

Timescape 681

Chapter 681: Nine Suns Cover Heaven

Fighting spirit had to be mustered before a war, otherwise there wouldn't be much momentum, and the will to fight would die out. That's what was happening in the Moonrebel Congregation right now. The Heir Apparent's speech, combined with Xu Qing's words and the Captain's bravado, stoked the spirits of the hundreds of thousands of cultivators in the Moonrebel Congregation. Determination gleamed in their eyes as they firmly decided to put their lives on the line.

"Kill!!!"

It was hard to say who said it first. But soon, everyone was passionately shouting the same thing, from the depths of their souls. It was as if they could wipe away all of the bitterness and defiance of their life by venting that word.

Rationality wasn't important right now. Schemes and strategies wouldn't mean much compared to such a fighting spirit. Everyone had become recklessly courageous, and when people like that were furious, blood would spill!

The truth was clear to them now. Crimson Mother was coming, and before, it had seemed like it would end in death for everyone. But now there was hope. And it was a greater hope than had appeared in countless years. As of this moment, even the cowardly would feel the valor of the recklessly courageous.

Besides, how could people who joined the Moonrebel Congregation lack courage and valor? The entrance subtests were specifically designed to weed out people who weren't truly suitable. Brightly colored light flashed in heaven and earth as the cultivators of the Moonrebel Congregation shouted, their cries imbued with a spirit that could conquer mountains and rivers.

Seeing that, Xu Qing took a deep breath and strode into the Moonrebel Congregation. Together with the Captain, he entered Paramount Temple. As they did, the Mirror of Moonrebel, which served as the canopy of heaven, glittered brightly.

A shockwave rolled out. It was a power in the Moonrebel Congregation that only the Archbishops of Moonrebel could command, to create a region-wide teleportation.

As the teleportation began, the Captain's voice rang out.

"Let all of the statues... make their way back!"

Outside, one Moonrebel cultivator after another rushed toward the Moonrebel Congregation in statue form. Li Xiaoshan was among them, as was Madam Godfinch and all the other unsealed cultivators.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings didn't need to go inside. All areas of the region were accessible to them with a mere thought. The ordinary cultivators in the Bitter Life Mountains were not asked to fight. Therefore, as Ning Yan, Ling'er, and everyone else looked on, a ripple passed through the dome of heaven, and the Mirror of Moonrebel vanished.

It was moving in the direction of the Penitence Steppes, and the headquarters of the Red Moon Cathedral.

As the saying goes, *speed is a crucial asset in war!*

The Penitence Steppes were in the middle of the Moonrite Region. They created a vast plain without any mountains. The lands were covered with red grass, and as the wind blew across it, it looked like a crimson sea. In the very middle of the plain there was a large lake. It looked like blood and reeked of gore, making it very reminiscent of the Yin Sacrifice River.

In the middle of that lake was an island, atop which was a giant who could prop up heaven and earth. He had been forced into a kneeling position. However, that posture couldn't prevent his mighty stature and powerful aura from creating a terrifying, invisible pressure.

Beneath the giant was a temple complex full of many buildings. However, none of that was very easy to see considering the bright red light shining down. It came from the dome of heaven, and the red moon. From a distance, it was possible to see red light covering the entire island.

There was a huge difference between the redness here and that outside. Everything outside was also red, but it was faint. But this area seemed to be the subject of a far more intense red color. Heaven and earth were crimson, and the boundless redness that converged on the island was like a curtain of blood pulsing with the aura of Crimson Mother. There was something else here that was different compared to normal. Usually, the island was filled constantly with the sound of worship, of people singing the praises of Crimson Mother. But now... the place was silent.

There was no chanting or singing. The bright red light had surpassed everything. Then a thunderous rumbling filled the sky, breaking the silence and causing the air to ripple and distort, as if some gargantuan thing was about to be teleported into the redness. But as the red light flickered, the teleportation failed.

A moment later, the Mirror of Moonrebel appeared in midair above the island. As it grew larger and larger, numerous gazes locked onto the island below, filled with killing intent.

Next to it were the Heir Apparent and his siblings. As they stepped out of nothing, their expressions flickered.

“The aura of a god....”

Ninth Sib's expression was cold as he suddenly raised his right hand. A long, illusory sword formed there. It was pitch black and emanated a baleful aura that made all heaven and earth darken. Stepping toward the curtain of blood, he slashed out with his sword.

The sword seemed like it could slash open heaven. The sky shook, tempests sprang up everywhere, the earth quaked, and the surrounding blood lake sank down. Then the sword reached the curtain of blood. A deafening rumble erupted from the curtain, and caused the blood-colored light it cast to become thin. The might of that sword was shocking to all.

However, only a moment later, it was possible to see through the thinned curtain of blood to what was beyond it. Everyone's gazes hardened. Beyond the blood curtain was the statue of the Imperial Sovereign, which was now a bit clearer. And surrounding the statue... were innumerable Red Moon Cathedral cultivators.

They weren't on the ground below. In fact, there was no one on the ground. All of the cultivators from the cathedral headquarters were hovering cross-legged in midair around the statue, almost as if

they were guarding it. There were so many of them that it was almost impossible to count how many there were.

The weakest among them had Nascent Soul cultivation bases. There were quite a few Spirit Trove cultivators, and plenty of Void Returning experts. Almost all of them wore the god robes of cathedral cultivators. The pontiff was there, looking out at the Moonrebel Congregation cultivators. These people came from various species and sects that adhered to the Red Moon Cathedral, and were waiting in combat readiness. They were there to stand guard over Crimson Mother's mortal husk.

The mortal husk had long since been freed. The ugly physical body was like an unraveled intestine that had been wrapped around the head of the Imperial Sovereign, completely covering it.

It twitched and wriggled in a very prescribed motion, almost in accord with the beating of a heart. Pulses of a godly aura emerged from the mortal husk, spreading out. Given that, and the vicious exterior of the husk, it combined with the blood-colored light from the sky to create a very gruish effect.

Looking at the scene, the Heir Apparent said, "Looks like we're just in time. Fourth Sib is going through with the godly ascension ceremony right now!"

The gazes of the Moonrebel cultivators grew even harder.

In Paramount Temple in the Moonrebel Congregation, the Captain's eyes glittered. Xu Qing, meanwhile, was frowning. And that was because of what the trembling Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior was telling him.

"Milord, this isn't good. Based on all of the novels I've read, whenever the destined main character is about to achieve a critical breakthrough, the villains will show up. Right now, it seems we're in the role of the villains. Given what usually happens in novels, the villains never succeed. The destined main character will always break through at the last minute and kill everyone else...."

After hearing the whole explanation, Xu Qing ignored the patriarch.

Outside of the Moonrebel Congregation, Eighth Sib seemed to be getting impatient. "You're really full of crap, Big Sib. Nobody can see what's going on in there. What are you talking about? Let's fuck that bitch up!"

Without any further ado, he rushed toward the blood curtain, clenched his right hand into a fist, and launched a blow. Smoldering God fluctuations rolled out everywhere. A world formed. A mighty shout echoed out as the blow landed.

Princess Brightblossom's eyes glittered with killing intent as she advanced. A river of time appeared, turning into a long spear that she grabbed. She swung the spear, and it stabbed from past into present.

Fifth Sister closed her eyes, causing halos to spring into being over her head, spreading out in concentric circles, then contracting rapidly and unleashing crushing pressure.

The Heir Apparent cast a glare at Eighth Sib, then waved his hand, causing a nail to fly out from within him that emanated the might of a god. It was none other than the Imperial Sovereign's nail. Destructive power swept toward the curtain of blood, shattering the air as it went.

Ninth Sib didn't utter a word. But he stepped forward, and black swords made of killing intent appeared around him. Every single one abounded with a baleful aura, and altogether, they created a sky-obfuscating, land-enshrouding rain of swords that shot toward the red light.

On the other side of the curtain of blood, the pontiff's eyes narrowed, and he quickly performed an incantation gesture and pointed out. All of the cathedral cultivators surrounding him unleashed the power of their cultivation bases to bolster the curtain of blood. It would make sense to conclude that the combined attacks of five Smoldering Gods, the nail of an Imperial Sovereign, and Ninth Sib's fierce swords, would pierce through any defenses that could be found in this world. But this curtain of blood was unique.

The curtain of blood was a god formation formed by the power of Crimson Mother. It contained the blessing of Crimson Mother, and was considered a reserve power of the Red Moon Cathedral. It was designed to defend against Smoldering Gods, and that was under normal circumstances. Now, when the red moon was in the sky, it was adding a further blessing. What was more, there was a host of cultivators also bolstering it....

And thus, a deafening boom rang out as the curtain of blood distorted. It blocked Eighth Sib's fist, stood strong against Fifth Sister's divine ability, and only allowed Princess Brightblossom's spear to pierce into it a few inches. It similarly held strong against the Imperial Sovereign's nail.

It was only Ninth Sib's swords that managed to punch through it. However, in the blink of an eye, the blessing of Crimson Mother caused the blood curtain to repair itself.

The Heir Apparent and his siblings looked on with grim expressions. This wasn't about them being weak; there was just no way they could easily penetrate the blessings of a god. Tapping into their cultivation bases, they erupted again. Ninth Sib lifted his hand, and a baleful aura converged as he prepared to unleash a trump card.

However, that was when the Captain laughed heartily and strode out from the Moonrebel Congregation into the sky.

"Grandpas! Grandmas! There's no need for you to waste time on a measly god formation like this. I'm an expert in all of this. Let me handle it! I've been preparing for this moment for a long time. Watch and see how I break this god formation!"

The Captain had a proud look on his face and inside he felt very excited. *The time has come for me to shine!*

Throwing his right hand up, he said, "Little Roundy, Medium Roundy, Big Roundy! Little Boxy, Big Boxy! All Roundys and all Boxys. Listen to my command and get out here!"

As the words left the Captain's mouth, the dome of heaven trembled, and a host of artificial suns appeared. In total, there were five. Some were big, some were small. They were all unique. Among them were the two that Xu Qing had helped drag onto the shore of the Yin Sacrifice River. [1]

Three beams of light appeared on the horizon. Shockingly, they contained three artificial suns, which had left the species that controlled them and screamed toward the Captain in response to his

summons. Eight suns could be seen in the canopy of heaven, shining brightly, and burning dazzlingly. All heaven and earth suddenly became immeasurably bright.

“The first thing I did when I came to the Moonrite Region was search for suns. And all of that was in preparation for today!” Looking extremely proud, he shouted, “Little Junior Brother, lend me the sun you have on your belt!”

Xu Qing emerged from the Moonrebel Congregation and looked at the eight suns. Without any hesitation, he took the metal sphere off his belt and threw it up into the air. The moment the metal sphere was off him, his aura soared. From inside to out, he felt incredibly relaxed. At the same time, his gaze glittered brightly. As the metal sphere rose up into the sky and joined the other eight suns, it began to burn, becoming far brighter than before.

Looking very pleased with himself, the Captain waved his hand and sent a strand of hair flying up into the dome of heaven.

That strand of hair came from a High God. As it ascended, it grew larger and larger until it pierced through the nine suns, connecting them like a bracelet.

It was a terrifying bracelet that covered the crimson light in heaven and earth.

Then, it erupted!

Chapter 682: The Hope of the People Summons Deceased Souls

Over countless years in the Moonrite Region, powerful species had created artificial suns for their own use. In total, there were eight such suns. When adding in the oldest sun of all from Xu Qing, the nine suns were exceedingly brilliant.

Never before had anyone awoken all nine of these suns at the same time. They all rose to brilliance at different time periods, and for various reasons, one after another fell from the sky. But today, the ancient suns were giving forth their light. Each one let off dazzling brightness that illuminated heaven and earth.

They were stupefyingly mighty, and with their light shining, the redness in the dome of heaven was surpassed. The formations in the ground were shaken. What made them even more powerful was the hair stringing them all together. That strand of hair from High God Moonfire contained the power of a god. And with hēr using those nine suns, they would be blessed. They would be the suns of a god. Their light would become the light of a god, and their flames would become the flames of a god.

A sea of light pulsed, and fire seethed. In the blink of an eye, the crimson light from the red moon was neutralized, and faded away. From a distance, the Moonright Region still looked red, but within that redness there was a large empty spot! It looked extremely ghastly.

The lake of blood also changed because of the sea of light, and instead of being crimson, was turbid and cloudy. It was possible to see countless skeletons rising up from it, almost as if *they* were the true form of the lake.

However, the island itself was still being bolstered by the god formation, so the Captain proudly waved his hand.

Instantly, the bracelet of nine suns exerted crushing pressure onto the god formation. Heaven-rending, earth-crushing power caused the lake water to explode, and shook the island violently. Cracking sounds rang out in all directions.

The Red Moon Cathedral's spell formation was clearly on the verge of collapsing. Not only was it thinning, but also, irregular cracks were spreading out over it.

At that point, the Heir Apparent's eyes glittered, and his hands flashed in an incantation gesture. The Imperial Sovereign's nail surged with mountain-toppling, sea-draining energy, and it slammed into the god formation like a boulder crushing a drinking glass. A cracking sound rang out as a huge section of the god formation crumbled!

Princess Brightblossom, Fifth Sister, and Eighth Sib all unleashed their attacks one after another. Sustained cracking sounds rang out as the god formation crumbled even further. Ninth Sib's eyes shone with cold light as he made a grasping gesture. The air shattered, then converged into the shape of a greatsword. Pointing it toward the god formation, he stabbed out viciously.

The god formation had already been put in great danger by the bracelet of nine suns. Then the Heir Apparent and his siblings crushed it further. Finally, Ninth Sib's sword put it on the brink of destruction.

A deafening boom rang out. The god formation shattered, revealing a host of grim cathedral cultivators inside.

Many of them looked very surprised. Clearly, the god formation had been destroyed far more quickly than anyone had anticipated it would.

"Didn't see that coming, did ya?" The Captain laughed heartily. "This isn't my first time facing your god formation, fools! I got through it back in the day, and ever since then I've been planning how to destroy it. I came extremely prepared, didn't I?"

As the Captain's laughter drifted out, the Heir Apparent ignored him and rushed toward the island. Ninth Sib followed, with Princess Brightblossom at his side, and Fifth Sister and Eighth Sib close behind.

The five of them became five beams of light that shot like lightning into the Red Moon Cathedral's headquarters. Not pausing for an instant, they headed right toward the twitching and writhing mortal husk of Crimson Mother.

They had no time to deal with the surrounding cathedral cultivators. Based on the godly fluctuations coming from the mortal husk, the Heir Apparent and his siblings knew that Fourth Sib was there... and it was in a critical stage of godly ascension. Time was of the essence, and they had to stop him. If Fourth Sib completed the godly ascension ceremony, then dealing with him would become vastly more complicated.

As they closed in, Princess Brightblossom's hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and then she pushed them out in front of her. Instantly, the river of time appeared, surging with waves as it surrounded them and then slammed into the mortal husk. Ordinary methods couldn't get them into the mortal husk. Only by using a dao of time such as this could they get inside!

In the blink of an eye, the Heir Apparent and his siblings went with the river of time into the mortal husk. They vanished from sight.

The mortal husk twitched and wriggled, then suddenly contracted. Next, ear-piercing sounds rang out from inside, along with deafening shockwaves. It happened almost instantly. The cathedral cultivators were visibly shocked. After all, their mission had been to prevent any outsiders from entering the mortal husk until the godchild emerged.

Seeing that their efforts had failed, they shot to their feet. The pontiff frowned, and was about to order all of the cathedral cultivators to employ their god magics to help the godchild.

Beyond the island, the Mirror of Moonrebel suddenly accelerated. Shooting into the dome of heaven over the island, it covered Crimson Mother's mortal husk. Fluctuations rolled off the mirror's surface, becoming a crushing power that locked down the mortal husk. And then statues emerged from the temples in the mirror, looking like fiendish gods. As they shot out of the mirror, they surged with determination and killing intent as they shot toward the cathedral cultivators.

From a distance, hundreds of thousands of statues shot out, shattering the air around them. Natural and magical laws were unleashed colliding to create a tempest of raging killing intent.

Unfortunately, compared to the cathedral's forces, they were few in number. This was the cathedral's headquarters, and it wasn't just cathedral cultivators who were present; there were all sorts of supporting organizations. For example, the Yin-Yang Betwixt Flowers Sect was on call.

As the battle began, the cathedral experts gathered, and one Void Returning expert after another shot toward the Moonrebel forces. Third Vice-Bishop and Fourth Vice-Bishop, along with their subordinates, raced forward to intercept the Void Returning enemies. Their fighting caused shockwaves to spread out in heaven and earth, making it seem like the end of days had come.

The unsealed cultivators from the Moonrebel Congregation also advanced to meet their counterpart experts from the Red Moon Cathedral. Every single clash caused storm winds to rage.

It wasn't just the Void Returning experts who began fighting. There were even more Spirit Trove cultivators who engaged in combat. Individually, such fighting would have been impressive, but given the battlefield as a whole, they didn't stand out much.

Of course, there were vastly more Nascent Soul cultivators. Because of all the various factors at play, casualties and deaths immediately occurred. Blood fell like rain, along with mangled corpses. Insane and defiant shouting rang out left and right.

Given how much of an advantage the Red Moon Cathedral cultivators had in numbers, it didn't matter that the Moonrebel cultivators were able to be resurrected after dying. They clearly weren't a match. Yet all the Moonrebel Congregation had to do was buy time and stop the cathedral cultivators from helping their godchild. That, they could do.

After all, the true battle which would decide everything was being fought inside Crimson Mother's mortal husk. Yet the vast disparity in numbers ensured that the Moonrebel cultivators were approaching a crisis situation.

That said, it was only natural that Xu Qing and the Captain would have come prepared. Seeing the dangerous situation, Xu Qing unhesitatingly activated another of the Moonrebel Congregation's divine abilities.

The Mirror of Moonrebel vibrated. Then, in locations throughout the entirety of the Moonrite Region, the numb commoners, who were simply waiting to die, suddenly found themselves

witnessing the battle taking place at the Red Moon Cathedral headquarters. The bitter scene was hair-raising to say the least.

The same voice that had narrated the events at the God Decapitation Altar then spoke into their minds.

“This is the final battle with the Red Moon Cathedral! It will decide your life and death. It will decide your survival! People of Moonrite, you don’t have to come here to fight. But... we need your strength for this battle! Everyone, extend your hand in the direction of the Penitence Steppes and offer your faith to bolster the Moonrebel Congregation!”

Few people held back from raising their hands, especially considering how they could hear the bitter cries of the Moonrebel cultivators, and could see people dying everywhere. As the living beings of the region lifted their hands, streams of white light emerged from their palms, turning into motes that were very reminiscent of what played out at the God Decapitation Altar. The white motes rose into the air, then shot toward the Moonrebel Congregation. It was the power of the people! This was the final hope of all living beings. The hottest blood that burned in their hearts!

This was the divine ability of the Moonrebel Congregation, which was a domain treasure that contained the will of Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua that survived his death. And it could gather the hope power of the masses. And that power could summon the souls of the Moonrebel cultivators who had died in battle from ancient times until now!

In the blink of an eye, that hope power became a multitude of white motes that shot into the Mirror of Moonrebel.

Once inside, the old spirit automaton atop the lake waved his hands out in front of him. The lake waters boiled as soul shadows from many previous epochs rose up. Every soul shadow was a Moonrebel cultivator from a previous time. When they had been alive, the Heir Apparent and his siblings were sealed, and couldn’t help. Nor could they benefit from Xu Qing’s curse-quelling assistance. Most relevant of all, Crimson Mother hadn’t been asleep during their time. When the red moon came, her gaze could vanquish all resistance. Therefore, they had no way to escape defeat at the hands of the Red Moon Cathedral, and ultimately be crushed and devoured. But they had not been forgotten by the Moonrebel Congregation. And the only thing that could summon them was the hope of the people. Today, they were making their debut!

One battle soul after another rose from the lake. When their eyes opened, they glowed with mysterious light. And then they shot out to the battlefield. When they had been alive, they fought for freedom. And now that they were dead... they were doing the same thing!

Bitter fighting played out on the battlefield surrounding the Red Moon Cathedral’s headquarters.

Li Xiaoshan and Madam Godfinch shot at high speed toward the pontiff from two directions. They hadn’t finished their last fight with the pontiff, and were more than happy to continue it here.

Fighting wasn’t just happening at the headquarters. At cathedral subsidiary bases throughout the region, various species and sects were rushing to combat. The entire region was being turned upside down.

And yet, though the Moonrebel Congregation had numerous divine abilities to unleash, the Red Moon Cathedral had been harvesting this region for generations. And thus, they also had reserve powers. Though they might not be on the level of Crimson Mother's mortal husk, they could still shake Smoldering Gods.

And thus, as Li Xiaoshan and Madam Godfinch closed in, the pontiff's eyes glittered with blue light. Expression calm, he extended his right hand and pushed down toward the ground.

"Blood guardians of the Red Moon Cathedral, hear the orders of a god! Execute all who blaspheme against our god!"

Chapter 683: Like a Monarch or King

As the pontiff's words echoed out, the island trembled. Numerous temples shook violently. Among them were nine that glowed with bright light. They were organized into a chart of nine stars.

Because of the nine suns shining overhead, the area had already lost its brilliant crimson color. Only Crimson Mother's mortal husk retained that color, as did the pontiff himself. But now, nine beams of red light appeared. They emerged from those nine temples, and all seemed profoundly ancient. Blood flowed like rivers and baleful auras erupted.

Nine figures emerged.

The first was a four-armed nonhuman. It was impossible to tell if this being was male or female. It was only possible to see that they had long, withered hair, and emanated a sensation of time and rot. Of the nonhuman's four arms, three were bound and rotting. However, the fourth arm was dark gray and gripped a long spear, the tip of which dripped with blood.

The second figure was human. He wore a blood-colored suit of armor, and inside his armor burned bright red eyes. He also had a long spear in hand.

The rest included humans and nonhumans, and all wore the same armor, which completely covered their bodies and heads. The armor was covered with magical symbols and Crimson Mother totems. Though these newcomers were as red as blood, they imparted a holy sensation.

All of them rode blood-red stallions. The nine stallions were also clad in battle armor, and visible beneath it was crimson muscle, with no skin on it at all. It was as if they had been skinned alive. As they moved forward, they left behind trails of blood. The horses' eyes were red, and they had sharp fangs. Though they resembled horses, the reality was that they were demonic creatures. And instead of having four legs, they had six.

Nine figures. Nine horses. Their arrival threw the battlefield into a big commotion. The forces of the Red Moon Cathedral were elated, while the Moonrebel cultivators were shocked.

These were the 'blood guardians' that the pontiff had summoned. Their cultivation base fluctuations were extremely intense, and as they proceeded forward, they pulsed with mountain-toppling, sea-draining auras. They were clearly on the verge of becoming Smoldering Gods. In fact, you could even say that with half a step, they would enter the Smoldering God level.

When it came to reaching Smoldering God, cultivation base wasn't the only factor. There were other requirements. That was why, other than the Heir Apparent and his siblings, countless years

had passed in the Moonrite Region with Smoldering Gods being *as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns*.

Even Madam Godfinch's clone was only half a step into Smoldering God. As for the level of her true self, the details had been lost in history. Currently, the only person to reach Smoldering God was the pontiff. That said, he was a Smoldering God because of blessings and augmentations, which left him with fatal flaws.

As a result, the arrival of the blood guardians was obviously going to have a huge effect on the battle. If they joined, then whatever advantage was brought by the Moonrebel battle souls would crumble.

However, Li Xiaoshan stopped in place, turned, and shot toward the blood guardians. As he did, he ignited himself. That was to say, he didn't ignite his flesh, but his inner self. As he burned, his facial features transformed. He was no longer old and decrepit. Instead, he was middle-aged, and his aura reached the highest point it had in his life.

"I, Li Xiaoshan, have experienced seven thousand deadly battles. For the first thousand, I fought people in the same level as myself. But later, when I came to understand the essence of slaughter, I fought enemies stronger than me! You blood guardians are all in the same level as me, so I'll fight you all myself!"

With a roar, he accelerated, turning into nine afterimages, each of which shot toward one of the blood guardians. In the blink of an eye, he arrived. Hoisting his huge saber overhead, he chopped down. As a deafening boom rang out, blood sprayed out of Li Xiaoshan's mouth. He staggered backward and lurched to a halt. However, the nine blood guardians also stopped in place.

Next, one of the horses shivered as it was split completely in half. The nonhuman mounted on it found his armor splitting and cracking, until it exploded, revealing his fleshly body. His fleshly body couldn't sustain the force. A red line appeared, which rapidly extended from his head down until... the nonhuman was sliced in half just like his horse. One of the nine temples below suddenly faded and then collapsed. That was how terrifying one of Li Xiaoshan's saber strikes was.

As Li Xiaoshan wiped the blood from his mouth, his battle spirit grew stronger. As of now, he didn't care about living or dying. He knew that there was a limit to the Moonrebel Congregation's resurrection abilities. And he had already passed that limit. But he didn't care. With the flourish of a saber, he attacked again.

Off to the side, Madam Godfinch's face remained completely expressionless as she stood atop a sea of fire and raced toward the pontiff.

And yet, there were still more reserve powers at the disposal of the Red Moon Cathedral.

Looking very calm, the pontiff extended his right hand and pushed down toward the ground again.

"Where are the blood generals?"

The ground rumbled. Three distinct areas sank down, and then three ancient temples emerged. Each temple was different, but each gave the sensation of being profoundly ancient. And that was exactly the case. These temples were among the earliest to have been constructed.

When their doors opened, the most ancient of sensations flooded out. Three blood-colored coffins emerged, flew out into midair, and then collapsed, allowing three wizened zombies to step out. A wind blew, and their bodies transformed. In the blink of an eye, they became three old men.

Close examination revealed that, in terms of aura, they were very similar to the pontiff. As their eyes snapped open, they looked at Madam Godfinch.

Madam Godfinch's expression flickered. Then, the three old men pierced through the air to appear around her. With the wave of their hands, worlds appeared.

As it turned out, they had Smoldering God cultivation bases. However, their major worlds weren't corporeal. They were illusory, which meant that their battle prowess wasn't truly in the level of a Smoldering God. That said, they could easily crush all Void-Returning cultivators.

Thankfully, Madam Godfinch was no ordinary individual. Given that she served as the Archbishop of Moonrebel, and had sealed her clone in the Moonrebel Congregation for all this time, it was obvious she had shocking methods at her disposal. She was at a disadvantage fighting these three old men on her own, yet she managed to force them to keep their attention on her alone.

Unfortunately, as the three old men fought, their major worlds gradually crept from being illusory to corporeal. The more they woke up, the more their battle prowess increased, putting the Moonrebel forces into increasing danger.

But even more shocking was that figures were starting to wake up within those major worlds. That provoked a reaction on both sides of the battlefield. The cathedral forces were excited, while the Moonrebel forces trembled in dread.

Deadly fighting was sending out shockwaves in all directions, shaking the entire region, and causing fluctuations to affect sky and land alike.

The cathedral cultivators seemed proud as they unleashed their god magics to crush everything in their path. The cathedral's subsidiary forces were fighting very hard. That included Gloomites and Soundseekers, as well as members of the Yin-Yang Betwixt Flowers Sect, who used arts of the sacrificial dance as their weapon. Obscuring fog swept over the Moonrebel cultivators, and whoever it touched suddenly stood there with a blank look on their face. Though some awoke, others did not. The Moonrebel Congregation's advantages were fading away. All they could do was buy time and wait for the battle inside Crimson Mother mortal husk to play out.

Seeing all of that, Xu Qing sent the spirit automaton out to fight the pontiff.

The pontiff had been there for the battle in the Bitter Life Mountains, and was now very wary of dealing with the Moonrebel Congregation. Up to this point, he hadn't actually launched any attacks of his own. Looking at the spirit automaton, he yet again extended his right hand and pushed down.

Eyes shining with mysterious light, he said, "Blood children, wake up!"

The island rocked back and forth. With the exception of the three ancient temples and the eight remaining red temples, all other temples collapsed and transformed into spinning vortexes. Those vortexes then turned into caves. Looking around the island, there were thousands of caves.

Astonishingly, beams of red light shot out of the caves as a host of bloodbeasts emerged, the very same type that Xu Qing had encountered in the past. They all looked vicious and incomparably fiendish.

Collectively, they transformed into a never-ending sea of beasts. It was almost as if the entire interior of the island was a gigantic cave filled with infinite bloodbeasts. Out in the open, they released vicious howls containing madness, hunger, and greed. Coming from all directions, they joined the fighting.

Everywhere they passed became crimson. As for the forces of the Moonrebel Congregation, they looked on with hearts pounding and eyes grim.

The Captain glanced at the pontiff, then projected a message to Xu Qing.

“Little Ah Qing, this old codger is too cautious. We need to think of a way to draw him over here. Then you can see what I have in store for the damned eye thief!”

Xu Qing nodded. Looking at the never-ending sea of bloodbeasts, his eyes suddenly gleamed with blood-colored light.

He was very familiar with bloodbeasts. It was only a few months ago that he had bred a lot of bloodbeasts. And back when he first met them, he was still in Nascent Soul, yet could use his authority to get many bloodbeasts to drop down in obeisance and acknowledge allegiance to him. Now, his cultivation base was far beyond that level. Therefore, he didn't hesitate at all to use the red moon authority in him. Instantly, his secret trove appeared behind him.

The eye-catching moon inside of it then flew out to hover directly above Xu Qing. As the moonlight shone down, turning everything red, the bloodbeasts stopped in place and instinctively looked in the direction of the Moonrebel Congregation. They fidgeted impatiently, as if struggling or fearful. It was as if they were looking at the most paramount entity possible to them.

Both sides of the battle were shocked. And for the first time, the pontiff's expression flickered. He looked in the direction of the Moonrebel Congregation.

As he did, Xu Qing floated out of the Mirror of Moonrebel, like a monarch or king.

Chapter 684: Nose, Mouth, Head, Limbs, Organs Return!

As Xu Qing floated out, the bloodbeasts on the battlefield got antsy. Emotions of struggle and fear became more apparent on them. They roared instinctively, and the rows of spikes covering their bodies bristled and stood on end. Countless blood-red pupils constricted, and some even prostrated on the ground, trembling.

This was the result of the suppression by the red moon authority, which was akin to a bloodline function. In the past, only Crimson Mother and the godchild could exercise control over the bloodbeasts, and spur them to action with orders. No other person could do so, not even the pontiff.

But Xu Qing was here, and he qualified to do what only Crimson Mother and the godchild could do. Back in the Greenhair Badlands, Xu Qing had done testing. Now that his cultivation base was higher, and he had a one-trove cultivation base, his red moon authority was even more encompassing, making it even more obvious that he was in a superior position.

As Xu Qing left the Mirror of Moonrebel, innumerable droplets of blood swirled out around him to form a blood-colored vortex. As it rumbled, a superior aura spread out through all heaven and earth. All of a sudden, the blood-red color staining the lands ceased to be a protection and blessing to the cathedral cultivators. Instead, it became a source of boundless terror and confusion.

Not all cathedral cultivators had heard about Xu Qing. In fact, the majority had no idea who he was, and therefore, weren't aware of the significance of his presence.

As a result, the fact that Xu Qing was emanating a crimson glow, and an authority that seemed comparable to the personhood of the godchild, left those cultivators reeling in astonishment.

Countless expressions of shock were visible on the battlefield. The cultivators of the Red Moon Cathedral could sense the faith within them stirring dramatically, telling them that the person in front of them was actually the object of their faith. It was a preposterous sensation, and instantly sent the hearts of the cathedral cultivators into chaos.

Compared to them, the bloodbeasts, who had much simpler minds, and acted primarily based on instinct, the effect was even more dramatic. The bloodbeasts settled down and offered allegiance. One by one, they bowed their heads deferentially to Xu Qing. Looking around, it was possible to see countless bloodbeasts in all directions prostrating, either on the ground or while floating in the air.

The bloodbeasts had poured out of the ground like fiendish monsters from hell. However, right now, it didn't matter how bloodthirsty, violent, or hungry they were... they all instinctively bowed in worship as if they were facing a monarch or king.

The object of their worship, Xu Qing, hovered outside the Mirror of Moonrebel, his hair swaying in the wind. His handsome facial features were cold, making him look like a perfectly sculpted statue. Combined with the blood-colored vortex.... Out of nowhere, people started saying the same thing.

“Godchild?”

Right now, Xu Qing really did seem exactly like a godchild.

The pontiff stared at Xu Qing with a very serious look, his eyes glimmering with killing intent.

Xu Qing ignored him. He hovered, silently looking around at all the bloodbeasts. Then he sent out some divine will to mark all the nearby cathedral cultivators.

“Devour them.”

In response, all the bloodbeasts looked up at the surrounding cathedral cultivators, even the pontiff. Eyes lighting up with blood-colored light and madness, they charged, roaring.

The tide of battle instantly changed. Chaos broke out, filled with screams, shouts, and howls of rage.

The Moonrebel forces obviously experienced a surge in morale. With the bloodbeasts on their side, much of the pressure on them was relieved, and thus, they quickly reformed ranks and then pressed the attack.

However, that was when muffled booms reached everyone's ears. They came from Crimson Mother's mortal husk, which was now rapidly shrinking. Then it was just barely possible to make out an anguished scream. There had clearly been a development in the fighting in the husk.

As for the pontiff, his eyes finally gleamed with determination. The reality was that he had no interest in personally fighting. Back in the Bitter Life Mountains, he had a full taste of the tactics of the Moonrebel Congregation, and they left him feeling very fearful. What was more, Madam Godfinch's words had unsettled him. That was especially true considering what she said about the eyes. It didn't matter that Madam Godfinch seemed to be in a bad position in the fighting; that still didn't make the pontiff any less eager to get close to Xu Qing.

And that was because the young man standing near Xu Qing was the very same person Madam Godfinch had mentioned, in other words, the previous owner of the eyes.

Of course, after returning to the headquarters, he had done a bit of research into the details. But the Moonrebel Congregation had acted too quickly, and the godchild had chosen to attempt his breakthrough. As a result, the pontiff didn't have time to get the information he sought. Most importantly, because of a unique magic he had, he had overheard what that person just said to Xu Qing via projection....

Unfortunately, he had no other choice right now other than to act. That said, he didn't actually move from where he stood. Remaining in position, he lifted his right hand and pointed at the dome of heaven.

“Heavenfire Sea!”

As the words left his mouth, rumbling filled the sky as he began an astral redirection. The sky rippled like water, and then became like a canvas being pulled to the side. That caused the sky over the Heavenfire Sea to move into a position over the island. In the blink of an eye, a massive rift opened up, and endless heavenfire poured out like a waterfall. As it fell, the pontiff controlled it, causing it to form into a gigantic finger that shot toward the Mirror of Moonrebel.

It was a case of ‘moving heaven’!

However, the might of the pontiff was not yet fully revealed. Looking coldly at Xu Qing, and the Captain next to him, the pontiff performed another incantation gesture. Instantly, something very dramatic happened in the northern ice plains. Everything began to get cold as layer after layer of ice from the north was teleported onto the island. Then, a massive finger of ice stretched up from the ground toward the Mirror of Moonrebel.

It was a case of ‘shifting earth’!

The pontiff's eyes narrowed. With the Heavenfire Sea overhead and the northern ice plains underfoot, he reached out with a snatching gesture. A boundless wind sprang up in heaven and earth. It stoked the heavenfire, causing the sea of flames to surge wildly. And it swept over the icy plains, causing frigid energy to proliferate. The boundless wind converged around the pontiff, where it created a tempest that connected heaven and earth. Then, filled with the power of both ice and fire, it swept toward the Mirror of Moonrebel like a huge finger.

It was a case of ‘chasing the wind’!

People reacted with visible shock as the pontiff then waved his hand in the direction of all the Moonrebel cultivators, including Xu Qing and the Captain. That action caused the Moonrebel cultivators to shiver. Though none of them were obstructed in any way, the shadows beneath their feet, because of the illumination of the heavenfire, faded into nothing. All of the shadows were being seized, and then dragged to the pontiff's right hand, where they made a black cloud. From

there, they spread out to form an enormous shadow finger that jabbed toward the Mirror of Moonrebel.

It was a case of ‘clutching at shadows’!

Moving heaven and shifting earth. Harnessing the wind and clutching at shadows! From this it was possible to see the power of a Smoldering God! [1]

The only exception was with Xu Qing, whose shadow remained beneath his feet, struggling visibly.

“Hmm?” The pontiff’s gaze sharpened. However, now wasn’t the time to be paying attention to things like that. The four fingers he had summoned rumbled toward the Mirror of Moonrebel with the power to destroy the heavens and extinguish the earth.

When that attack hit, the Mirror of Moonrebel might survive, but it would significantly affect the Moonrebel cultivators. It took only a brief moment for a deadly crisis to form.

And yet, at that very moment, the Captain laughed. Striding forth with an excited expression, he licked his lips.

“Hey, Eye Thief! You finally made a move, you patchwork freak! Did you really think I wasn’t aware that you were eavesdropping on my conversation with my little Junior Brother? I did that on purpose. You see, I wasn’t waiting for your mere presence. I was waiting for you to use your divine ability!

“You’ve been influenced by my eyes! What you’re seeing, and how you react to it... is exactly what I wanted you to see.”

Laughing heartily, the Captain strode forward with a crazy look building on his face, as if he was about to take complete control of the battle situation. Raising his right hand, he pointed toward the empty sky above.

“Nose. Neck. Get over here!”

The moment the words left his mouth, wild colors flashed in heaven and earth. The air rippled as a huge nose appeared, along with a neck. They were both covered with countless sealing marks, and they even had church temples on top of them. As soon as they were summoned, the church temples collapsed, and the sealing marks exploded. Then the nose and the neck sped toward the finger made from the Heavenfire Sea... and slammed into it.

A boom rang out as the fiery finger stopped in place. Meanwhile, the Captain laughed crazily.

“Get over here, head!”

A huge head appeared out of thin air. It did not have any eyes, ears, nose, or mouth, nor any hair. As soon as it appeared, it thrummed with mighty energy as it shot toward the finger of ice.

“Arms. Legs. Body. Also my five yin organs and six yang organs! Past-life god body, return!”

The pontiff’s expression was one of madness as he heard the Captain’s cries. In the shortest of moments, the shattered remnants of the Captain’s past life body popped out of thin air. Among them

were two golden kidneys, one of which was the very same one Xu Qing had helped him retrieve from the clay fox. As the pieces reappeared, they shot toward the remaining two fingers made of wind and shadows.

Next, the Captain looked at the pontiff, his eyes gleaming with a strange look.

“Left ear!”

Intense rumbling sounds could be heard as a huge ear popped into being. Next, the Captain waved his hand, causing a blue coffin to appear. Inside of it was a corpse, which was the very same one he and Xu Qing had retrieved at Mount Heavenly Ox. All of a sudden, the corpse stepped out of the coffin, whereupon it melted into the shape of a right ear! [2]

In his past life, the Captain had managed to get a mouthful of Crimson Mother’s blood. As a result, Crimson Mother detested him and had his body dismembered and turned into the foundation of the Red Moon Cathedral’s church temples. Previously, there had been no way for the Captain to control those body parts. All he had been able to do before was get help from Moonfire to get one of his ears.

It was only recently that, by means of the blessing of the Moonrebel Congregation’s power, he was able to sense the location of all his organs and body parts, establish contact with them, and summon them to him. All of these things, from getting the artificial suns to becoming the Archbishop of Moonrebel, had been part of his plan. Now, everything was coming together.

The Captain watched excitedly as his past-life body arrived. Then he pointed at the pontiff, who was uneasily backing away in the opposite direction.

“Now, where are you, my mouth? I want you to devour this Eye Thief right now!”

A sound like heavenly thunder echoed out as a huge mouth appeared in the canopy of heaven. As the Captain’s laughter rang out, the mouth shot toward the pontiff. The mouth opened ridiculously wide as it loomed over the pontiff.

The pontiff breathed heavily in alarm.

Meanwhile, the Captain’s eyes looked crazier than ever. “Okay, you damned Eye Thief. Yesterday, you stole my eyes. Today, I’m going to take away your body!”

Chapter 685: He’s Coming Out

The pontiff acted, using the techniques of moving heaven, shifting earth, harnessing the wind, and clutching at shadows! Majestic energy surged as the abilities of a Smoldering God were made manifest.

The Captain struck back with his past-life organs and body parts. He acted in a very gruish style, but his past-life might was enough to astonish ghosts and gods.

As all of these developments unfolded, cultivators on both sides of the conflict looked on with shock and bewilderment.

That was especially the case as the Captain looked on with a crazy look as the huge mouth opened wide and closed in on the pontiff. Massive amounts of saliva poured out of the mouth, almost like rain that fell to the ground below. The saliva was thick and sticky, and stood straight up when it hit the ground. There, it exuded a will of rot and sealing that locked down the surroundings.

The pontiff's expression flickered dramatically as a sense of profound unease rose in him. He was about to fight back when, all of a sudden, searing pain filled his eyes. The pain was so intense it interrupted his magic. His view of the world blurred, and he suddenly saw a host of blurry figures snapping at him.

Those blurry figures were all the Captain.

The pontiff's expression turned grim. "These eyes might have belonged to someone else before. But as of now, they're mine!"

The pontiff snorted coldly. Ignoring the pain in his eyes, he backed up and circulated his cultivation base, causing a field of golden light to spring up around him. As it spread, it turned into innumerable sealing marks that began to converge on each other.

As that process continued, blood oozed out of his eyes. Then, shockingly, faces appeared in each of his pupils. Those faces belonged to none other than the Captain. The faces were smiling gruishly. In the pupils of those face's eyes were more faces, all the same, and that pattern continued. It was impossible to say how many faces there were, but all of them had that same gruish smile.

When the faces appeared, rumbling sounds filled the pontiff, and his divine ability was interrupted. In fact, his entire person locked in place. But he was the pontiff, after all. No one knew where he came from. What was more, his cultivation base and body were all patched together. At the moment, that wasn't relevant, as he began to utter an enchantment.

As the words left his mouth, his entire body erupted with blinding golden light. The sealing marks around him clumped together to form the projection of a gigantic, golden rhinoceros. It threw its head back and roared, causing everything to shake violently. Then the golden rhino charged toward the enormous mouth.

A boom rang out as the mouth chomped down onto the rhino. Crunching sounds rang out, but the rhino held strong, and the Captain's past life mouth was unable to chew it up in a short time.

Taking advantage of the moment, the pontiff flared with golden light that converged on his eyes, causing the faces there to ripple and distort. The faces seemed no match for the golden light. As the light faded, the faces were slowly wiped away, and the pontiff's aura grew stronger. It seemed that the situation with the eyes was about to be reversed.

The Captain laughed coldly.

"You measly patchwork Eye Thief!" Throwing his hands out, he shouted, "Past-life body, sealed by me, converge into a body, lock and seal the soul! Head. Facial features. Limbs. Torso. Organs.... Go!"

Blue light surged off of the captain, creating a sea the color of blue. At the same time, he performed a right-handed incantation gesture and pointed at the pontiff. All of his past-life body parts and organs vibrated and shot at high speed toward the pontiff, closing in with shocking speed and momentum.

The pontiff was currently fighting against his own eyes. When he realized what was happening, he reeled mentally. A sensation of deadly crisis again rose within him. At that critical moment, he suddenly exploded, turning into a beam of golden light that turned to flee.

However, that was when Li Xiaoshan somehow managed to extricate himself from the blood guardians. Striding forth, he lifted his huge saber and, eyes glimmering with killing intent, chopped down.

The saber shattered the air and hewed out a huge gully. Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth.

The blow landed on the golden light. Blood sprayed out of Li Xiaoshan's mouth. He had put everything he had into that attack, and even sustained the resulting backlash attack. As a result, his body was instantly covered in bloody wounds, and he tumbled backward, gasping for breath.

However, that saber attack had no small effect. The golden light was cut in half, and an agonized scream rang out. The light stopped moving.

That was all the time it took for the Captain's organs and body parts to arrive. First were his four limbs. The Captain's past-life limbs blurred and entered the pontiff's body. Next came the five yin organs and six yang organs, the neck, the torso, the head, the ears, and the nose.... Finally was the huge mouth, which crushed the golden rhino, then lunged forward and swallowed the pontiff.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. That was how long it took for the Captain's past life body to completely vanish. All of the body parts... fused with the pontiff's body.

As of this moment, every part of the pontiff, from the limbs, to the organs, to the head and facial features, were all from the Captain's past life. It was the same with the eyes, which sent glittering blue light raging in all directions. Most shocking was that the facial features of the Captain's past-life body shifted until they looked exactly like the current Captain.

As wild colors flashed in heaven and earth, the surrounding cathedral cultivators looked on in abject shock and disbelief. Countless eyes locked onto the pontiff, who had been taken over by the Captain's past life body. His fluctuations were extremely unstable, and he seemed to be struggling as he stood there in place.

Xu Qing was paying close attention to his Eldest Brother's words. Truth be told, he wasn't surprised that the Captain had succeeded. After all, the Captain had prepared for a very, very long time for this day.

But what did surprise Xu Qing was the information about the Captain placing warding spells on himself, and also his body refinement.... Xu Qing couldn't help but look a bit closer at the Captain's present-life body.

When the Captain noticed Xu Qing looking at him, he could guess what he was thinking. He cleared his throat.

Xu Qing nodded, a strange expression on his face. Then he looked at the unmoving pontiff.

“Is he—”

“Don’t worry about it,” the Captain said, clasping his hands behind his back proudly. “The Eye Thief’s soul is complicated, but he’s dreaming if he thinks he can escape the restraints placed by my past-life body. Once my body finishes assimilating him, then I’ll be in complete control!”

The situation on the battlefield had been completely reversed. With the defeat of the pontiff, the cathedral cultivators’ morale collapsed. Many of them just turned around and ran. In contrast, the Moonrebel forces went on the offensive, going all-out to fight for their hope, their freedom, and their future. Everything seemed to be going well. But then, something dramatic unfolded.

A boom like heavenly thunder erupted from Crimson Mother’s mortal husk, sending a frantic sound wave rolling out in all directions. Wherever it passed, the Moonrebel cultivators coughed up blood. Some were ripped to shreds. The same thing happened to the cultivators of the Red Moon Cathedral, with many of them being destroyed in body and soul. Everyone on the field of battle backed away from the mortal husk.

Xu Qing’s expression flickered as he turned to look in that direction. The Captain did the same.

Cracks were spreading out on the surface of the mortal husk, from within which beams of blood-colored light emerged.

The mortal husk exploded with a boom, and five figures tumbled out of it. They were none other than the Heir Apparent and his siblings. They had serious expressions on their faces, and all of them were injured. That was especially true of Fifth Sister and Eighth Sib; their faces were splattered with blood, but their eyes shone with killing intent. The Heir Apparent’s chest had caved in, and in the spot where his heart should have been was a gaping hole. His heart... was missing.

A very unsightly expression could be seen on Princess Brightblossom’s face. She was also seriously injured. Only Ninth Sib seemed to be relatively unharmed. The battle spirit in his eyes burned brightly as he offered protective cover to his siblings.

“Back up, hē’s coming out!” Ninth Sib barked.

All of a sudden, massive amounts of blood shot out from the mortal husk. It was like a sea of blood had been tapped into, as it flowed down the statue of the Imperial Sovereign and spread out on the ground below.

A terrifying aura began to spread. It wasn’t the aura of a cultivator. Rather, it contained the fluctuations of a god. Once again, the canopy of heaven turned crimson, as did the lands below.

Next, countless gazes converged on a figure casually stepping out from Crimson Mother's mortal husk. Mountain-toppling, sea-draining pressure crushed down on everything, and as mutagen flourished, the surroundings blurred.

This was the arrival of a god!

Chapter 686: Taboo Magic

The arrival of a god provoked a variety of reactions.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered brightly. The Captain narrowed his eyes. The Moonrebel forces were bewildered, while the cathedral cultivators were not as excited as they might have imagined they would be.

As blood continued to pour out of the mortal husk, all of the cathedral cultivators felt their blood and cultivation bases slipping out of their own control. It was as if every aspect of them was being sucked away.

As everyone reeled in fear, the Heir Apparent and his siblings shot in five different directions to form a pentagonal formation. The light shining off of them connected, creating a five-pointed star. Then they shifted positions, forming a square shape above the star.

The Heir Apparent was on the left, Eighth Sib was on the right, Ninth Sib was in front, and Fifth Sister was in the back. As for Princess Brightblossom, she stood in the middle, her eyes blazing with killing intent.

"He didn't completely succeed at his godly ascension ceremony," she said grimly. "We interrupted him earlier, and thus, his godfire isn't completely ignited! Right now, he might seem like he has the aura of a god, but he's also weaker than ever, and is suppressing the backlash from the failed ceremony!

"But if he tries again and succeeds at igniting his godfire, then we won't be able to stop him! This is going to be our only chance! I'm going to unleash a taboo magic. I'll use time as the source to unlock the fetters of a heavenly dao. We'll use a past magic to behead him, throw his aura into chaos, and sustain the full backlash of the failed ceremony. In that way, he'll kill himself!"

As the words left Princess Brightblossom's mouth, the figure emerging from the mortal husk neared.

Below, blood roiled like a sea, with huge waves rolling across its surface. It extended out to the blood lake surrounding the island, and caused everything to once again turn crimson. The stench of gore grew strong, overpowering everything.

The figure approaching through the crimson was immense, and every step hē took caused booming thuds to echo out. The sound shook everything, especially the hearts and minds of the surrounding cultivators.

Cathedral cultivators. Moonrebel cultivator forces. Everyone paled upon hearing the sound of those footsteps. The sound seemed to replace their heartbeats, one step at a time. People instinctively edged backward, their souls trembling, their bodies shaking. Virtually everyone was unable to

control the impulse to drop onto their knees and kowtow. It was a pressure from a higher level of life, and the fear felt by the weak toward the strong.

Innumerable eyes focused on the figure emerging from the mortal husk, which grew clearer and clearer with every moment that passed.

The figure was some 30 meters tall and completely red, with no skin, only bloody muscle. What was more, multiple faces were visible. Every face looked different. In total, there were thirteen, and they represented the Imperial Sovereign's other sons and daughters, with the exception of Fourth Sib. The Heir Apparent, Brightblossom, Fifth Sister, and Eighth and Ninth Sibs were all there. It was incomparably gruesome.

The figure looked incredibly vicious, with flesh and blood that contained an irregular pattern of golden speckles. It looked extremely ugly. It had four eyes with dual pupils, and as hē looked out at heaven and earth, hē seemed to think that nothing around hīm was important. Hē had a row of sharp spikes that ran from hīs head, down hīs back, and along the tail that stretched behind hīm. The tail was completely golden, and left behind a streak in the blood sea.

Hīs hands looked human, except instead of five fingers, there were four. In hīs right hand was a beating heart which, as hē walked along, he squeezed. Then, after fully emerging from the mortal husk and glancing at the surroundings, hē crushed the heart. It exploded with a popping sound.

Blood sprayed out of the Heir Apparent's mouth, and his face went deathly pale. "His godly ascension ceremony focuses on time. The point of the ceremony is to tap into the points in time in the past when his relatives of the past experienced breakthroughs to higher cultivation realms. By devouring that specific time and converting it into personal power, he can use it as fuel to light his godfire!

"If he succeeds, he'll be a convergence of us all. There were fourteen of us brothers and sisters. That's why the ceremony has fourteen nexuses. Each of the fourteen nexuses has a different time shadow! Each time shadow corresponds to a different cultivation base. And only by destroying them all can his ceremony be considered a failure.

"We managed to destroy five, which means there are nine left! Next, we have to destroy another five, but don't have the ability to deal with the remaining four. Li Xiaoshan, if you can fight, then you can deal with one of them. Madam Godfinch, you get another!

"Only people with Smoldering God qualifications, or the authority of a god, can meddle with this ceremony. We have two left.... Xu Qing, you have the proper authority. And, Erniu, you're a god bastard. Can you get the last one?"

Li Xiaoshan was mangled and bloody, but he still laughed heartily, and his eyes shone with determination. Madam Godfinch nodded as she continued to fight.

Xu Qing and the Captain exchanged a glance and could see the desire to do battle in each other's eyes. At that point, the Heir Apparent's formation flared to life, and numerous energies swirled into a vortex.

From a distance, it was possible to see the Heir Apparent and his siblings standing on the star formation, organized into a square configuration, with supernatural images rising up all around them.

The supernatural image tied to Fifth Sister was a huge flower basket full of swaying flowers that emanated soft light. Eighth Sib's supernatural image was a gruish face that combined all sorts of human emotions and desires. Its expression changed constantly. The Heir Apparent had a vague projection of Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua that pulsed with energy that could crush everything. As for Ninth Sib, he had a blade that could sever heaven and earth. It was not a sword, but rather, a guillotine! It was... a manifestation of his enlightenment of the God Decapitation Altar!

After those four projections formed, they connected to form major worlds.

In the middle of those major worlds was Princess Brightblossom. As she stood there with time flowing around her like a river, she sent projections of herself into each of the major worlds. It seemed like there were countless such projections, and all of them were looking at Crimson Mother's mortal husk.

Once again, the sea of blood within the husk erupted, and the godchild emerged further. Heaven and earth were overwhelmed with crimson, which further affected the blood of the surrounding cultivators.

The forces of the Red Moon Cathedral and the Moonrebel Congregation felt their blood and cultivation bases going completely out of control. It was as if they were about to burst out from inside them. Some with weak cultivation bases lost control and exploded, whereupon their blood would stream toward the godchild. That included cathedral cultivators. The cathedral forces began to hesitate, and none of them dared to get too close.

As of now, the godchild didn't care about taking sides in the conflict, and was focused solely on godly ascension. Even though the cathedral forces were backing up, they were easy to target, and thus, many of them exploded and became streams of blood. As that blood flowed to the godchild, the aura of a god grew stronger, and began to affect the surroundings.

The sky distorted, the air rippled, and the lands shook. And the effects didn't stop there.

The godchild, who was like an actual god, looked around coldly before fixing his gaze on the Heir Apparent and the other siblings.

"Father picked the wrong path. The only correct path in this world is to become a god. As for me, I was born after he had become a god, but before he extinguished his godfire. Thus, I am different from the rest of you.

"You only exist to become a part of my godly ascension. And my purpose is to finish walking the path that our father abandoned. That's why I chose Crimson Mother. Shē is my future fellow daoist."

The godchild extended his left hand toward the mortal husk and made a grasping gesture.

The mortal husk shivered, then flew out and wrapped around the godchild, transforming into a full-body suit of blood-colored armor. Then the godchild strode toward the Heir Apparent and the others. The moment his foot landed, the Captain's eyes shone with brilliant light. He waved his

hand urgently, and the dome of heaven darkened. The bracelet of nine suns then dropped down, exerting immense pressure onto the godchild.

“Little Junior Brother!” the Captain said.

Without the slightest hesitation, Xu Qing activated the powers of the Mirror of Moonrebel. He knew full well that the Captain didn’t generally *shoot without aiming first*. Since he had chosen to use the nine suns, and had asked for Xu Qing’s help, he obviously had something in mind. The surface of the mirror shifted, and glittering light shone onto the godchild. The mirror vibrated, and the bracelet of nine suns rotated.

The godchild ignored all of that. To him, Xu Qing and everyone else were like bugs. As of this moment, the only people he cared about on the battlefield were the Heir Apparent and his siblings. He took a second step, and as he did, the Mirror of Moonrebel trembled, and the bracelet of nine suns started to crumble.

Meanwhile, Princess Brightblossom, who was in the middle of the formation, as well as the numerous projections of her in the major worlds, all opened their eyes. Their gazes combined, and she spoke, her voice drifting out from the void, from the past, and from all directions.

“Directly pacify the sun of earth; bury the will and conceal the dao; pacify ordinary time with this location!

“Directly determine the sun of wood; nourish the present and smolder the ancient; determine ancient time with this door!

“Directly grasp the sun of water; expend years and effect a return; grasp the path of life and death!

“Directly pierce the sun of fire; immolate memories and ignite souls; pierce the shackles of the heavenly dao!

“And I am the metal; bury nourishment and expend immolation; pacify, determine, grasp, pierce!” [1]

As the words left Princess Brightblossom’s mouth, the cosmos shifted, heaven grew dim, and all living things blurred. A magnificent seven-colored river erupted from nowhere and flowed out over everything. Not even the godchild could avoid it, and was overwhelmed. The power of time was active in an unheard-of way.

From a distance, the island looked like it was being wiped out of existence, sent into the ancient past. Left in its place was an incredibly ancient door sitting above the river of time. The door slowly opened.

Chapter 687: Golden Crow and Heavenly Rhino; Imperial-Class Faceoff

Something else that the river of time swept over were all the living beings present. If there were a pair of eyes belonging to a god that were located high above and could look down, those eyes would see a river of time that contained the island, the statue of the Imperial Sovereign, and innumerable cultivators.

All were inside, unmoving. For everyone, time had been stopped right then and there. They were neither alive nor dead, as they were locked in place just like the time in the area.

But there were nine cultivators who were exceptions: the Heir Apparent and his four siblings, Li Xiaoshan, Madam Godfinch, Chen Erniu, and Xu Qing. They weren't affected at all.

When the great door of ancient time opened, Princess Brightblossom used her taboo magic to send them into the past times of the godchild, each one to a different node.

In order to ensure their success, each person was sent to an ancient time period that correlated to their own cultivation base. For example, the Captain went to the time node in which the godchild broke through from Gold Core to Nascent Soul. Li Xiaoshan went to the point when the godchild went from Spirit Trove into Void Returning. Madam Godfinch went to the point when the godchild broke through to Smoldering God. Xu Qing was sent to the node where the godchild broke out of Nascent Soul and into Spirit Trove.

If they could cut down the godchild in those nodes, then they would vanquish the ceremony and cause the godfire to extinguish itself. The reason that each node was related to the early stage of a cultivation level was that it was a requirement of the godly ascension ceremony. The godchild needed the power of time from those specific siblings' breakthroughs.

That power of time was actually the first step of his ceremony. The second step was to combine those different times and break through from a weak spot to a strong one. It was a snowball effect. Starting in Qi Condensation and proceeding through the fourteen nodes, invincible energy would be gathered. In the end, all of that power from the different siblings would converge, break through time, and complete the final step of the godly ascension ceremony. That was his method to smoothly become a god!

The technique was different from Crimson Mother's godly ascension ceremony. However, it was just as miraculous, such that ordinary people could never hope to succeed at it.

Unfortunately, the Heir Apparent and the other siblings had shown up, causing the godchild's ceremony to shift in an unexpected way. Rumbling sounds filled heaven and earth as the river seethed. Foamy waves provided glimpses of antiquity. The Heir Apparent and the other siblings were visible in it, as was the Captain.

Carried by one of the crashing waves, Xu Qing, who had just vanished from outside, popped into being. He immediately rotated his cultivation base and looked around vigilantly. He was in an unfamiliar world. The sky was sunny and cloudless. The never-ending blue color imparted a sense of freeness and relaxation. A wind blew, carrying with it the sweet fragrance of plants and vegetation. There was a sense of life that seemed capable of seeping deep into one's heart and mind. Everything was verdant, with lush vegetation and strong spirit energy. In some places, the spirit energy was so strong it formed a visible mist, which made the entire world seem like an immortal paradise. Spirit beasts frolicked everywhere, and immortal birds soared in the air. Everything seemed natural and harmonious. There were rivers visible, with clear waters and fat fish jumping here and there.

This world was like a garden the likes of which Xu Qing had never seen in his entire life. He lived in a world full of mutagen. It was the dwelling place of gods, where the spirit energy was poisonous and living beings live lives as tragic as livestock. This place was different.

Xu Qing looked up into the dome of heaven.

“The broken face of the god...” he murmured. The monstrous, colossal face that existed in his memories as far back as they went... was not here! This was before the broken face of the god arrived.

This node is before the Revered Ancient mainland experienced catastrophe. This was when Ancient Emperor Dark Serenity ruled all of Revered Ancient, and humans... were the top species in existence.

Xu Qing started moving. He needed to find the location where the godchild was experiencing a breakthrough. As he moved forward, some of the immortal birds flew past him, then started circling around him. They seemed friendly. All of the spirit beasts acted like that. When they saw Xu Qing, they would let loose amiable cries that almost seemed like worship. It was because he was human.

Xu Qing’s heart started to pound as he realized that, then thought about how humans had such a contemptible place in the outside world. Everything in this node of time was different. The mountains were green and the waters were blue. The spirit beasts and immortal birds were all peaceful and auspicious.

Xu Qing looked around. He was sorely tempted to just look around at what the world was like before the catastrophe. However, he understood that it was far more important to cut down the godchild. Taking a deep breath, he blurred into motion. With no metal sphere on him, he was capable of astonishing speeds. He sent out divine sense to search for his target, and also had the shadow spread out. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, Xu Qing suddenly stopped in place and looked to the east.

“There!”

In that direction, he could sense Spirit Trove fluctuations.

Without any hesitation, Xu Qing shot in that direction like a bolt of lightning. In the blink of an eye, he traveled 500 kilometers, until he saw a huge low-lying basin up ahead. It was about 50 kilometers from one side to the other, and appeared to have been formed when some massive extraterrestrial rock slammed into the ground. It was surrounded by crevices snaking out in all directions. In the middle of the basin was a gigantic black rhinoceros.

The rhino was massive, and was imbued with a spirit that could conquer mountains and rivers. It emanated terrifying fluctuations as it threw its head back and let loose a long cry, a deafening sound like metal scraping on rock that caused ripples to flow out in all directions, and auspicious light to descend and cover the rhino over like armor. It was just barely possible to see a secret trove within the rhino’s body.

The rhino detected Xu Qing’s arrival, and turned to face him. Steam shot out of its nostrils as it looked at him coldly.

The two of them locked gazes.

To Xu Qing, this rhino was illusory. He could see that, deep within it was a young man clad in a black robe. He was handsome, with a cold expression, and he emanated a sensation of danger. What was more, he was surrounded by a river of time. That river wasn’t his. Rather, it was the manifestation of Princess Brightblossom’s taboo magic.

“Insect,” the black-robed young man said, waving his finger at Xu Qing.

The black rhino roared and then rapidly grew larger. When it was fully 30,000 meters from end to end, it started charging toward Xu Qing like a meteor. Heaven and earth shook violently as a terrifying aura exploded from the rhino, filled with mountain-toppling, sea-draining power.

This was an imperial-class technique! And it was mightier than any imperial-class technique Xu Qing had ever seen.

Xu Qing had just broken through from Nascent Soul to Spirit Trove, making him confident to deal with just about any other person. But this person was the son of an Imperial Sovereign. It didn't matter that his cultivation base was the same as Xu Qing's. There was no way Xu Qing was going to be careless. That said, he didn't shrink back either. His eyes shone with the desire to do battle. He wanted to know which of them was stronger, given the reserve powers he had accumulated on his path of cultivation.

As the battle spirit within him surged, he raised his right hand and performed an incantation gesture. He waved his finger, and the golden crow tattoo started burning. Then a piercing cry could be heard as the golden crow flew out into the open. It had a thousand tails spread out in all directions, and a black body that emanated terrifying might. Burning flames created a sea of fire around it as it shot directly toward the rhinoceros.

Flames blasted out in all directions as the black rhino closed in on the golden crow. As it arrived, it found a thousand razor-sharp tails waiting for it. At the same time, the golden crow opened its mouth and used its spirit-assimilation powers to suck in everything around it.

A tremor passed through the black rhino. At the same time, the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son frowned slightly from his spot in the middle of the basin. He snorted coldly.

“Howling Moon!”

Black light erupted from the rhino, turning into a black hole around it. Throwing its head back, it roared and shook off the golden crow. The sky shook as a white moon formed above, connecting to it and destroying everything around it. The golden crow had no choice but to fall back. This was the essence of the imperial-class technique of the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son. It was called Heavenly Rhino Roars at the Moon. Normally speaking, it wasn't common for people to develop an imperial-class to this level. That was especially true for people who were only in Spirit Trove.

Next, Xu Qing calmly performed an incantation gesture, which caused the golden crow to wither rapidly. Its flesh and blood disappeared, and in its place was revealed a long, black spear. As it formed, wild colors flashed in heaven and earth, and thunderous rumbling sounds echoed from above, like the cry of a heavenly dao. The sound echoed out across the entire area, as if to declare that the spear wasn't allowed to come. The spear came anyway.

Xu Qing had also gained enlightenment of the essence of his imperial-class technique.

The Imperial Sovereign's fourth son had a very serious expression on his face. Even more surprising to him was that the destructive power of the spear slammed right into the black rhino.

The white moon blocked the attack, but it wasn't enough. A deafening boom rang out as concentric white halos shattered. The moon collapsed, and the spear stabbed right into the rhino. Entering its forehead, it pierced through its entire body and impaled it to the ground.

The rhino howled in anguish. The ground shook. The battle spirit in Xu Qing's eyes soared, and he started walking toward the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son. Meanwhile, a cold gleam appeared in the fourth son's eyes.

"Well, isn't this interesting."

Meanwhile, Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior was speaking to Xu Qing internally.

"Milord, based on all the novels I've read, people who talk as pretentiously as this are usually big villains that are destined to be defeated. Our victory is assured! Keep it up, milord!"

The patriarch was actually feeling relatively helpless. He got the feeling that if he didn't shine soon, he was going to be turned into cannon fodder. Therefore, he had been wracking his brains trying to come up with ways to show how important he was.

Ignoring him, Xu Qing shot toward the basin with astounding speed.

The Imperial Sovereign's fourth son was also capable of incredible speed. Suddenly shooting up into the air, he dodged Xu Qing, then shoved his hand into the sky and made a grasping gesture. Then he pulled with full force, tearing open a rift in the canopy of heaven. Black smoke poured out of it, within which was a black rattle-drum. It had two drum faces, one decorated with an evil ghost, the other with an image of countless species wailing in agony. It was very gruish. [1]

It descended, and the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son grabbed it. Then it erupted with an ink-like energy that corroded everything it touched. It even affected spirit energy, causing it to undulate wildly. He waved it casually, and the thumping sound of the drum echoed out. Wherever the sound went, living things withered. It was a poison curse magic.

"How amusing," Xu Qing said calmly, his eyes turning black.

Patriarch Golden Vajra Warrior gasped and was about to warn Xu Qing to watch his words. But then he changed his mind.

"When you talk like that, milord, it's completely different. The feeling isn't the same at all. Let's shatter the common perceptions and win this thing!"

Chapter 688: Seven Lamps Underworld Fire Curse

The sound of the drum thumped out, filled with poison as it spread out in all directions. It was a taboo curse magic that could invade all living things. Irregularly shaped rings of rot started spreading through the air, and it was the same with the land. As the wind screamed in all directions, a black fog formed.

The fourth son of the Imperial Sovereign stood within the miasma, looking coldly at Xu Qing, the drum in his hands swishing back and forth. The poison fog surged as if with huge waves as numerous vicious beast projections formed within it, howling loudly.

The beast projections were varied; some had bottle-shaped bodies covered with countless eyes; some looked like gruish conglomerations of swirling hair; some looked like draconic turtles covered with spikes; some were humanoid but had pāramitā lilies growing on their foreheads. [1]

There were many, many varieties. All were extremely poisonous, and were not commonly seen in the era of the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son, much less in Xu Qing's time. Virtually all of them were actually from extinct animal species. The moment they took form, the fog surged outward, and the poison grew stronger, becoming so hypertoxic it could invade Spirit Trove experts and damage their secret troves and furnaces.

The poison raced toward Xu Qing, whose expression didn't change at all. He didn't seem even remotely surprised. In fact, this fight had been relatively easy for him so far.

And that was because this Imperial Sovereign's son wasn't turning out to be as mysterious and unpredictable as he had anticipated. He could definitely be considered a chosen cultivator, yet he had his limitations.

Xu Qing also had the essence of an imperial-class technique. And when it came to the dao of poison... Xu Qing shook his head. His eyes became pitch black as the taboo poison within him filled his gaze. He calmly looked forward. Colors flashed and winds roared. The area around him rippled and distorted, and the poison fog spasmed and started to disperse.

There were some poisons in the world that could provoke a reaction from Xu Qing. But this wasn't one of them. On a substructural level, Xu Qing's taboo poison was different from ordinary poisons. It was a type of mutagen, or the curse of a god, and it could invade the life force and substructure of all living beings and entities. Compared to it, the poison from the rattle-drum's sound waves was interesting, but just couldn't match up in terms of personhood.

The poison fog was falling apart! The Imperial Sovereign's fourth son looked surprised. The rattle-drum stopped moving.

Xu Qing's gaze rapidly pierced through the poison fog as he looked at the fourth son. That gaze caused all the fourth son's hair to stand on end. A sense of deadly crisis rose up within him, yet he was no ordinary individual. Without the slightest hesitation, he shot backward, tossed the rattle-drum out in front of him, and performed an incantation gesture.

The rattle-drum, which was an extremely precious treasure, exploded, creating a sound wave full of extremely strong poison that rushed forward to block Xu Qing. It was an effective tactic. Xu Qing had no problem dispelling the drum's poisons. But the soundwaves caused by the drum's detonation also stopped him in place.

Taking advantage of the bought time, the fourth son shot backward about 3,000 meters. His expression was grim, as he could tell how serious the situation was. He had no choice but to admit that the person facing him had similar methods, all of which were slightly stronger than his own.

Killing intent flickered in the fourth son's eyes. He had no interest in playing around, and was still convinced he could end this fight quickly. He quickly performed a right-handed incantation gesture, then moved his index finger toward his forehead. However, instead of touching his forehead, he held his finger a few inches in front of it.

"Bloodline Underworld Curse!"

The moment the words left his mouth, complex black designs appeared everywhere on his skin. If you looked closely, you would realize that the convoluted network of dark lines represented his blood vessels. The dark lines bulged and shifted in place on his skin, especially on his face, where they created the image of a vicious ghost face.

The fourth son's finger touched his forehead and the ghost face there. Instantly, the ghost face lit up like a lamp. In fact, from a distance, it actually looked exactly like a lamp. The lamp had fused with his face, creating an extremely grisly sight. At the same time, his aura skyrocketed, making him grow several times stronger than before.

A sense of unease rose up in Xu Qing. Sending out more poison through his gaze, he burst into motion, heading toward his opponent at top speed.

The fourth son's eyes narrowed. Continuing to move backward, he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, causing the rhino to appear around him again and block the invading poison. Then he waved his hand, sending a host of hair flying forward to entangle Xu Qing and block his forward path.

Xu Qing's eyes glittered coldly as he accelerated again, becoming a string of afterimages that pierced through everything toward the fourth son. This was speed that surpassed Spirit Trove, and was all thanks to the tempering of the Heir Apparent, which had involved Xu Qing carrying around a sun all the time.

The fourth son's expression flickered. He opened his mouth, and a beam of white light shot out toward Xu Qing. The white light spread around him in a complex latticework, intertwining and overlapping.

Xu Qing arrived a moment later. As his secret trove manifested behind him, he clenched his fist and punched. Lands shook and mountains rocked. Booms filled the dome of heaven.

The latticework collapsed into hundreds of fragments that scattered everywhere. However, it was a mysterious magic. Unexpectedly, the fourth son appeared within every single one of those hundreds of fragments, making it very difficult to tell which version was real among all the fakes.

Xu Qing's expression darkened as he sent his shadow flying out, along with a host of heavenfiend clones, to invade the latticework and find the true body.

Meanwhile, within the latticework, the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son reached up and put his finger on his shoulder. At that spot, the black veins merged together to form a second burning lamp. Next, he touched the other shoulder, then his dantian region, then his legs, and finally, his heart. All of the incantation gestures were performed in the blink of an eye.

Seven mysterious lamps alive with underworld fire were now burning within the fourth son's body. And every single lamp caused his aura to skyrocket. His entire person seemed to burn, causing his energy to surge, and sending terrifying fluctuations everywhere.

At the same time, Xu Qing's shadow and heavenfiend clones were spreading through the latticework looking for the hidden fourth son. Rumbling sounds echoed out as latticework exploded left and right.

Finally, the fourth son stepped out into the open, his body aflame. He waved his finger, and the sky shattered. The air collapsed, and the surrounding heavenfiend clones were ripped to shreds.

"I underestimated you," he said coolly. "Whether in your time period or my own, in this cultivation level, you... have exceptional talent."

His right hand danced through the air, causing the seven lamps to sway. That swaying motion caused a sensation of intense danger to fill Xu Qing. He had no choice but to stop in place, a serious expression on his face. He had never heard of any kind of magic like this before. It wasn't a divine ability from his own time period, but rather, a taboo magic that came from Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua.

Of all Li Zihua sons and daughters, only his fourth son had been able to cultivate it successfully, due to a variety of unique factors.

This taboo magic had a name. It was... Seven Lamps Underworld Fire Curse!

The reason it was considered taboo was that, in addition to being able to significantly boost the strength of the user, it was also a curse. And it was the type of curse that resulted in death! Extinguishing the lamps extinguished the enemy!

As killing intent blazed in the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son, he opened his mouth to speak.

Xu Qing didn't know the details of this magic. But at the same time, he didn't like to waste words. Regardless of what his opponent said, he wouldn't trust it. Thus, he planned to force the fourth son's hand, and give him no choice but to unleash his trump card as quickly as possible.

Seeing that, the fourth son laughed coldly. Acting in response to his thoughts, the seven lamps within him swayed, and projections of Xu Qing appeared within the flames. It was as if his mind was trapped within the fire of the lamps.

As Xu Qing neared, the fourth son directly extinguished one of the seven lamps. As a result, Xu Qing's five yin organs and six yang organs experienced a burst of pain. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his body rapidly deteriorated as if with age. His clothing started rotting, the flame of his life force faded, and his expression flickered. At the same time, the fourth son extinguished the second lamp.

Cracks spread out over Xu Qing's skin, and blood oozed out. His hair withered and fell out, his cultivation base declined, and a sensation of imminent death filled him.

Next came the third, fourth, and fifth lamps.... In the shortest of moments, six of the seven lamps had been extinguished.

Xu Qing fell out of the sky and slammed into the ground. Sweat poured off of him like rain, and grisly, the sweat contained corrosive properties that started melting his body. Indescribable pain filled Xu Qing, causing his expression to turn blank. As the sensation of death filled him, the noxious odor surrounding him grew intense. Indecision filled him. Apprehension. Terror. All sorts of negative emotions.

The fourth son looked at Xu Qing from above and coolly said, "You might have exceptional talent. But insects will always be insects."

With that, he extinguished the final lamp. When that happened, Xu Qing's aura was suddenly wiped out.

"It's over," the fourth son said, turning to leave. But then his expression flickered, and he turned to look at Xu Qing's corpse. And what he saw was the manifestation of five

life lamps. They were like sundials, and all the gnomons were pointing in the same direction. Then they turned back, and the time surrounding Xu Qing went backward.

In the blink of an eye, Xu Qing rose into the air, and the deadly effects of the curse vanished. His melted flesh recovered, and he hovered in the same spot as before, completely unharmed. This was the divine ability that came with his sundial life lamps!

“You!” the fourth son blurted, his pupils constricting and his heart starting to pound. “You have an Imperial Sovereign’s bloodline?”

Xu Qing took a deep breath and looked squarely at his enemy. He had just died. And if he hadn’t used his life lamp divine ability at exactly the right moment, that would have been permanent. That process of dying had given him a very detailed understanding of how the seven lamps magic worked.

“That’s a nice magic,” he said softly, licking his lips. “Very nice.”

Daybreak light erupted from him, illuminating the surroundings with seven colors. And as the light formed, it gradually took the shape of seven lamps burning with underworld fire. It was a copy! Using the daybreak light’s method of myriad magics, he had copied the Seven Lamps Underworld Fire Curse!

Chapter 689: Just Stronger Than You!

Xu Qing had unlocked the abilities of daybreak light even when he was in Nascent Soul. It could be used to scan countless magics. Thanks to the tips from the Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom, Xu Qing had gained enlightenment of how to use it to duplicate myriad magics. Later, when he broke through from Nascent Soul to Spirit Trove, he used it to form countless living beings and terrain features in his secret trove.

As of now, its imitation abilities were even more extraordinary than before. And thus, it glittered around Xu Qing as seven lamps with underworld fire formed, one after another.

The same ghost face ignited! Though it was blurry, and obviously not quite on the same level as the version used by the fourth son, it was still able to give Xu Qing a boost. Rumbling sounds echoed out as his aura climbed. After that happened seven times, he pulsed with mountain-toppling, sea-draining force as he hovered in midair with his eyes closed, looking like a god. Daybreak light glittered around him, all while the seven lamps rotated around him, burning with gruish underworld fire.

That, combined with Xu Qing’s handsome features and long hair, made it so that if you compared him to the Imperial Sovereign’s fourth son... Xu Qing actually seemed more like the son of an Imperial Sovereign. He seemed imbued with a spirit that could conquer mountains and rivers, and it caused the sky to flicker with bright colors, and gale-force winds to whip around him.

When the seven lamps were fully manifested, Xu Qing opened his eyes and looked closely at the Imperial Sovereign’s fourth son.

The first thing he did was completely unleash his taboo poison magic. Mutagen flourished, taboo poison spread, and the curse of a god descended. Those were just primers to make the Seven Lamps Underworld Fire Curse more perfect.

Next, the seven lamps swayed, and projections of the fourth son appeared in their fire!

When the fourth son saw that, his heart pounded, and his eyes filled with incredulity. He felt like his mind was being struck by lightning bolts. There was simply no way he *couldn't* be astonished. This was his magical technique, yet it had been copied and was being used by someone else. He had never before encountered someone with powers of understanding like this.

There was no time to contemplate the situation. With a double-handed incantation gesture, he summoned the latticework again, going all out to defend himself while simultaneously falling back. He acted too late.

Xu Qing's eyes gleamed with killing intent as he extinguished three of the seven lamps.

The fourth son spasmed. Latticework shattered around him, revealing his true body. His hair was withering, he was shaking, and blood sprayed out of his mouth.

Xu Qing unhesitatingly extinguished the four remaining lamps.

The fourth son shrieked miserably, and then coughed up blood seven or eight times in a row as he staggered backward. His aura was gone, and he no longer looked magnificent. His clothing was rotten like a maggot as he slammed into the ground.

Yet he wasn't dead! After all, this was an Imperial Sovereign's taboo magic, and not even Xu Qing's daybreak light could make a perfect copy. The best he could do was make a copy that was about thirty percent faithful. But even thirty percent was enough to make a deadly curse. And the addition of Xu Qing's own poison made it even more terrifying.

The fourth son was seriously injured in body and soul. As the power of taboo poison spread through him, his flesh decayed, his mind was crushed, and black energy filled him along with an aura of death.

But Xu Qing's killing move wasn't finished yet. Now that his opponent had been weakened, Xu Qing's eyes became colder as he waved his right hand. Instantly, the bluegreen dragon roared and flew up into the air, becoming a white beam of light that took the shape of a heavenly saber. Xu Qing dropped his finger to command the blade, which chopped down toward the fourth son. The dao contained in the saber split the dome of heaven and severed the earth.

The fourth son's expression flickered dramatically. Xu Qing had attacked with lightning speed, and hadn't given him any breathing room at all. He was now feeling overwhelmed by a feeling of potential death. At that moment of crisis, the fourth son's expression turned vicious. Reaching up, he smashed his hand onto his face, and dragged his fingers down viciously, creating five ghastly and bloody wounds.

Blood flowed, but not much. What was more, it was now possible to see through those wounds; his flesh beneath wriggled and twitched, while simultaneously letting off a crimson glow.

This was a time period before the broken face of the god arrived. It was also before Crimson Mother reached gods and spirits. And yet, when the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son scratched his face, the light that shone out clearly contained the aura of a god. It was the power of red moon authority, manifested as blood-colored light that spread out and created a blood sea around him.

"Die!" the fourth son howled, waving his arm out.

The blood sea churned as innumerable heads rose from the blood, revealing only their eyes. Everything from their noses down was submerged and impossible to see. The eyes were closed, yet they imparted a terrifying sensation, especially considering how many of them there were.

Next, the eyes all opened and looked at Xu Qing. The red moon curse instantly surged.

The heavenly saber shivered and became blood-red thanks to the gazes of those eyes. In fact, even Xu Qing's daybreak light was infected and became red. Any other Spirit Trove cultivator would be powerless to fight something like that. After all, this was the power of authority. But Xu Qing looked at the fourth son and actually felt very curious.

Whatever he can do, I can also do....

As the thought passed through his mind, he took a step forward. When his foot landed, endless blood spread out beneath his feet. In the blink of an eye, it created a blood sea very similar to the fourth son's. Then, it surged viciously in the direction of the other blood sea. A deafening crash rang out.

From a distance, it was possible to see two very similar blood seas smashing into each other. Waves exploded everywhere as authority battled authority and curse battled curse.

Xu Qing hovered above his own blood sea, his green robes flapping in the wind.

Not too far away from him, the fourth son hovered above the other blood sea, his expression grim. He was no longer capable of releasing any more red moon authority. That said, his killing intent hadn't been reduced at all. Lifting his right hand, he pointed up into the sky.

"Heaven as the blade!" he said, and the dome of heaven trembled. Countless rifts appeared as one entire section formed into a long saber. It was shocking to the extreme!

"Earth as the altar!" The earth shook. Soil rose up into the air, clumping together to form an enormous altar of execution.

"Connect to the sun and moon!" Suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies appeared, connecting the heavenly saber and the execution altar. And thus it came to be that... the God Decapitation Altar appeared!

This was the divine ability of Imperial Sovereign Li Zihua. Clearly, Ninth Sib wasn't the only one to master it. Li Zihua's fourth son also could command that very same divine ability. A shocking baleful aura surrounded him as he howled and sent the god-decapitating blade chopping down.

Xu Qing looked up with great curiosity at the god-decapitating saber. Then a timescape bottle appeared in front of him.

The bottle opened, releasing the power of the timescape. The Ghost Emperor mountain appeared, turning into the altar. Then the destiny aura from D-132 became the blade trough! The heavenly dao bluegreen dragon roared in the form of the heavenly saber. Taboo power and the curse of a god filled the edge of the blade, while daybreak light formed the blade light! The golden crow formed the connection, and the violet moon sealed it tight. The sundial life lamps added strength. And then, Xu Qing's God Decapitation Altar appeared in heaven and earth.

Two huge God Decapitation Altars faced off.

RUMBLE!

The power of decapitation swept out with heaven-rending, earth-crushing force!

A deafening cracking sound rang out as the fourth son's God Decapitation Altar split in two and was sent spinning off to the side. Then it shattered.

Xu Qing's God Decapitation Altar vibrated violently, then faded away. However, it remained whole the entire time. Xu Qing backed up a few paces, his face flush, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth. He was already recovering.

In this clash of divine abilities, Xu Qing came out on top!

The fourth son's face was extremely pale as he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. Then he glared at Xu Qing, his heart pounding.

Whatever I can do, he can also do....

He was thinking almost exactly the same thing Xu Qing had just been thinking.

"Fine. Secret trove!" As the fourth son's eyes shone with the desire to do battle, he performed an incantation gesture. A huge secret trove then rose up behind him from within the sea of blood.

The interior of the secret trove seemed like a world, except it had no heaven. Instead, it was a sprawling land like the Nine Serenities. The ground seemed like it had been soaked in blood, creating a crimson mud. The very middle of it was bright red, with everything around it somewhat faded. And along the edges, white flames burned constantly.

Countless figures were visible, buried in the blood-colored lands as well as in the white fire, and they constantly moaned and screamed in agony. The screams seemed to be attempts to please someone. It was a very sinister secret trove, almost like a hell. And as soon as it appeared, it shot toward Xu Qing as if to crush him.

As the hellish secret trove closed in, Xu Qing's face remained expressionless. Then he shoved his right hand out, and deafening rumbling sounds echoed out as his own secret trove appeared. Within it, the golden crow was the sun, and the violet moon was the moon. Taboo poison formed the clouds, and the Ghost Emperor mountain made the lands. The waters were the timescape, and the heavenly dao made the natural laws. Daybreak light made the plants and animals, while D-132 propagated living beings. Sundials governed the passage of time.

When it appeared, it overlapped with the fourth son's secret trove, whereupon both of the secret troves began to fight with natural and magical laws as they attempted to overtake each other.

The overlapping secret troves trembled violently as they affected each other. Within them, suns, moons, stars, and heavenly bodies manifested. Wind, rain, lightning and thunder appeared. The howls of two heavenly daos echoed everywhere.

The battle seemed incredibly dangerous; defeat meant death, and the critical life-or-death moment was here. However, the reserve powers Xu Qing had been building up in recent years were inherently superior. Gradually, his secret trove began to overtake the fourth son's secret trove.

The fourth son's bloody soil sought to overtake the land in Xu Qing's secret trove. But it was too slow.

As the natural laws clashed, the fourth son's secret trove began to show signs of collapse. Its heavenly dao howled defiantly as the light of Xu Qing's sun and moon appeared within its hell. That light melted and devoured everything it passed....

The land in the fourth son's secret trove was collapsing.

And yet, just as that happened, Xu Qing suddenly saw what the fourth son's secret trove lands were really like!

Those lands were anything but ordinary. The very middle, the crimson part, was like the pupil of an eye. And the white flames were the whites of that eye. The lands in the secret trove... were actually a gargantuan eyeball. The moment Xu Qing saw that eyeball, he realized it was very familiar.

Is that... Crimson Mother's eye??

Chapter 690: My Past is Your....

Xu Qing clearly remembered how the statues of Crimson Mother always had hands covering the eyes, with blood flowing down from those spots. And now, as Xu Qing saw a huge eye in the secret trove of the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son, and sensed the strong aura of Crimson Mother, his heart started pounding.

Thinking back to the nursery rhyme, which mentioned 'fourth dolly' being lost, he recalled the Heir Apparent talking about how his fourth brother became Crimson Mother's godchild. And he also thought about the ancient scene he had witnessed during the events at the God Decapitation Altar, and the first thing Li Zihua said to Crimson Mother.

"The song you were singing was just too unpleasant to hear. It interrupted my fourth son's dream." [1]

It seemed everything was backed up by history.

Perhaps Crimson Mother's song didn't just interrupt the dream of Li Zihua's fourth son. Perhaps it had implanted an eye into that dream.

Perhaps *this* was that eye, and it was the reason why shē could be resurrected after being beheaded before reaching godly ascension.

Perhaps Li Zihua knew all of that, yet for some unknown reason didn't tell anyone, and also didn't stop it from happening....

Perhaps that was why Li Zihua's fourth son, who was born before his father reached godly ascension only to extinguish his own godfire, had ultimately become the godchild.

The Moonrite Region was the place where Crimson Mother grew hēr food. It was hēr Spirit Garden. And the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son was also Crimson Mother's Spirit Garden. He was growing an eye for hēr.

Xu Qing had no way of knowing whether any of his speculations were correct or not. They made sense, logically speaking. And because of how logical they seemed, Xu Qing was deeply shaken.

Eventually, the secret trove worlds faded away into nothing....

Xu Qing's secret trove had crushed the fourth son's secret trove. It had wiped out everything. And then the river of time swept away all the pieces. In the end, Crimson Mother's eye didn't release any special power. It wasn't a huge surprise to Xu Qing. After all, in this time period, Crimson Mother still hadn't reached godly ascension. Besides, shē was only a projection that lacked any familiar karma.

However, in the outside world, the godchild presumably has a fully matured eye in him.... I'm sure the others have realized this.

Xu Qing let himself be swept along by the river, until he eventually vanished. The river continued flowing off into the distance. It left the time period, and then returned to where it had started on the island.

As Xu Qing appeared, thunder rumbled overhead, and he heard a familiar voice teasing him from behind.

"What took you so long, little Ah Qing?"

Xu Qing turned to see the Captain sitting on the waves of the river of time, fiddling with the nine artificial suns, which had been shrunk down to the size of pearls. He was smiling enigmatically.

"The grandmas and grandpas obviously weren't taking me very seriously," the Captain said. "They arranged for me to go back to when the Imperial Sovereign's fourth son broke through from Gold Core to Nascent Soul. All I had to do was wave a finger to wipe out that arrogant brat. I even had time to remove one of my seals."

The Captain looked very pleased with himself as he pulsed with a wave of energy, and a black secret trove appeared behind him.

Xu Qing wasn't very surprised that his Eldest Brother had experienced a cultivation base breakthrough. Back when the two of them had been blessed by the Moonrebel Congregation, he had been able to tell that his Eldest Brother was ready for a breakthrough but was holding back.

"Eldest Brother," Xu Qing suddenly said, "did you intend all along to go to the fourth son's Nascent Soul time period?"

The Captain grinned and was about to reply when the waves surged and Madam Godfinch appeared in the froth. As soon as she was out in the open, her body withered significantly.

"The Imperial Sovereign's fourth son is now dead in the time period I went to," she said. "My mission is complete. This clone of mine... won't last for much longer. Going forward, it's all up to you two."

Madam Godfinch's clone had not shown any emotion at all up to this point, not even now, when she was fading into nothing. That was the price she had paid to leave this clone behind. And it was also a manifestation of her determination and her mission. She was a former Archbishop of Moonrebel, and when she failed to lead the people of her era into freedom, she had sighed in sorrow and then defiantly created this clone. Now, though she still sighed in sorrow, she had reached the end of the line.

After looking around one last time, she sighed and closed her eyes. The wind blew, and she faded away, turning into ash that blew out into heaven and earth, leaving behind only the sound of her echoing sigh.

Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed.

The Captain said nothing. He also bowed.

Before long, the waves surged again, and Fifth Sister appeared. She was staggering, and she kept coughing up mouthfuls of blood. She looked older than before. After noticing Xu Qing and the Captain, her eyes flickered with gratitude, and she nodded. Not speaking a word, she settled down cross-legged, whereupon motes of white light drifted off her and into the river. She was sacrificing her own life force in order to help her brothers and sisters.

As the white motes of light entered the river, the water seethed with greater intensity, and Eighth Sib emerged from the waves. He was missing his lower half, but the white motes of light were already gathering to heal him. As he dragged himself out of the water, he spat out some phlegm and then grinned.

“I never liked Fourth Sib. Always wanted to give him a good thrashing. It felt great!” He waved his hand, and the white motes of light surrounding his missing lower half moved away and returned to Fifth Sister. “You don’t have much longevity. Don’t waste it on me. I’ll be fine!”

Fifth Sister looked at him but didn’t object.

“Erniu,” he said, “are you really looking at your Eighth Grandpa in this state and not offering some help?” He looked at the Captain and laughed heartily.

Chuckling, the Captain hurried over, offered Eighth Sib an arm, and sighed admiringly.

“Grandpa Eighth, you’re extraordinarily valorous. I previously believed that I was the only person in this world who had your level of determination and boldness. How could I have ever guessed that there would be another heroic individual around such as you, Grandpa Eighth!”

Eighth Sib looked very pleased, and was about to say something when the river of time rumbled loudly. The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom emerged, followed a moment later by Ninth Sib.

Ninth Sib arrived with astonishing grandeur. Most noteworthy was that the sharp blade he wielded dripped with golden blood. Of the nine who had gone to different time eras, he had gone to the one when the godchild was strongest.

“He’s been executed,” Ninth Sib said, his face expressionless.

The Heir Apparent and Princess Brightblossom breathed sighs of relief. Clearly, they had also succeeded.

Everyone was back with one exception.

Li Xiaoshan.

“He perished, but succeeded in the process,” Princess Brightblossom said, looking at the river of time. She waved her hand, and the river of time faded away.

The statue of the Imperial Sovereign appeared once again. A figure knelt on the head of the statue.

As the waters receded, the cultivators from the Red Moon Cathedral and the Moonrebel Congregation slowly opened their eyes. At first, they looked confused, then amazed. All of them were looking up at Xu Qing and the others, as well as the figure on the head of the statue.

That figure was the godchild’s true form. His vicious expression and terrifying body were no different than before. But his aura was unstable. Shivering, he opened his eyes. Golden fire burned in his eyes as he looked into the canopy of heaven.

The Heir Apparent and everyone else looked down at him.

Xu Qing and the Captain backed up a few steps. The battle was clearly nearing an end. If their success didn’t stop the godchild from reaching godly ascension, then it didn’t matter what they did next. Eventually, the godchild slowly got to his feet and spoke in a smoky, hoarse voice.

“To other people, our father was the Imperial Sovereign who safeguarded heaven here. He was completely loyal to the Ancient Emperor, and took pity on all living beings. But the reality is that he was a very contradictory person. And also ruthless.”

The Heir Apparent shook his head. “It sounds like you don’t understand our father.”

The godchild was silent for a moment. Looking at the Heir Apparent, he quietly continued, “Big brother, you and I don’t see our father in the same way. When you were born, you saw him as an Imperial Sovereign. When I was born... I saw him as a god.”

The Heir Apparent seemed like he had more he wanted to say, yet was unable to find the words.

Princess Brightblossom’s eyes glittered coldly as she said, “That’s not why you chose to betray and torture your own relatives.”

The godchild turned to look at Princess Brightblossom. Then he looked at Fifth Sister and Eighth Sib. Finally, his gaze fell onto Ninth Sib.

“Third Sister. Fifth Sister. Eight Brother. Ninth Brother... I want to ask all of you a question. What’s more tragic, to be the only one sober while everyone else is drunk... or to be the only one drunk while everyone else is sober?”[2] [3]

There was no right or wrong answer to the question.

The godchild laughed self-deprecatingly. Then, golden fire spread from his eyes, covering his face, then flowing down over his entire body. Flames scorched the lands and illuminated the dome of heaven. The holy sensation coming off the godchild grew even more intense.

It was... godfire.

The fact that the fire was ignited didn’t indicate that the godchild had succeeded in his ceremony. Instead, it was a backlash.... As the flames spread, he looked at the Heir Apparent and the others. And he looked at the Captain, a profound look in his eyes.

The Captain met his gaze, and a crazy expression appeared on his face as he suddenly extended his right hand. All of a sudden, the nine artificial suns he had been playing with shot forward and surrounded the godchild. Streams of golden godfire seeped off the godfire and into the nine suns.

The Heir Apparent and others looked on with serious expressions. As the godfire entered the nine artificial suns, they experienced a heaven-shaking, earth-toppling transformation. They turned golden.

“Little Ah Qing, this is why your Eldest Brother worked so hard to recover these artificial suns here in the Moonrite Region. With godfire in them, tell me, do these nine suns remind you of the Dawning Suns? With nine mini-Dawning Suns, that shrew Crimson Mother’s big ceremony is going to be rocked to the core!”

Xu Qing wasn’t surprised by the Captain’s crazy words. Right now, his focus wasn’t on the nine suns, but rather, on the godchild.

That was because, as the godchild burned away, the last thing he looked at was Xu Qing.

“All of this happened because you showed up,” the godchild said. “You’re the reason for it all. There are far too many similarities between you and me. Could that really be a coincidence? Could it be that my past is actually your future...?”

The flames roared, and the godchild vanished from the head of his father’s statue.

Heaven and earth trembled. Wind screamed. The clouds seethed. The red moon loomed on the horizon, sending out a blood-colored light that formed into the face of Crimson Mother.

A god was coming.