your own good fortune.[1]

“The exalted Li Mengtu’s identity... is that of the study partner of Immortal Lord Aurora’s son. He wanted me to tell you that he’ll see you in the fourth world.”[2]

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. Thanks to the imp, he had already learned about the matter of identities in the fourth world. But from what Li Mengtu had told him, this situation with the identities was not something that had happened before. In that case... why was it happening now?

Xu Qing looked down at the empty palm of his hand. *Is it because of the imp?*

After bidding farewell to Patriarch Diling and the others, he stepped through space-time and left the south. He was heading north.

Shortly after, the jade slip formed anew in his palm, and the imp started talking. He sounded anxious.

“Don’t get mad! I won’t scold you this time! It’s a real identity!”

No expression could be seen on Xu Qing’s face as he prepared to crush the jade slip again. Before he could, the imp appeared in projected form above the jade slip, waving his hands desperately. Then the paper boat appeared in midair in front of him.

“Stop! Don’t! The identity is right here!”

Xu Qing looked at the paper boat. As he watched, the imp quickly unfolded the boat to reveal a piece of paper. Written on the paper were eight silver words.

Dao Finale Sixth Month First Day Early Morning.

The imp looked at the eight words, and seemed profoundly shaken. Then, he waved his hand, and a five-colored figure appeared on the paper. That figure looked exactly the way Xu Qing had appeared in the second world. The eight words converged with the figure.

Having accomplished that, the imp started folding the paper up again. However, he didn't fold it into a boat. Instead, he wrapped it around the jade slip.

"If you wrap the jade slip with the paper, you can use the power of the second world to make it real. That way, your fate will conform to what is true and real, and you can turn illusion into truth!"

As he wrapped up the jade slip and talked to Xu Qing, there was nothing insolent about his tone of voice. Instead, he seemed to be very serious, like an older person giving important advice to a young one.

"Alright, ya little punk. Remember those eight words. After you get into the fourth world, you need to recite them. Then you'll get the identity. By the way, I really do need your help to get me into the fourth world. Afterward, you do your thing, and I'll do mine....

"Oh, there's something else I should explain. When you go into the past, you can use your space-time canon, but don't try to change history. The past cannot be changed. It can't be altered. At least, not unless you want to die. After you get in... you are a spectator, watching history pass."

After finishing wrapping up the jade slip, the imp blurred into motion and entered it. When he was inside, he cleared his throat, and once again spoke in an insolent manner.

"Hurry up and get into the fourth world, son! Go into the past and see how awesome and heroic your daddy was! See how he was unparalleled under heaven! Watch him in his glory and majesty as he... fights your grandpa!"

Xu Qing grabbed the jade slip and tried to crush it. This time, it didn't work.... The paper protected it. Inside the jade slip, the imp laughed insolently.

"Hahaha! Can't crush me, can you? Alright, alright. Save your energy. I know you're annoyed with me. But don't worry, ya brat, this is the last thing I'll say to you in this life. And so... see you in the fourth world!"

After those words rang out, the jade slip burst into flames and collapsed into ashes that quickly disappeared.

Xu Qing didn't say anything. Inside, he was analyzing what the imp had told him, and was also trying to determine what problems might crop up with this identity. It seemed that no matter how he looked at it, this identity would be superior to all others. Based on the clues he had so far, it seemed that one's identity in the fourth world... was very important.

It determined the destined opportunities you encountered, the good fortune you acquired, and how far you could go. In other words, it determined all of your limits in the fourth world.

Most importantly, the moment the imp drew the five-colored figure on the paper, Xu Qing could feel it tugging on him faintly. It was connected to his fate.

At the same time, the world around him seemed different. It seemed to view him more kindly.

A moment later, Xu Qing looked in the direction of the north. Then he blurred into motion through space-time. He sped through the immortal palace of the third world without so much as pausing for a moment. When he reached the north, he eventually caught sight of a majestic sea.

Waves surged across its seemingly endless surface. As the waves crashed on the rocky shore, the sound seemed to tell an ancient story. Seven-colored sunlight shone through the clouds and onto the surface of the sea, creating dazzling reflections and motes of light. That only seemed to add a colorful sensation of time to the ancient story.

Occasionally, illusory sea birds would flap through the air, dive down into the water, and come up with a fish. Sometimes they just glided overhead until disappearing over the horizon.

But those were just the things visible with ordinary 'sight.' What Xu Qing saw with his space-time canon was something completely different. He didn't see any seven-colored sunlight. There were no surging waves or flying birds.

In fact, it was actually deep in the night. A pale moon hung in the sky, and the sea was as red as blood. It looked like a sea of blood filled with countless corpses. A powerful aura of death formed a mist atop the water.

In the depths of that mist were two figures as tall as the sky itself, locked in combat.

One of them had a broken sword and pulsed with an incredible, baleful aura. His every movement pulsed with a heaven-destroying, earth-extinguishing mightiness, and his broken sword seemed capable of slashing apart anything in existence. He was none other than Sir Vilespirit!

Naturally, the person he was fighting was Zhou Zhengli. He seemed to be surrounded by infinite lightning bolts that created a figure so enormous it was like the lord of the sky. He wielded a long dagger-axe that could indict evil! Anything he pointed at was indicted evil, and could be targeted by canon-devastating force. This was the result of his own canon, that of... executing evil!

After the two of them ran into each other in the east, they had started fighting, and had not stopped even upon reaching the north. Here they were, still fighting at the entrance of the fourth world. Thunderous booms rang out, sending shockwaves through the air, smashing into the sea and the shore. And they reached Xu Qing.

Xu Qing looked at the two combatants. Back when he first entered the third world, he had sensed the fluctuations of major combat. Now he knew where they had come from. They were the shockwaves from this fight.

He watched for a moment, then looked away and stepped onto the surface of the lake. The fight had nothing to do with him. And he didn't care who died.

All he was concerned with was finding the entrance to the fourth world. Face expressionless, he walked forward.

A stream of sword energy descended from above, but he brushed it aside. Lightning fell like rain, but he sliced through it with space-time. As he continued onward, the side-effects of the battle swept past him constantly. The entire time, his expression was completely placid.

Sir Vilespirit and Zhou Zhengli both noticed him. At first, they were mostly focused on their fighting. But gradually, both of them looked over at Xu Qing.

Compared to most people, Xu Qing was very young. What was more, he was unusually good-looking. There he was on the surface of the water, a young man strolling around as calmly as if he was in his own backyard. He almost seemed like he was the ruler of the palace.

The two combatants' expressions turned serious. Both of them clearly remembered seeing Xu Qing before, and he had not come across like the ruler of the palace. And then, they simultaneously noticed something else.

His killing aura... has become stronger! Sir Vilespirit's eyes narrowed.

His dao has a resonance with this world.... Zhou Zhengli's eyes shone brightly.

In an unusual turn of events, they stopped fighting.

Even still, Xu Qing didn't pay them any attention. He would walk his own path, just as he would pursue his own dao. Eventually, he reached the middle of the sea. That was where he found an ancient stone door. He stopped in front of it for a few breaths of time. Then he stepped inside.

As he did, he murmured, "Dao Finale Sixth Month First Day Early Morning."

1. This sea bears the same name as the sea from I Shall Seal the Heavens that was mentioned only a few chapters ago. We don't really have any evidence right now to tell us whether or not it's the same sea or related to it. ❸

2. The Chinese term I'm rendering as 'study partner' can have different meanings. In some contexts, it could refer to a spouse. But that's not what it means here. As is made clear a bit later, it means "a person hired to be a school companion to children from a wealthy/powerful family." ❹

Chapter 1147: The Aurora Epoch

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The first year of the Immortal calendar in the Fifth Star Ring was the year that the God Paragon perished and the Immortal Paragon rose to prominence. After that, there were twelve epochs named after twelve Immortal Lords. Each epoch was 12,000 years, and together they formed a major cycle. Each epoch was divided into the following time periods: Dao Beginning, Dao Luster, Dao Firmament, and Dao Finale. Each Dao period was 3,000 years long. The combination of the four of them formed a minor cycle.

According to the custom, whenever a new Immortal Lord rose up, a new epoch started in the Immortal calendar. Furthermore, because the Immortal Paragon spent most of his time in cultivation, another custom dictated that the Immortal Lord associated with a given epoch would be in charge of the Fifth Star Ring during that time.

It was currently the eleventh month of the year 2999 of the Dao Finale of the Nineshores epoch. It was only one month until the beginning of the Aurora epoch.

The transition of one epoch into another was always a huge celebration for the cultivators of the Fifth Star Ring. It was very significant. It didn't matter who the new Immortal Lord was or who the old one was. It was always a special occasion.

The next center of government was going to be the Aurora Immortal Palace, and thus, the place was fully festooned with shining lanterns and colorful banners. Everyone there was anxious to *bid farewell to the former and welcome the new*. There were countless tasks to be handled as the moment of transition approached.

Years had already passed since the immortal subordinates of Immortal Lord Aurora had spread through the Fifth Star Ring to serve as assistants before ultimately taking over their new positions in the administration. Immortal Lord Aurora had four apprentices. The fourth apprentice was going to stay in the immortal palace, but the other three had outside assignments. All would take over positions as immortal generals that had previously been held by Immortal Lord Nineshores' subordinates.

Whenever one epoch transitioned into another, things like this happened. As of now, all arrangements had been made, and the only thing left to do was wait for that last month to pass.

The entire Fifth Star Ring was waiting to welcome the new epoch. For the next 12,000 years, Immortal Lord Aurora would be the most powerful individual in the star ring.

However, even though the immortal palace was currently full of hope and excitement, there was currently a howl of agony ringing out in the east of the palace. It came from the Scourgebolt Cliffs.[1]

The screams were so intense that many cultivators in the immortal palace could hear them. However, few people paid much attention. Occasionally, someone would look in the direction of the Scourgebolt Cliffs, but usually they would just sigh, shake their head, and then go about their business.

A young man was hurrying toward the cliff. Occasionally, some bemused onlookers noticed him and called out to him.

"Is the young lord being punished again?"

"What did he do this time?"

"What's the hurry, Zhong Chi? Come on, tell us what's happening."

Whenever people would say things like this to the young man named Zhong Chi, he would smile wryly and offer greetings, but he would just continue on his way to the Scourgebolt Cliffs.[2]

As he neared, the sound of thunder grew loud, as did the howls of agony and grief.

The moment Zhong Chi stepped into the warding spell that protected the Scourgebolt Cliffs, the screaming stopped. Looking surprised, Zhong Chi hurried forward through the warding spell. His vision blurred, then grew clear again, whereupon he saw a sky full of green lightning bolts.

There was no end to the lightning, which fell without cease on a person hanging in midair. He wore tattered garments, had disheveled hair, and was completely surrounded by lightning. Yet for some reason he had stopped screaming, despite how the lightning continued to smash into him, causing him to gasp for breath, and sending blood spurting out of numerous wounds on his body. Blood even oozed out of the corners of his mouth.

Zhong Chi was relieved to see that the young lord still had some energy left in him. Relaxing a bit, he clasped hands and bowed.

“Young Lord... as you commanded, the Hundred Flowers Palace was sealed immediately. No one will go inside during your lightning punishment.”[3]

The lightning continued to crash down.

The figure in midair didn't seem to have noticed Zhong Chi. His head was currently bowed, and his eyes were tightly shut. As long as the lightning was striking him, he would not open his eyes. That was because... if he did open his eyes, they would be full of helplessness, confusion, and similar emotions.

How come I got sent right into a torture session?

Being punished by countless bolts of lightning was not making Xu Qing feel very good. He clearly remembered that only a moment ago, he had entered the door in the North Sea of the third world. He had uttered those specific eight words, and had then appeared here.

This was not his body. In fact, it wasn't even his soul. But his thoughts were his own!

It was like he had been transported. In an instant... all of the memories and knowledge of his host became part of his own thoughts. And then, every aspect of what the host was experiencing filled Xu Qing's senses.

The imp had not fooled him. The identity of his host was without any doubt that of Immortal Lord Aurora's only son. This was the fourth world. It was something that had happened in the past.

As Xu Qing absorbed the memories of his host, the lightning strikes from above ceased. It wasn't just the lightning that stopped. The dome of heaven ceased to rotate, the air went still, and time even seemed to slow down. His study partner Zhong Chi similarly went still.

A figure appeared out of thin air, right in front of Xu Qing. The figure was blurry and impossible to see clearly, but was full of majesty. It was like the will of heaven, or the world itself. Or the lord of the entire star ring. He looked coldly at Xu Qing.

A moment passed, and then he snapped, “You unfilial son! You want to screw around with women all the time? Fine! You want to dally at your Hundred Flowers Palace? I can look the other way. I can tolerate some impudence.

“But you... you actually fooled around with the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores?? And you didn’t just mess with her emotionally! You messed with her physically? Maybe I could deal with that if you had smoothed things over on your own. But in all your genius you seduced her and then unceremoniously dumped her in the most heartless way possible!! Well guess what? Immortal Lord Nineshores’s daughter just showed up asking for an explanation!”

Xu Qing was feeling very nervous and had his guard up completely. There was no doubt that the person in front of him was Immortal Lord Aurora. His first worry was that he would break his own cover. Granted, the whole arrangement of going back in time was the work of the immortal palace, and he was following all the rules.

But an Immortal Lord was an Immortal Lord!

What was more, he had no way of knowing what was going on with the imp. It was entirely possible that the imp had occupied a host in this place as well. If that was what happened, it would make perfect sense for the imp to select Immortal Lord Aurora as his host. After all, the imp was apparently a bit of discarnate will left behind by Aurora.

But Xu Qing had no way to know for sure. What was more, now that he had absorbed the memories of his host, he knew that when Immortal Lord Aurora got mad, the best thing to do was keep his mouth shut.

“Oh, *now* you know how to keep your mouth shut?” Immortal Lord Aurora said coldly. He waved his hand, and the power of the lightning surged, becoming many times stronger than before. Having done that, he turned to leave the Scourgebolt Cliffs.

“Since you know how to keep your mouth shut, you can keep it shut and wallow in your regret. I’ve already proposed a marriage on your behalf. You and Nineshores’ daughter are going to be wed whether you want to or not! Also, I’ll give you half a month to tear down that pestilential Hundred Flowers Palace of yours!

“Zhong Chi, I know you’re just a study partner, but this time I want you keeping an eye on everything!”

As his voice echoed out, the lightning that had gone still earlier suddenly went wild again, slamming down onto Xu Qing with even greater force than before. Everything else started to move again as well, including the young man Zhong Chi, who was, of course, Li Mengtu.[4]

Li Mengtu took a deep breath and bowed his head respectfully. In his heart, he was feeling profoundly nervous. He knew that Zhong Chi had never actually seen Immortal Lord Aurora. And that was because whenever Immortal Lord Aurora went somewhere, everything went still. But this time, Zhong Chi had been mentioned by name, and thus, Li Mengtu had been able to sense some of what was happening.

He had already been in the fourth world for a while now, so he was familiar with the identity he had assumed, and knew that the other people in this past space-time couldn’t tell who he really was. But there was no way he *couldn’t* be nervous in the presence of an Immortal Lord.

As for the young lord.... According to the popular saying, *when the father is a lion, the son will never be a dog*. But according to Zhong Chi’s memories, that was not how this father-son relationship had

worked out. The young lord had a lot of cultivation aptitude. But he was very given to lust, and had accomplished nothing of note in his entire life.

What was more, based on what Li Mengtu remembered of history, the young lord would die at the end of the month. In fact, on the very day he was to marry the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores, before the wedding could even be carried out... the entire Aurora Immortal Palace would experience catastrophe.

In a month, he'll die, but so will everyone else in the palace. Not one person will survive the slaughter carried out by the Immortal Paragon. I just need to play along according to my role, and complete my dao along the way!

Everyone else in here is keeping their identity deeply hidden, so I only have some basic guesses about who is who.... Well, as long as they don't interfere with me, I have no reason to do anything to them.

Having reached the conclusion that this was definitely the best idea, Li Mengtu looked up at the young lord and sighed.

“Young Lord, the Immortal Lord has made his decision. Why not... just go along with it?”

Xu Qing only vaguely heard the words, as if they had reached his ears across a vast span of time. By now, he had absorbed the memories of his host, the son of Aurora, and he was having a hard time trying to decide how to assess the life he had lived.

It wasn't correct to say that he had slacked off in cultivation. Nor was he a silkpants. He was over 300 years old, and his cultivation base was in the Imperial Sovereign level. In fact, he wasn't far off from becoming a Quasi-Immortal. He generally behaved well. Most people perceived him to be cultured and refined. He was graceful, and was very impressive, at least on the outside.

But his big downside.. was that he was very passionate. In the self-deprecating memories of the young lord, the best way to describe it was to say that his heart had been broken countless times, and each time, it was broken by a different woman. The end result was that his memories were like an erotic painting.

Xu Qing frowned and dispelled the memories. After that, he could hear Zhong Chi speaking, and he opened his eyes. His host's memories were telling him that this person was his study partner. At the same time, Xu Qing's memories were telling him that Zhong Chi was most likely Li Mengtu. That said, he had no plans to reveal that he knew that.

Looking at him, Xu Qing hoarsely said, “I'm a bit tired.”

Li Mengtu blinked a few times. It seemed like this young lord was different than before. However, there was one thing he was absolutely certain about.

There were three historical figures who couldn't possibly be possessed by others. One was the Immortal Paragon, one was the Immortal Lord, and one was the young lord. It went without saying why that was true of the Immortal Paragon and the Immortal Lord. As for the young lord, he was under the protection of the Immortal Lord, so there was no possibility that someone could take his identity.

He was certain of this because of the very means by which he and the other Shining Stars had acquired their identities in the fourth world. The end result was that he was certain of that fact, and so were the other Shining Stars.

With that thought in mind, Li Mengtu said, “That’s probably because of the lightning punishment and what the Immortal Lord just said. Young Lord, on the way in I made an inquiry at the Scourgebolt Palace, and they said the punishment will last seven days. After the seven days are up, you and Li the Chosen are supposed to have your duel. Do you want me to request an extension on the date?”

Xu Qing consulted the memories of his host. His host had gotten into a quarrel with Li Shaofeng, who was known as Li the Chosen, from the Heavensieve School. The conflict was over a beautiful maiden who was the reincarnation of a charming 1,000-year-old fox. In the end, they had agreed to duel, and the winner would get the maiden.

What kind of a duel is this...?

Xu Qing frowned slightly. He was about to ask for some more details when all of a sudden he thought about the clay fox.

Don’t tell me Starfire got in here too...?

1. Scourgebolt Cliffs: The Chinese character I’m rendering ‘scourge’ usually means something like torture or punishment, and in xianxia novels, at least in Er Gen’s novels, this character is almost always associated with some sort of government department or location where criminals are punished or tortured. The character I’m rendering ‘bolt’ is the one for thunder or lightning. So although there has not been an explanation of this place, the characters imply that it’s some location where criminals are punished with lightning. Incidentally, as I’m sure many of you know, there are no true plurals or singulars in Chinese, so this place could also be Scourgebolt Cliff (singular). There is never any clear description that decisively states one way or another whether it should be cliff or cliffs. However, as the narrative reveals, it’s more like a world/dimension, and the sense I got when reading is that it’s a huge place, not just one singular cliff. ㊦

2. Zhong Chi: Zhong is listed #53 on the list of 100 common Chinese surnames. It has a handful of other meanings, but most notable of them are “clock, time, bell, o’clock.” Chi means “late, delayed, slow.” ㊦

3. Several hundred chapters ago there was a reference to ‘hundred flowers,’ and I included a footnote with an explanation. In this instance, the meaning/feeling of the ‘hundred flowers’ is different. Considering that we’re in the middle of some sort of ‘palace/imperial’ arc, and especially because this moment involves a ‘young lord,’ this instance makes one think of women, concubines, or maybe even courtesans. My first reaction was to assume the place was either a brothel or a harem of some sort. We’ll find out more details in coming chapters. ㊦

4. The author did not seem to want to bother to differentiate between Zhong Chi and Li Mengtu. In other words, even when we’re inside the head of Zhong Chi and seeing the thoughts that are obviously those of Li Mengtu, the author usually just calls him Zhong Chi. I feel like this makes sense in Chinese but is confusing in English. I’m going to do a bit of selective editing so that it makes more sense in English. When the story is being told from Li Mengtu’s POV, I will use the name Li Mengtu. But when seen from the POV of other characters, he will be Zhong Chi. This same

thing goes for other characters who have assumed identities. In some cases the author uses their real name, and in other cases he uses the assumed identity. And he will switch back and forth randomly, seemingly with no standard for doing so. I feel like it was mostly just a matter of carelessness on his part. Like he just typed out whatever came to mind in the moment, without much regard to keeping the POV accurate. In any case, throughout this arc I will try to make the English reading experience as smooth and logical as I can. 📖

Chapter 1148: Getting To the Bottom of Things

Chapter 1148: Getting To the Bottom of Things

Xu Qing wasn't sure whether Starfire could have possibly entered the fourth world. But he did know that he was not himself in body and soul. His thoughts had taken over the Young Lord Aurora of this time period, and he was now tasked with acting out his role in the most accurate way possible.

History could not be changed. That was what the imp, who was the discarnate will of Aurora himself, had said to Xu Qing. He had made it clear that after entering the fourth world, things needed to play out as they had in history. Xu Qing was there to listen and see. To experience.

But Xu Qing wasn't completely convinced of that. After all, if that was how things went, then this entire thing would be somewhat meaningless, both to himself and to the Shining Stars. If all you did was observe, then would that really bring the best good fortune and destined opportunities? Did things really play out automatically in the best way possible for the participants? Or was there a better way to do things?

And thus... Xu Qing felt that the best destined opportunity in this fourth world was to find the best possible outcome for this version of the past, even if it was hidden deeply.

So how am I supposed to do that?

As the lightning struck him, he began to observe his surroundings and sense what was going on. In that manner, time passed.

Five days went by.

Zhong Chi came every day to keep him company at the cliff. He was a study partner, and therefore, that was his job. At least, that was how it looked on the outside.

The reality was that while the young lord was being punished, Li Mengtu had some unprecedented free time to do whatever he wanted.... And thus, he was working on his own good fortune. In the end, Li Mengtu didn't really care at all that the young lord was strung up and being punished. In fact, he hoped it would last for longer.

Xu Qing could tell what was going on. He didn't call Zhong Chi out. After all, he wouldn't have appreciated someone else doing that to him. Everyone who came to the fourth world had their own matters to deal with.

As for himself, he took advantage of his time being punished at the Scourgebolt Cliffs to study the lightning bolts and use them to learn a bit more about this world.

The spirit energy here, the lightning, and even the aura of heaven and earth... all contain traces of time within them. This place is actually a bit different than the real world. To actually change history would be incredibly difficult. There are some high-level canon restrictions that make changing the past impossible. It's as if there is a space-time tempest covering the entire Fifth Star Ring here. This part of the timescape I'm in is likely... not real history!

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as he studied the lightning striking him, and came up with further speculations. It wasn't that this part of history had never occurred. Based on what Xu Qing understood of time, it seemed to him that the fourth world was a representation of the past. It was like... a reflection.

I'll have to do some tests to find out for sure.

As he devoted thought to such matters, he would occasionally let loose some screams to make sure that he was playing his role properly.

During the five days that passed, he spent time thinking about something else. And that was... whether there were other Shining Stars in this world besides Li Mengtu. And if there were, he wondered what roles they were playing.

After I'm freed from the Scourgebolt Cliffs, I'll have to see what I can find out.

He had no intention of causing problems for them. But the more he knew about who was here and what role they were playing, the easier it would be to work that to his own advantage.

Finding out how they're trying to get their own good fortune will help confirm some of my speculations. If I'm right, then this world is just a reflection....

If that's true, then trying to mess with time here, for instance by altering death, would result in transformations to space-time. And that would help me achieve deeper enlightenment of my space-time canon. If I did that, I could become a sovereign of space-time! Hm. I wonder if Immortal Lord Aurora is going to come back and see me...?

Xu Qing looked off into the distance. Immortal Lord Aurora had come right when Xu Qing arrived in the fourth world. Back then, he knew nothing about his surroundings, and in the interests of not making a mistake, he hadn't even looked at the Immortal Lord.

But in the days that had passed, he had learned a lot. Sadly, as the sixth day passed, and he was only about half a day from being freed, though someone did come to visit, it wasn't the Immortal Lord.

A person arrived in an imperial carriage being pulled by nine phoenixes. The carriage's curtain made it impossible to see who was inside. As the lightning shone onto the dazzling carriage, it seemed capable of lighting up this entire section of the immortal palace.

The nine phoenixes pulling the carriage let loose cries that caused wild colors to flash in heaven and earth. Each phoenix was like a burning flame that could devour all existence. The carriage was inlaid with countless jewels which shimmered like stars as the carriage moved, making it incredibly eye-catching.

Flanking the carriage were over a hundred guards clad in pitch-black suits of armor, with long spears in their hands. All of them emanated terrifying auras. They maintained orderly ranks as they marched next to the carriage. They seemed solemn and austere, and clearly viewed it as a great honor to serve as guards for this person.

The entire procession flew right into the Scourgebolt Cliffs. The carriage came to a stop about 90 meters away from Xu Qing, right in front of him.

Then a fair, delicate hand reached out from behind the dazzling curtain. The hand fairly radiated kindness, but it seemed to falter for a moment just as it emerged. After a short pause, the hand moved gracefully in an arc to draw aside the curtain, revealing the person in the carriage.

She had an extremely beautiful face that seemed like it was gilded with silver in the flashing glow of the lightning. In fact, that glowing radiance seemed to make her holy and even dreamlike. Everything around her seemed to dim in comparison. She had gleaming eyes, a long, straight nose, and naturally flushed lips that were perpetually curved in a gentle smile. However, at the moment, that smile was gone, and had been replaced with pure anger. As she emerged from the carriage, her hair cascaded like ink over her shoulders, and the way it flicked made her seem even angrier, but at the same time, added to her gentle charm.

Striding up to Xu Qing, she said, "You heartbreaker!"

Xu Qing looked up at the beautiful young woman in front of him. Based on his host's memories, he knew exactly who she was. She was the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores, and her name was Zhou Linshan, although she was usually called Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix.[1]

This was the woman that Immortal Lord Aurora had commanded he marry in a month. It went without saying that the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores was beautiful in every way imaginable. There was something transcendently gorgeous about her, such that anyone who saw her would think of her as so pure and holy that they wouldn't dare to even touch her.

When the breeze stirred her hair, her attractiveness would stir the heart of anyone looking at her. Her good looks and her temperament made her seem like an immortal fairy who had stepped out of an ancient painting, or perhaps a beautiful gemstone delivered as a gift from heaven above. Even when she spoke with anger in her voice, it sounded like music from nature.

Unfortunately, Xu Qing was not actually Young Lord Aurora. After glancing at her, he simply closed his eyes and ignored her.

"You womanizer!" she snapped, her eyes blazing. But then she saw the wounds covering his body, and she suddenly felt sorry for him. Despite still being angry, she took out a handkerchief and

wiped some of the blood off him. Her hand seemed infinitely gentle, as if it could soothe all restlessness in the world. As she wiped away the blood, she said, “You were very eloquent. Quite the flatterer. But now.... I know you don’t want to give up your Hundred Flowers Palace. So why did you come flirt with me in the first place? Your father already proposed a marriage. The wedding is supposed to be in a month. You don’t—”

Xu Qing’s eyes suddenly snapped open, and despite the lightning binding his arm, he reached up and grabbed her wrist.

She didn’t struggle against him. She just looked at him.

“If you wipe all the blood off,” he said, “how am I supposed to convince my father I’m sorry?”

He let go of her hand.

She snorted coldly and kept wiping the blood away. “You won’t give up your Hundred Flowers Palace, and you also think that Immortal Lord Aurora is going to feel sorry for you because you have some blood smeared on you? Maybe I should tear down the Hundred Flowers Palace myself!”

Spinning furiously, she walked back to the carriage. A handmaiden opened the curtain, and she got inside without looking back. The carriage and the guards then turned around and left the Scourgebolt Cliffs.

Zhong Chi looked up. “Was that really necessary, Young Lord...?”

Xu Qing didn’t reply. He just closed his eyes. As a result, no one could see the strange gleam therein. He was currently thinking about everything that happened from the moment Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix arrived until she left.

There had been a few noteworthy details.

First was the way she opened the curtain of the imperial carriage. There was something strange about the way it happened. Based on the host’s memories, it seemed to him that someone of her status would have grown up having other people open the carriage curtain. It was not something she would do herself. Of course, there could be reasons to explain that way.

But there was another detail. When he suddenly grabbed her wrist, she hadn’t reacted in any way. However, he had felt a hidden but profound force pushing back against him. It was faint, but he had been paying attention and had detected it. That was very strange. His host and Immortal Fairy Spirit Phoenix had already had physical contact, so why would there be a force pushing him away? Even still, those things could be explained away.

But there was an additional detail to add into the mix. After her wrist was grabbed, and at the same time as the force of rejection flared, her guard had gone up. Given who she was, that didn’t make sense.

Any of those things on their own wouldn’t mean very much. But when you added them together, they were very meaningful, at least to Xu Qing. That was especially true considering... that those three details didn’t seem to add up unless you combined them with a certain speculation. Then they made perfect sense.

And that speculation was... that she was an outsider. An outsider would slip up by opening the curtain. An outsider would instinctively push back against him. And an outsider, having been provoked, would put their guard up.[2]

I bet that she's not really Zhou Linshan! Is she one of the Shining Stars? There's only one of the Shining Stars who's a woman, although that doesn't rule out the others.

Xu Qing opened his eyes and looked off into the distance.

If she is one of the Shining Stars, then... what is she trying to accomplish?

1. Zhou Linshan: Zhou is #10 on the list of 100 common surnames. Lin means “gem” and Shan means “coral.” Madam Deathblade says it sounds like a beautiful, feminine name. The name is important, but in the vast majority of cases she's referred to by her title/nickname. For best reading experience, put a mental bookmark into Zhou Linshan being her real name. 📖

2. Those of you who have read ISSTH might remember the Outsiders from that novel. That is a completely different term than the one in this chapter. In this chapter, the word literally means “someone from outside.” In ISSTH, the term “Outsiders” is actually the same as what I'm rendering as “nonhuman” in this novel. Back in the ISSTH days, I was much less experienced. Based on the context of how those nonhumans were portrayed (being “outside” of the world Meng Hao lived in), I thought that Outsiders was a cool name for them. Even after finishing that translation and moving on to AWE, it never occurred to me that Outsiders was not a good choice. I mean, it does sound cool. But it doesn't accurately reflect what they are. If I could go back, I might just refer to them as “nonhumans” the same way I do in this novel. In any case, during this “fourth world arc” in BTT, the ‘outsiders’ are simply people from the outside. 📖

Chapter 1149: Everyone Has Their Own Dao

Chapter 1149: Everyone Has Their Own Dao

Xu Qing had taken over the body of the Young Lord Aurora. So far, he had spent seven days being strung up at the Scourgebolt Cliffs. In six hours, he would be released. During those six hours, the lightning got even stronger than before, and the thunderous booms were audible far beyond the confines of the Scourgebolt Cliffs. That was intentional, so that everyone would be convinced of the power and majesty of the Scourgebolt Cliffs.

However... though the figure being punished by the lightning seemed to be in very bad shape, during the final six hours, there was something nourishing concealed within the falling lightning. It was a case of *loud thunder but a small storm*. The crashing thunder was just a show for those on the outside. What was really happening... was that the lightning contained profound nourishment for his soul. It was... soothing him after the seven days of punishment.

No outsider would have any way of knowing about this. But upon searching the memories of his host, Xu Qing came to the realization that it always happened this way. Whenever he got punished, the very last part would be beneficial. After all, there was no way the body and soul of the young lord could truly be forced to suffer. He was the only son of Immortal Lord Aurora, after all.

Li Mengtu glanced over, and though he had a look of concern on his face, inside, he was snorting coldly. Though no one else knew what was really going on, there was no way that he could be unaware of the truth. *A kind father often spoils his son!*

However, he maintained his concerned look as he cried out, “Young Lord, please, just hold on a bit longer. There are only six more hours to go, sir! Li the Chosen is already at the dueling stage. He’s waiting for you!”

His delivery was perfect in both intonation and facial expression. Xu Qing couldn’t help but open his eyes and look at Li Mengtu playing the role of Zhong Chi. He had recently come to the conclusion that Li Mengtu was a natural-born actor. He was so good that, if Xu Qing hadn’t been aware of his true identity from the beginning, he would never have guessed.

When Li Mengtu noticed Xu Qing looked at him, he worked harder to maintain the proper facial expression. It almost looked like he wanted to outshine the lightning. Of course, that wasn’t possible.

Lightning crashed, filling the Scourgebolt Cliffs with flickering light and booming thunder.

The Scourgebolt Cliffs wasn’t the only place where lightning crashed. In the north of the immortal palace was a sword furnace.

The north was famous for its furnaces.

This particular furnace was almost like a cauldron filled with raging fire. The fire seemed like thousands of raging beasts casting light everywhere. Even the air seemed to be on fire. Magical symbols swirled above the furnace. As the sound of the fire raged, the chanting of an ancient enchantment drifted about. Every single magical symbol seemed to contain profound power of heaven and earth.

This was one of 100,000 minor worlds created by Immortal Lord Aurora. It was a furnace of heaven and earth. It could refine countless things, and could *change rotten things into something magical*.

At the moment it seemed to pulse with something that could transcend the mortal world. By borrowing the fire of heaven and earth, it took all sorts of metal-type precious materials and continuously refined them. They turned into a dark smoke that eventually became a liquid. And every time it transformed, the spirit energy of heaven and earth poured into it.

Within that intersection of intense flame and spirit energy, something aggressively powerful was being born.

It was a sword embryo!

Over the years, the furnace had produced ten immortal swords that Immortal Lord Aurora wielded to earn great glory in the star ring. Immortal Lord Aurora’s long-term plan was to have a total of twelve swords that could be combined into a sword formation.

Today, the final two swords were being formed. Because of that, heavenly lightning was summoned. It slammed into the sword furnace, and sent the power of lightning inside to help form the swords.

As the shining lightning poured inside, and as the fire of heaven and earth burned, the precious materials melted, and two sword embryo's began to form inside. Their auras swelled, becoming incredibly aggressive. From the perspective of the sword embryos, the process was like that of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. And that was because, to the two outside souls that had taken over the sword embryos, this was an unprecedented destined opportunity.

Hordeslayer and Rampart from the Sword Immortal School in the northern planetary system had worked very hard in the third world to acquire the identities of these two swords! This connected very closely to their daos. Both of them had been born with swords, and had preheaven sword bodies. Therefore, being forged into immortal swords in this furnace would have a profoundly beneficial effect on them. For them to be attached to the two sword embryos was the best path for them.

The two immortal swords would never be fully forged. Historically speaking, their production would continue for a month, but they would ultimately be destroyed along with the catastrophe that struck the immortal palace.

The end result was that the two swords never had any true master. Being masterless swords that had never been fully forged, they had no karma attached to them. There couldn't have been a more perfect match for Hordeslayer and Rampart.

Both were extremely pleased with how things turned out. They didn't really care what choices the others made, or what good fortune they got.... To those two, their destined opportunity lay right in front of them. They didn't need to compete or fight with anyone. They could just peacefully work on their cultivation until everything ended a month later.

Even if they did cross paths unexpectedly with some of the others, it wouldn't matter, as their destined opportunity would never involve interfering with others among the Shining Stars. At the moment... as the fire and lightning refined the swords, a calm voice spoke from outside the sword furnace.

"This furnace can do more than just refine swords. It can refine one's heart and refine one's character. The dao of sword-refining is the dao of refining the heart."

Hordeslayer and Rampart were shaken by what they had just heard, and quickly sent their divine will outside.

Standing near the sword furnace was an elegant young man with a placid expression on his face. He wore a long, golden robe that swayed in the fluctuations sent out by the fire and lightning. His robe was embroidered with dragons and phoenixes, making him seem both noble and mysterious. He wore a violet-gold crown inset with jewels and carved with dragons and phoenixes so lifelike they looked like they were moving, and would inspire awe in anyone who looked at them.

There was something otherworldly about this young man, a quality that would make it impossible for anyone to overlook him. He strode forward, and his gait was filled with power and seemed to

conform to a specific rhythm. Colors flashed and winds blew as he walked, causing the lightning and fire to sway.

He walked right into the sword furnace, appearing inside, right in front of the two sword embryos.

The sword embryos thrummed and emanated aggressive auras.

The young man didn't seem to care. His eyes shone brightly, as if he could see into the depths of all things. At the same time, his gaze was cold and apathetic. Looking at the two sword embryos, he coolly said, "The two of you won't be able to stay in there until the swords are fully forged. What's more, with every transformation to the metal, you'll face a test of the heart and character. This furnace is like a cauldron, and the cauldron hides heaven and earth; the heart is like a mirror, and the mirror reflects both yin and yang."

The young man's words seemed to make the fire in the furnace burn even brighter. At the same time, intense fluctuations of spiritual power rolled out, causing space to tremble. It was a baptism of power that nourished the two sword embryos.

"This is a great destined opportunity," the young man said calmly, his voice filled with a will that could not be ignored. "Unfortunately, history cannot be changed. Everything that happened in the past is done. It doesn't matter if history is like a reflection or not. Nothing can be changed!

"Therefore, I permit you to go with the flow of things, and seek your destined opportunity within history. However, if either of you show any signs that you intend to try to change history, then I'll personally erase you from existence, and revoke your right to be in the fourth world. Remember to follow the rules!"

Hordeslayer and Rampart were quiet for a few breaths of time, and then let loose sword resonances that contained the feeling of obedience. They knew who this person was, and they knew of their dao. They needed to pick a side and make a deal. Since they chose to follow the rules, there was no conflict.

The young man blurred as he left the sword furnace and appeared in the fire and lightning outside. An attendant was waiting patiently there.

When the young man appeared, the attendant bowed his head and followed him out. They left the location of the sword furnace and walked deeper into the immortal palace.

Any immortal palace cultivators who saw this young man would stop what they were doing and bow respectfully.

"Well met, True Monarch."

In the Aurora Immortal Palace, the only people who could be called by the title 'true monarch' were the four personal apprentices of Immortal Lord Aurora. That was their unique form of address.

Of course, three of those apprentices had been assigned to duties outside the immortal palace, which indicated that this was the fourth apprentice! In terms of status and rank, he was second only to the young lord himself, although in reality, most people thought far more highly of him.

Fourth True Monarch smiled in acknowledgment of those who called greetings to him as he led his attendant into the True Monarch Hall.

Once they were inside, the attendant took a deep breath and respectfully said, “Exalted one, what happened with Hordeslayer and Rampart?”

“They’ll follow the rules,” Fourth True Monarch replied coolly.

The attendant didn’t seem very surprised. That attendant was actually Zhou Zhengli!

Upon arriving in the fourth world, he had quickly deduced that Sir Star Ring had assumed the identity of Fourth True Monarch. After all, both of them were from the eastern planetary system, but beyond that, both had selected similar daos in the fourth world. Their intention was to ensure that everything played out historically here in the fourth world. And to make sure that they benefited the most from things, they would crush anyone who tried to do things differently. Following the rules in that way would conform perfectly to their respective canons.

“Hordeslayer and Rampart were easy to find. But Sir Vilespirit and Li Mengtu have hidden themselves much more deeply.... And then there’s Jiang Fan and Yuanshan Su. We have no clues at all for any of them.” Zhou Zhengli looked at Sir Star Ring.

Sir Star Ring, in his guise of Fourth True Monarch, was looking placidly at the sky outside the window. “Historically speaking, there are two very important people to note. One is the Immortal Lord, the other is his son. Someone who wanted to change history would focus on one of them.

“The former is far too transcendent for anyone to do anything to. So we should focus our attention on the young lord. We can use him like bait to lure the fish out into the open....

“For example, there’s the daughter of Immortal Lord Nineshores. And there’s also the duel with Li the Chosen. And of course, the young lord’s study partner.”

Zhou Zhengli considered this, then smiled and opened his mouth to speak.

Before he could, Sir Star Ring shook his head. “I don’t think any of them are important. There’s someone you overlooked. Someone I also overlooked originally. I didn’t pay any attention at all to him until he took action in the third world, spoiling one of my plans. That’s when I took note. I just wonder which identity he’s taken here in the fourth world.”

Six hours passed. The lightning circling the sky in the Scourgebolt Cliffs was very punctual. At exactly the right moment, it stopped.

The restraints binding Xu Qing disappeared, and he dropped to the ground to stand in front of Zhong Chi. His clothing was in tatters, and he looked badly wounded. But in truth... those were all just flesh wounds, and they looked a lot worse than they actually were.

Zhong Chi still looked deeply concerned. In fact, he had already produced a new set of clothing that he threw over the young lord.

“Young Lord,” he said, “Li the Chosen is already at the dueling stage claiming that the fight would be unfair, and that you should take time to recover before the fight. Also, that fox demon beauty is there—”

“There’s no need for delay,” Xu Qing said coolly, “I’m going right now.”

He started walking.

Li Mengtu shook his head inwardly and mused that this young lord really was a lecher. Even after all the punishment, as soon as heard about a beautiful woman, he immediately ran right toward her. The words he spoke next ran counter to the thoughts in his head.

“Young Lord, you really are amazing. Brilliant as well. You’re extraordinarily brave and incredibly skilled, in other words, a rare genius. One day in the future, Young Lord, you’ll ascend the throne and lead the star ring into a golden age. Everyone will prosper and peace will reign for eternity.”

Upon hearing that, Xu Qing stopped in place and turned to look at Zhong Chi.

Li Mengtu blinked a few times and thought, *Isn’t he used to hearing things like that? Don’t tell me he’s not pleased.*

His host Zhong Chi had always been a brown-noser, but at the moment, he wasn’t exactly sure what to do. Thinking quickly, he launched into some more flattery. “Young Lord, you don’t even need to speak the words. I understand, and I’m shaken to the core. I’m infinitely grateful for all of your generosity and praise. It goes without saying that I will work for you as hard as a horse or dog. But at the same time, there’s something I simply have to get off my chest.

“Young Lord, despite being so badly injured, you’re keeping your word and participating in the duel. This is a true show of valor that everyone will be able to see. You’re like a dazzling star that one can’t help but want to revere. You’re a true hero of the ages!”

Xu Qing said nothing. Turning away, he kept walking. Soon he was far from the Scourgebolt Cliffs and in the depths of the immortal palace. Looking around he saw dazzling light, countless living beings, and ordinary celestial bodies in the sky. There was no crimson aurora. Scenes of a golden age entered his eyes.

So, this is what the Aurora Immortal Palace was like in the past!

Chapter 1150: Who Else Could it Be But...?

Chapter 1150: Who Else Could it Be But...?

Auspicious light in the sky created dazzling colors on the ground. Immortal clouds released immortal rain that nourished all living beings. Immortals strolled everywhere, chatting and laughing. Immortal beasts roamed peacefully, flowers blooming around them. The buildings in the immortal palace seemed to go on forever and ever. Immortal flowers and plants created an intoxicating aroma. Off in the distance, bells tolled from immortal towers and pagodas.

Xu Qing looked around at everything... and it seemed like a dream. All of a sudden, he felt like he wasn't sure where he was, or *when* he was. As he walked through the immortal paradise, he absorbed immortal energy from everywhere. The sights, sounds, and smells made him feel like he was part of his surroundings.

In the end... his host's memories rippled, filling him with a sensation of familiarity. He expanded his heart and his mind, and everything seemed normal.

Xu Qing took a deep breath and then proceeded slowly in the direction of the dueling stage. As he walked along, he adjusted his aura and familiarized himself with his fleshly body and cultivation base.

He had done this before during the past seven days. He was already seeing some results. His fleshly body was at the peak of Imperial Sovereign, as was his soul. He was only half a step from being in the Quasi-Immortal level.

The process of becoming familiar with this fleshly body had been an incredible experience for Xu Qing. In fact, it could be called a destined opportunity. He could now be a lot more confident about the process of climbing through the Imperial Sovereign level. After all, though he had extraordinary battle prowess, the truth was that his cultivation base was only at the eight-world Smoldering God level. And he still had no way to become an Imperial Sovereign.

That said, he had killed plenty of Imperial Sovereigns, so he had a good overview of the level. The biggest difference between Imperial Sovereigns and Smoldering Gods, besides battle prowess, was the immortal embryo. Imperial Sovereigns would combine nine worlds to form an immortal embryo, which was a process of turning the illusory into a reality.

Back at the God Blood River, the ferry pilot said that the immortal embryo is also called the undying illusory reality.[1]

As he walked, he thought.

The illusory represents the soul. The reality represents the fleshly body. Because of that, the Imperial Sovereign level is divided into the three minor levels of early, mid, and late. The early level involves releasing your soul externally, and using it to form a fleshly body. That is the illusory reality.

Xu Qing examined the fleshly body he occupied and confirmed that information.

This body has already reached that point.

Xu Qing scanned his host's memories to study the enlightenment his host had experienced in that level.

During that time, the Imperial Sovereign cultivator can be considered strong, but is also weak.

They're strong because the external illusion is gradually made real. They come to understand authority, and can control all manner of things. Those abilities eventually reach an inconceivable level. The weakness comes from the fact that reality is concealed by illusion. Therefore, if something can harm reality, they can be killed easily.

Xu Qing thought about it for a moment. He understood why a strong Imperial Sovereign could kill a weak one. It was impossible to escape that which could harm reality.

Succeeding with the illusory reality leads to the second level. That second level involves taking the fleshly body, which was concealed in illusion, and turning it into a soul. That is what is called undying.

Imperial Sovereigns of that level can instantly shift between reality and illusion. To some extent, a person like that has no weaknesses, and can be called undying. That's why the level is said to be about replacing and merging. However... this 'undying' quality really only refers to methods within the Imperial Sovereign level. When facing canon, it's like a bubble that can be popped effortlessly!

Xu Qing thought back to the Imperial Sovereigns he had killed, and suddenly had a much deeper sense of understanding.

For ordinary Imperial Sovereigns, the third level requires a dao lineament of authority. The dao lineament is like a thread weaved through the body, taking the illusory, reality, and undying aspects and combining them. Pluck down a star, make it one, and then form the immortal embryo!

The 'star' referred to there is obviously canon. It relates to an opportunity to gain enlightenment of one's own canon. Success or failure won't affect the upgrade. But it will affect your battle prowess after the upgrade is complete!

The moment you succeed, you're a Quasi-Immortal, also known as a Grand Emperor. As for chosen cultivators, they get canon early, which is equivalent to plucking that star. And thus, when they enter the Quasi-Immortal level, they are anything but weak.

He had benefited a lot from his study of this fleshly body over the past few days. This fleshly body had completely completed the second level and was halfway through the third level. It had nine major dao lineaments, and was in the process of weaving the undying illusory reality.

What's more, it's clear that Young Lord Aurora has his own canon. That said, his canon is a bit strange!

Xu Qing's eyes narrowed as the dueling stage became visible in the distance. Even still, he continued with his current train of thought. And that was because Young Lord Aurora's canon had experienced a major withering!

At some point in the past, he gained enlightenment of his canon. That alone shows how talented the young lord is, and highlights his powers of understanding. What's more, the canon he gained enlightenment of was completely extraordinary. It's the canon of mirror! But later on, his canon bizarrely withered for some reason. And after that, it became a canon of sealing!

Xu Qing could tell that there was something very unusual about it all.

Unfortunately, Young Lord Aurora's memories did not have any explanation for the withering or the transformation. All the memories told him was that the young lord had informed the Immortal Lord as soon as it happened.

When the Immortal Lord found out, he had looked profoundly grim. It was as if he had confirmed something he already knew, and he had stormed off angrily. But a month later, he returned and acted as if nothing had happened.

What was more, there was a section of memory from during that time that had been erased. Xu Qing had no idea what that memory was about. He just knew... that from that day forward, Young Lord Aurora had ceased to be hardworking and above-board in everything, and had instead built the Hundred Flowers Palace and immersed himself in a life of drinking and women.

When his canon withered and transformed, it was given a formal name... Three-Karmas Ten-Evils Seal! It was a type of canon that could seal evil! [2]

As his thoughts swirled, he found the emotions of grief that were buried in those memories from years ago. He could sense the bitterness and confusion the young lord had felt back then. Although he had no idea what had caused it, he definitely sensed deep, deep pain. And yet, there was no resentment to go along with it. Instead, there was relief.

Just what exactly happened? Why did his canon change? What could it have been that not even Immortal Lord Aurora was able to resolve the situation...?

Xu Qing mused about these things silently. He already had an idea of who could possibly have changed the young lord's canon. That was because of a secret that, though known to some people, was only known to a few very important people. As a result, the vast majority of cultivators in the Fifth Star Ring didn't even know there was a secret to begin with.... It was about the relationship between Aurora and the Immortal Paragon.

Or perhaps it's better to say that some immense power hid the truth of their historical relationship. Aurora is the son of the Immortal Paragon. And that means that this young lord that I've possessed... is actually the grandson of the Immortal Paragon.

All of a sudden, a peal of laughter from up ahead interrupted Xu Qing's thoughts. He looked up.

The dueling stage was right in front of him. It was an ancient arena surrounded by tall stone walls. The walls were carved with all sorts of animals. Some flew in the air, some roared in the mountains, and all were extremely lifelike, so much so that it almost seemed like they were about to leap off the wall. At the moment, the sunlight shone through the clouds, casting mottled light onto the dueling stage. That, coupled with the ancient and mysterious air of the place, made it seem even more somber and dignified.

In the middle of the dueling stage was a circular platform constructed from some unknown material, surrounded by a ring of cold, shimmering blades. The light of the sun glinted on the blades, casting awe into the hearts of any who looked at them.

The grandstands of the arena were already filled with plenty of spectators, most of whom were witnesses that Li the Chosen had invited to watch the duel. Many of them turned to look at Xu Qing.

A young man hovered in midair, clad in a crimson daoist robe. He had pronounced but handsome facial features, as well as a general air of heroism. The way he carried himself, plus the color of his robe, made him seem like he was a scorching flame that could look down on everything around

him, and burn anything that got too close. Upon seeing Xu Qing approach, the young man smiled loftily.

“There’s no rush, Young Lord. The immortal palace’s university is on break today, so we have plenty of time. Please, take some time to rest. That way you won’t be able to make any excuses after I beat you. By the way, I brought the prize with me.”

He waved his hand, and a gentle stream of light shot out of his sleeve, which transformed in midair into a bewitchingly charming woman.

She wore a simple garment, and at first glance looked like a young lady. But at second glance, she looked like a more mature woman. Her facial features were pure and enchanting. Her gaze seemed both charming and crafty, and her long hair was tied into a ponytail, although a few strands of hair had slipped loose and hung down in front of her face. She was currently glancing shyly at Xu Qing.

He looked at her. That single glance was enough to cause him to sigh inwardly. There was something familiar about that gaze, as well as the way she held herself....

There could be no doubt about it. If the fox maiden wasn’t Starfire, who else could she possibly be...?

At the same moment that Xu Qing looked at the fox maiden, Li the Chosen strode forward to stand in front of her, blocking her from Xu Qing.

“If you beat me,” he said derisively, “you can take her and do as you please. I can guarantee that she’s undefiled. However, Young Lord, I happen to think that the prize for this duel isn’t very reasonable. This fox maiden was mine to begin with. Therefore, if I win the duel, I can enjoy myself for an entire month in the Hundred Flowers Palace!

“And if you win, not only do you get the fox maiden, but I will be your study partner for a hundred years! No matter what errands you assign me during that time, even if it’s to search the whole world for beauties, I’ll comply without so much as a frown! What do you think? Do you dare agree?”

Li the Chosen was making no attempt to hide his arrogance or the fact that he was trying to provoke his opponent.

Xu Qing’s pupils constricted.

Behind him, Li Mengtu was also stunned. This was not what happened historically speaking. *Something’s off here. Don’t tell me that Li the Chosen is an outsider! Maybe someone that used the pretext of this duel to somehow get close to the young lord?*

Even as Li Mengtu’s heart raced, Xu Qing spoke.

“I agree!” he said. The moment the words left Xu Qing’s mouth, a very strange feeling rose up within him. It was caused by space-time fluctuations. It was only a small wave rolling out over the river of history.

But that wave instantly provoked a reaction from Xu Qing's canon! All of a sudden, a sound like a deafening heartbeat rang out, as if the will of heaven and earth was erupting.

Li the Chosen laughed heartily. Battle spirit surging, he shot toward Xu Qing like a meteor.

All eyes in the dueling arena were suddenly sparkling.

1. The ferry pilot talked about cultivation stuff in chapter 1110. ㊦

2. I give up! There are too many words and characters in Chinese that relate to destiny, karma, fate, etc! In this case, the 'karma' here is a completely different character than the one I normally translate as karma. However, it means pretty much the exact same thing. And the 'three karmas' is a thing from Buddhism. Those three karmas are that of body, word, and mouth. Funnily enough, I mentioned this exact same thing in the footnote of chapter 898, as this same character was used back then as well. ㊦