

Necropolis Immortal

Chapter 14: Vessel

“Dead! Ge Chengxian’s been murdered!” Incredulous cultivators shuddered with shock. Someone had been so bold as to kill Ge Chengxian!

House Ge was the second most powerful clan of cultivators in Dusk Province. With House Lu’s decline, House Ge was poised to replace them as the most powerful clan. They were also the most likely to take over the governorship.

Major factions in Nephrite Major had spared no effort to raise up House Ge, wanting to extend their fingers into Dusk Province. That was also why Ge Chengxian had returned. No one had expected the young man would be killed so soon after setting foot in the province!

“You killed the sixth master, Lu Yun. You’re dead. You’re dead!” Those from House Ge just about lost their minds. However, with a spirit realm expert like Yin Xuantian in front of them, they didn’t dare do anything but run their mouths.

“Ha! Hahaha! Now you recognize me? House Ge has committed high treason in Dusk City! They attempted to assassinate the governor and attacked the Dusk Phalanx. They were blatantly staging a coup! Soldiers, capture all of the treacherous scum!”

The cultivators present felt their stomachs lurch. Among them, those from House Ge were the most desperate. The Dusk Phalanx!

Lu Yun had summoned the army stationed in the northern territories!

They’d thought the soldiers in black armor were merely the remaining militia of House Lu. Located in the north of Nephrite Major, Dusk cherished black as their provincial color. Forces serving the governor’s manor wore black as well, so who would’ve surmised that these soldiers were the heavenly army?

While Lu Yun had lain unconscious, factions in Dusk Province made quick work of the Lu loyalists, either transferring them to other posts or executing them with flimsy excuses. Those operations continued to even this day.

Even then, House Lu had once been the most powerful family in the province. Though they were on the verge of collapse, their many branches hadn’t all been excised yet. There were some remnants left still.

“How dare you, Lu Yun!” roared a cultivator. “The Dusk Phalanx defends the northern border against the sea monsters. What if those monsters invade and conquer our

territory because you brought the army here? You'll be the greatest sinner in all of the immortal world!"

"Only ten thousand came. If the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand soldiers fail to withstand the monsters, then the entirety of the Dusk Phalanx may as well end ourselves by self-detonation." Spear still dripping with blood, Yin Xuantian's gaze turned mocking. "Kill!"

"Wait!" A messily dressed young man with red lipstick imprinted on his cheek elbowed his way through the crowd. "Stop! Halt, everyone!"

He raised his hand and waved a shiny token. "I am a special envoy of His Majesty the Celestial Emperor. Under His Majesty's command, halt! You there! What are you doing? Why did you step forward? Back down, all of you!"

"This is all a misunderstanding, Your Excellency! Please be so kind as to forgive them. Well, what are you all still doing here? Get going!"

The man had called himself a celestial emperor's envoy, but he hardly looked the part. He seemed more like a typical skirt-chaser who'd been dragged out of his latest foray into the flower bushes. His words held no weight at all.

Yin Xuantian's expression changed when he noted the token, but he didn't put away his spear. Dusk Phalanx was the Nephrite Major's heavenly army, but they were commanded by the governor of Dusk. He wasn't going to stop unless Lu Yun commanded it. A mere envoy had no power over the Dusk Phalanx; only the celestial emperor himself could override the orders of the governor of the city of Dusk.

"Greetings, Sir Envoy!" The crowd sighed in relief to see an envoy from the celestial emperor show up. The tension in the air slightly dissipated.

"Since you've come in person, then this certainly is a misunderstanding," Lu Yun cheerily joked with a smile. "It's not like His Majesty's envoy is going to rebel against His Majesty, is he?"

This governor really is crazy! The envoy shuddered. If he dared favor House Ge and the others even a little at this moment, this madman would likely order his execution.

"Thank you for answering the call, General Yin." Lu Yun raised a cupped fist salute at Yin Xuantian. "Please assign some dependable men to take over the city's defense once you return. The law and order of the provincial capital must be preserved. I may have only half a year left in my term, but I hope that this remaining time will peacefully pass by in the province. If someone rebels again, it will reflect badly on me."

"Understood!" Yin Xuantian bowed to Lu Yun.

“Yuying.” Lu Yun glanced at his servant. She remained silent, and the token in her hand shone with a bright golden light, materializing the enormous door once again.

“Retreat!” The Dusk Phalanx marched in neat fashion through the portal and disappeared from sight.

“We’ll wipe that arrogance off of your face soon enough, Lu Yun. Your death sentence is in six more months!” House Ge cultivators gnashed their teeth.

“Didn’t we clean out the remnants of House Lu? Who’s the woman following Lu Yun? Why does she dare to stick close to him at such a time? Let’s find a chance to kill her, too!” Just like House Ge, those from Houses Feng and Gongsun were staring at Yuying with a thick murderous intent.

House Lu was close to falling apart. Although some stubborn supporters remained, most had been taken out by major provincial factions over the past few days.

“Let’s go.” Lu Yun swept a glance over the crowd. Varying expressions hung on their faces, and though many were trying their best to conceal killing intent, Lu Yun could still see through their masks. Scoffing, he memorized their faces. It was better to know his enemies than to die from an unexpected stab in the back.

“Please wait a minute, pretty fairy. I’m Feng Li. May I have the honor of knowing your name?” The envoy caught up with Lu Yun and fell in step with Yuying. He smiled and wiped away the lipstick on his face.

Yuying followed after the governor with a frosty expression, paying the envoy no attention.

“Feng Li?” Lu Yun stopped in his tracks. “Someone from House Feng has become an imperial envoy?” He recalled a House Feng in Dusk City. Their family’s grand steward lived in his manor.

“Ah, you misunderstand, Your Excellency. I belong to House Feng of the Nephrite capital, which has nothing to do with the House Feng here.” Feng Li shifted to cozing up to Lu Yun, seeing that Yuying had refused to even spare him a glance.

“You would know best if the two are actually separate,” smirked Lu Yun. “Didn’t you come here to support House Feng and help them claim the seat of the governor?”

Feng Li paused. He hadn’t expected that Lu Yun would so easily see through him. He seems a little different from the simpleminded bully that rumor paints him as.

“That sixth son of House Ge didn’t know me, either,” continued Lu Yun. “He must’ve been sent by one of the factions of Nephrite Capital to fight for the position. Tsk tsk,

Patriarch Ge didn't even show his face when his son was killed, nor did he collect the body. That kid was probably adopted."

He followed up his words with a round of laughter. His voice wasn't too loud, but everyone around them had heard him quite clearly.

Those from House Ge finally broke free from their shock and collected their sixth master's body.

"Heh heh, you've guessed right, Your Excellency." Feng Li shamelessly clung to Lu Yun, glancing at Yuying every once in a while. "On top of my duty to support House Feng, however," a serious expression accompanied his sudden shift in topic, "I bring a message for you, Your Excellency."

"What is it?" Lu Yun asked in surprise. "Is His Majesty going to strip me of my title right now?"

"No," Feng Li replied solemnly. "The decree has been modified. There will be a tournament in half a year, with Your Excellency as the defending champion. If you can defeat a hundred challengers, you get to keep your position! Likewise, if anyone else manages to get a hundred consecutive wins, they'll become the new ruler of the province!"

"A hundred challengers?!" Lu Yun's expression soured. "Does His Majesty want me dead? No, that can't be. He can kill me with a simple decree, so why go through all this trouble?"

The expressions on his face reflected his rapidly shifting thoughts, and an answer quickly showed itself. "Someone acquired a Aurum Openia Pill for me, didn't they?"

"Your Excellency is indeed clever." Feng Li flashed Lu Yun a thumbs-up. "However, the decree didn't come from His Majesty himself, but rather the crown prince. With His Majesty recently in closed door cultivation, His Highness the Crown Prince has been in charge of all important affairs."

Lu Yun fell silent. He was now a cultivator, but he was still only at the qi application realm. How much could he possibly improve in half a year?

"There is a sliver of hope," Feng Li oh-so-sincerely offered. "If Your Excellency can form a golden core within six months, you'll stand a better chance of surviving the tournament."

"I stand a better chance if I enter the core realm? Is the tournament limited to only core realm cultivators?" Lu Yun perked up.

“No.” Feng Li shook his head. “There are a plethora of treasures in the celestial court. Some can limit a cultivator’s level, so that’s how we’ll ensure the highest strength is only at the core realm.”

Lu Yun was silent for a moment, then sighed after a long pause, “Might I surrender the governor’s seal and command token now and abdicate my position?”

This development would certainly result in his death. Even if he could ascend to the core realm after six months, he couldn’t possibly rival the old freaks who’d been cultivating for centuries.

Back in the ancient tomb, Yuying had destroyed eight spirit realm cultivators with a mere origin core cultivation. Only one managed to escape with a shard of his soul. Powerful cultivators were still powerful, even with their strength limited; they would crush peers of the same level. That much, he knew.

Feng Li nodded, then shook his head. “I’d advise against it. Many wish for you to abdicate, but not those who sent you the pill. If you give up, they’ll have someone seize your body and regain the title of governor.”

Lu Yun sighed, “I understand.”

Dusk Province was no rich territory, but a governor still held great power. Lu Yun was essentially a child in possession of a mountain of gold. “Thank you for answering my questions, Sir Envoy. I would like to hold a banquet at my manor to express the depths of my gratitude,” invited the young man with a hopeful expression.

Feng Li’s eyes lit up and he snuck a glance at Yuying. A shudder ran down his spine a half-second later as the invite’s ramifications hit home.

This brat is entirely too treacherous! If I accept his invitation, there will be rumors on the morrow that I’ve allied myself with him!

Feng Li had only carried on the conversation out of interest in that strikingly beautiful woman. He wouldn’t have spared Lu Yun a second glance, if it’d just been the governor. At the end of the day, however, he wasn’t going to risk his life for a woman.

“No, no, that won’t be necessary. I’ve just eaten. You must be tired, Your Excellency. You should retire early for the day. Please excuse me!” Sneaking a final glance at Yuying, he bolted.

“He sure ran off quickly. What a shame. Despite how he looks, he’s a shrewd one.” Lu Yun was slightly disappointed.

“Should we lay low somewhere, milord?” Ge Long had been by Lu Yun’s side all this time, and Feng Li’s message raised goosebumps all over his body. There was no way out for Lu Yun.

“Why should we?” The hesitation and fear in Lu Yun’s expression faded. He sniffed coolly and said, “I’m still the governor for the next six months and have the absolute upper hand.”

Ge Long gulped, too scared to respond.

Wanfeng nodded vehemently. “That’s right! The young master is the governor. Why should he be scared?”

“It seems crass and, well, childish, to determine the governor through a tournament,” Lu Yun remarked with a slight frown.

“That’s not the case, master,” Yuying explained. “There are seventy two provinces in Nephrite Major. The ones in the four cardinal directions—Dusk Province to the north, Crimson Province in the south, Azure Province in the east, and Argent Province to the west—are particularly unique. The governors of these four provinces must be the strongest fighters in the region, or have the potential to become the strongest.”

Befuddlement clouded Lu Yun’s expression.

“That’s because there’s an ancient tomb higher than emperor level in each of these provinces. Only the strongest expert of the province can keep a tight grip over the tomb,” Yuying explained. “These four tombs are no regular tombs, and each of them seem to have bred some sort of demon king.

“Every once in a while, the four tombs lose control and hordes of evil spirits rush out to wreak havoc. The four governors must use their seals to deploy the power of the province to quell the chaos. The command token is also something that only the four governors possess.” During Yuying’s term, she’d dealt with three such calamities.

“Tombs of ancient immortals?!” Lu Yun’s eyes lit up.

“Master, your current cultivation isn’t high enough to break the restrictions on the four tombs. You’d have to at least be an immortal yourself.” Yuying smiled wryly. This master of hers had an unusual passion for tomb raiding; such an occasion was how she came about.

“Alright then.” Lu Yun nodded. “I’ll have to enter that ancient tomb in Dusk Province sooner or later. As for the disturbances, well...”

He’d be more concerned with riots of the living. As a bona fide Yama King, how could he possibly be afraid of any trouble from the dead?

Ge Long cackled. "Milord can be much more than a mere governor. You could be like the ancient immortal emperors wielding absolute rule— "

"Enough of that," Lu Yun interjected. "Find an excuse to return to House Ge, and notify me as soon as they make a move. Something must've happened for the patriarch to not show his face even after his son died."

"At your service!" Ge Long said eagerly. "Please excuse this old servant!"

When Lu Yun returned to the governor's manor with Wanfeng and Yuying, the place was well lit. A chubby, diminutive old man in the accoutrements of a steward approached them.

"Aiyaya, Wanfeng, you're finally back. I thought that brat Lu Yun had kidnapped you and was getting worried." The old man stepped forward and reached for Wanfeng's hand, an action swiftly blocked by Lu Yun when he saw that the maid didn't know what to do.

The governor growled with a frown, "What do you think you're doing, Xue Lang?"

"Oh, Your Excellency! Greetings from this old servant!" Xue Lang was surprised to see Lu Yun block him, but quickly recovered and cheerily cupped his hands. "Right this way, Old Willow. This is the girl I was talking about. Her spiritual root is of empyrean grade, and she formed a golden core before she turned sixteen. A hundred thousand premium spirit stones for her is simply a bargain, isn't it?"

The steward shifted to the side to allow an old man in green to stride out from the door. He gave Wanfeng a few inquisitive glances, then noticed Yuying off to the side.

"Indeed, her spiritual root is of empyrean grade. She'll make an excellent vessel," Old Willow nodded slightly, then continued, "and I'll pay another fifty thousand for the woman there."

Grand Steward Xue's eyes lit up. "Wonderful! A hundred and fifty thousand premium stones for two women! Please step out of the way, Your Excellency."

1. These correspond directly to the four sacred beasts, whether in terms of color and direction. The Black Tortoise is associated with Dusk, and I ended up choosing Dusk because the Chinese character used for the province name also means 'profound', as opposed to straight up black. Dusk is the meeting point between night and day, a time of transition, mystery, and possibilities.

Crimson and Azure are self-explanatory, and Argent was a slight struggle. The White Tiger is associated with the metal element, and calling it the Metal Province seemed slightly silly. The word 'argent' won out because it means silver or a silvery-white color, which better corresponds to its sacred beast.