

Necropolis 1331

Chapter 1331: Ghostly Spies

“I want his sword too, though I walk the way of the knife,” said the Bloodclad Duke. “If I can obtain the Stellar Stone Magneticus and forge a blood knife from it, no one beneath third step king will be my match.

“If you want to kill him for his sword, fight me first. You can do as you wish after you beat me.”

The Azureclad Duke glowered while Lu Yun considered everyone with resignation. Did these preeminent geniuses think he was a pig to be butchered however they liked?

Despite that, he didn't fly into a rage. He wasn't offended by the Bloodclad Duke's words since most of his time and effort had indeed been spent on supplemental dao upon arriving in the Hongmeng. He hadn't had the chance to really hone his battle skills, so it was normal that he was lesser than all of them.

“How about we deal with the sword in our own way after we handle the vicious ghosts?” proposed the Purpleclad Duke.

“What if he runs off?” snorted Azureclad.

“We'll just haul him back if he does,” came an indifferent female voice. Flames blazed to life in the void and a woman wrapped in crimson smoke walked out of the fire.

The Crimsonclad Duke was here as well.

Shocked gasps were drawn through the crowd—who would've thought that four out of the five unparalleled geniuses would come to ClouDEXIT City? Was the venerated enforcer here as well then?!

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“Little brother, don't go running away now. If big sister finds you and accidentally hits you too hard, you'll lose that little head of yours.” She winked coquettishly at Lu Yun.

The Crimsonclad Duke was a young woman roughly eighteen years old and exuded every possible womanly charm. She was one of the greatest beauties of the Hongmeng.

Though her expressions and gestures could entrance any man beneath titled kingdom, Lu Yun was completely immune to the temptation. After all, he spent his days in the company of two beauties so breathtaking that they personified trouble!

The Fineheart King had failed to seduce him in the Immortal Pagoda, and so did this Crimsonclad Duke.

Lu Yun spread his hands out—he didn't want to provoke these four either. If a real fight broke out and he had to fend for his life, his trump cards would probably blow ClouDEXIT City to high heaven.

Crimsonclad giggled like tinkling bells upon seeing Lu Yun's demeanor and left.

“Anyone who wants to challenge the Champion Duke may do so, but whoever dares take his sword will face my wrath.” Azureclad sneered and flicked his eyes to the eighteen kings in the sky before taking his leave.

“What did he look at us for? Would we lower ourselves to take that sword?” grumbled the Dawn King.

Earthmartial and the others shrugged. Since Dawn King was the city lord, he’d refined Cloudexit City’s core essence. It wouldn’t be difficult for him to surreptitiously ambush a superior realm cultivator.

Bloodclad and Purpleclad departed as well; Lu Yun wasn’t worthy of their attention.

“Is the name of Champion Duke not well known enough?” Lu Yun mused with dejection.

“Hahaha!!” Uproarious laughter broke out from the cultivators around him. “Do you really think you’re a half step king worthy of a title just because you’ve defeated trash like Li Zhen?”

“Nuh uh, he didn’t even defeat that trash, just broke his sword. If you were wielding anything else, Li Zhen would slice you into two with one stroke.

“Ah this is boring, let’s go. He’s just another Extraordinary Duke.”

“The ‘Champion Duke’ title is gonna be another joke after today, used to insult fools.”

A hint of viciousness floated onto Lu Yun’s face when he heard the jeering around him.

The title of Champion Duke is also going to be a joke?

This title was the pillar of a nation and people, encompassing illustrious battle feats! How dare these people turn it into a joke?!

“Very well, I’ll swap to another sword. No, how about I fight you with fists only?” He coldly pointed at the person chortling about the title.

“Me?” The cultivator brayed with laughter. “Oh no, oh no no no. I’m just a minor character and a puny superior realm cultivator. You’re a noble, majestic duke, the Champion Duke! You can’t lower yourself to my level!”

Contempt and patronization filled his tones as he bit off the title “Champion Duke” like it really was an insult.

“Heh heh heh,” Lu Yun cackled. “Li Zhen left without another word when I broke his sword, so how dare a puny nothing like you taunt me? Do you really think the Champion Duke is a pushover?”

Whoosh!

Searing cerulean light flared from the Stellar Sword and flashed down on the superior realm cultivator.

Shock and dismay rocked the crowd; no one had imagined that the Champion Duke would be so small-hearted that he’d want to kill someone after a few jeers! He’d just said that he would fight with his bare fists, but he used his sword the next second and plainly intended on killing his victim!

Despicable, shameless, reprehensible!

“You!” The cultivator swiftly backed up and flailed around to grab others for a shield, but the ray of sword light had locked onto him. No matter how he dodged or hid behind others, the stroke would still land on him!

“Bastard!” Flying into a rage, he emitted black smoke and formed an enormous ghostly face out to block the blow.

“He’s a vicious ghost!”

“Ghost!!” Shock and dismay of a different nature ripped through onlookers. The Champion Duke’s target was a disguised ghost?!

“What?? Ghosts have slipped into Cloudexit City!” This immediately drew the attention of the eighteen kings in the sky. They were hovering overhead to survey the city and face off the army of ghosts in Starspace Region, but the enemy had already snuck into the city!

“Is it a coincidence, or did he actually recognize the ghost’s true identity?” They looked uncertainly at each other.

The Dawn King looked on with a black look; the ghost’s fake identity came from one of his forces. Despite the unwelcome revelation, a ghost in the superior realm didn’t warrant action from the kings.

Back in the city, Lu Yun smashed through the ghostly face of smoke, kicked the ghost to the ground, and stepped on him. He pierced through the ghost’s forehead with a simple stab and killed him where he laid. The ghost dispersed into the air as a tendril of black smoke.

“You killed him!” Cultivators clustered around when they saw him execute the ghost.

“What, do you think you’ll get his conspirators out of him?” Lu Yun rolled his eyes. Inwardly, however, he frowned to himself.

He had indeed killed the ghost, but there was no new addition to his Infernum like there’d been when he executed the Meteorite King. The ghost was completely gone. It’s like when I killed the akasha ghosts, none of them became my Infernum either.

Lu Yun had subdued the ghost ancestor, but it wasn’t much help in the Hongmeng. All it could do was remain in hell.

The ghost he’d just killed was so much stronger than the ghost ancestor that it could crush the ancestor with one hand. Evidently, the ghost ancestor was relevant only in the chaos and had nothing to do with the ghosts of the Hongmeng.

A faint hunch flickered in Lu Yun’s mind—the ghosts of the Hongmeng might have something to do with the akasha ghosts. The akasha ghosts... seemed to be everywhere. They were drawn by a child of resentment, and who was the child?

As for the ghost he’d just killed—Lu Yun had discovered him early on and was beyond startled to find a disguised ghost swaggering through town. That meant there was a spy among the eighteen kings!

He reflexively looked upward, unable to see that the kings wore unpleasant expressions as the same thing occurred to them.

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“Hah, that bunch of trash dares call themselves kings.” Having witnessed everything that’d just happened, Azurecloud curled his look at the eighteen kings.

“Sir, they’re just some low level kings. Apart from Earthmartial who possess some real skill, the other seventeen are no match for you.” A young girl dressed in similar azure robes stood next to Azureclad, resting her head on his shoulder. He stroked her pale blue hair and nodded slightly.

“One of their agents in the city has been removed, they’re probably about to launch their first salvo. Otherwise, the ghost king hidden in the shadows will be exposed soon, too.” Azureclad stood up with a lazy stretch. “Qing Ting, keep an eye on that Champion Duke when the melee starts. Don’t let him get away, he’s not what he appears on the surface.”

“Don’t worry, he’s not going anywhere.” Qing Ting smiled merrily.

Chapter 1332: Executing A King

The Azureclad Duke was right. Less than an hour after the ghost spy was unmasked, the ghosts launched their first offensive on Cloudexit City.

The formation that enveloped the city with more than six hundred million kilometers of safety couldn’t withstand the enemy. A variety of vicious ghosts, vengeful ghosts, ghostly spirits, zombies, and other ghostly entities poured in from all directions. Wreathed in dense ghostly air, they sizzled and crackled when they crashed into the pure golden formation.

Many were burned to a crisp, but the charge continued relentlessly. The black smoke they left behind upon death condensed in the air and sheltered the ghosts behind them.

The first to rush the formation was just cannon fodder, the true experts came after!

Armed with overwhelming numbers, the weakest among the ghosts was in the common realm. Though superior realm cultivators could kill thousands of commons with the flip of a hand, the ghosts were so plentiful that their numbers couldn’t be imagined.

They covered the land in a moving mass of black, blotting out any color beneath them.

“We can’t let these ghosts set foot into Cloudexit City, charge!” the Earthmartial and Dawn Kings roared in challenge. They knew what the ghosts were planning and that there must be a turncoat among them.

However, all that went out the window at this juncture. If the ghosts breached the gates, then the city was as good as lost.

Naturally, the ghosts wouldn’t permit the eighteen kings to freely move around either. More than ten ghost kings emerged from their army and pounced on the eighteen kings.

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Everything proceeded in orderly fashion within Cloudexit City. Though the enemy was on the march, they’d drilled for this eventuality countless times. As long as the formation around the city remained whole, Cloudexit stood a strong chance of withstanding the ghostly hordes.

Troops of black armored soldiers trotted out from the streets and assembled on the city walls. Long range weapons whirred to action and rained down devastation on the approaching enemy.

Cloudexit City hovered the air as an enormous golden orb and threw out searing aureate splendor in every direction. More than just the city itself, Cloudexit needed to safeguard the six hundred million kilometers of territory around it. The enemy could not be permitted to enter the heartland of Clouduin Region.

The closer one drew to the city, the heavier the defensive light became. Any ghost that could make it to this point was a heavyweight of its race and the equivalent of a superior realm cultivator.

“Form up and head outside!” An extremely strong soldier suddenly leapt into the air, brandishing his black sword at a location outside Cloudexit City. A powerful half step king, he roared, “There are ghosts trying to break the formation five hundred million kilometers to the southwest! Noble ladies and gentlemen, follow me to eliminate that filth!”

“Yes, sir!”

“Chaaaaarge!”

A battalion of more than a hundred thousand black armored soldiers shot in the sky and barrelled toward the danger zone. They were all superior realm cultivators and would be a dominating force in any part of the Hongmeng, but everyone knew that none of them would return alive!

A battalion of a hundred thousand superior realm cultivators would be overrun by the ghostly army trying to circle around Cloudexit City. They had no hope for survival, but they answered duty’s call without a look back!

Lu Yun trembled imperceptibly to see the soldiers depart. How they resembled the immortals who walked through the World Gates to defy the yin spirit tide in the world of immortals!

“What a pity that I can’t save you guys,” he sighed. He wouldn’t be able to do so even if he revealed his identity and used all of his supplemental arts. They were voluntarily going on the offensive, not passively defending themselves.

“Folks, we have come to Cloudexit City not to watch a show. It is time to slaughter this ghostly scum and validate our dao with bloodshed!” Astounding bloody light erupted from the genteel Bloodclad Duke, and a knife resembling a bloody crescent moon appeared in his hands. Outlined in crimson splendor from his knife, he shot out of the city to follow in the battalion’s wake!

“No shit, the Demonward Formation was created for the ghosts. All land within six hundred million kilometers is our battlefield. To war, to war!!” Li Zhen also charged out with a flash of sword light, but he didn’t trail the Bloodclad Duke or battalion. He headed in another direction as there was a contingent of ghosts trying to drill through the golden light there.

Geniuses in Cloudexit City roared with laughter and flung themselves at the enemy. Being carefully nurtured elites from various sects, factions, and clans, they were no ordinary cultivators. Each of them was the equivalent of the Cloudexit battalion, and their efforts on the battlefield brought the ghostly army to an immediate standstill.

“Champion Duke!” Li Zhen suddenly shouted. “I admit that you have a sharp sword! Do you dare come out of the city to prove your strength?”

Using a sharp sword to break an opponent’s weapon wasn’t a show of strength, and a sharp sword alone wasn’t enough to reign invincible among unending hordes of enemies in war. Only absolute power would prove sufficient!

“And why not?!” Laughing heartily, Lu Yun darted out of the city. The Purpleclad, Azureclad, and Crimsonclad Dukes also flew out in three different directions.

Cultivators of the Hongmeng didn’t have to defeat their peers in order to prove their might, they could also slay the invaders of the Hongmeng—the ghosts.

Dusksnow Morningstar was renowned throughout the realm because he’d once fought the venerated enforcer to a standstill with three moves, but he was still generally regarded below the enforcer and dukes. Though he’d killed his fair share of ghosts, his feats weren’t as impressive as the other five.

Currently, the Bloodclad, Purpleclad, Azureclad, and Crimsonclad Dukes each held one direction, blockading the roads that ran from Cloudexit City to the rest of Cloudruin Region. They were as immovable as kings.

“ROAR!!” exploded from the ghostly army as a new ghost king suddenly appeared and charged the Bloodclad Duke.

“No!” Earthmartial and the others hadn’t expected that there’d be more kings in the ghostly army! Though this one was only a first step king, it was an indomitable nightmare to cultivators beneath titled kingdom.

“A ghost king? Bring it!” yelled Bloodclad. “Stories say that Hua Fengwen killed a king in peak condition before he ascended to kingdom! Today, I imitate his accomplishment and slay a king to make my name!”

Boom!

He released his aura entirely and raised waves of bloody light that annihilated any ghost they touched. His curved blade turned into a bloody moon that spewed forth lethal force at the suddenly appearing ghost king.

In a void intersected with black and golden light, all was suddenly dyed a pure crimson.

Chapter 1333: Taking the Blame

The Bloodclad Duke instantly became the center of attention in this part of the battlefield. A bloody moon hung in the sky and illuminated the land with crimson glory. It actually halted the incomparable ghost king in its tracks.

“How dare you draw a blade on me, little thing!” Violence and bitterness raged in its raspy voice. Dense black smoke wrapped around the ghost king, through which Bloodclad could see hints of a tiny skeleton.

“Draw blades?” he roared with laughter. “I’m going to cut your head off while I’m at it!”

Boom!

The void caved into a black hole when the two collided. Gusts of black and crimson air exploded in all directions and vaporized any soldiers caught in the blast zone. So, too, was the ghost king obliterated into ash.

“Hahaha!!”

“Well done!”

“As a Hongmeng cultivator should be!” The battalion that Bloodclad followed bellowed with approval. Though most of them were dying from the fallout of the duke executing a ghost king, none of them died with any regrets!

Their last image of this world was the fragmenting body of the ghost king. The Bloodclad Duke had won! He’d really defeated a ghost king with one stroke!

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“Damn it, why didn’t that ghost king come for me? He’s getting all the glory!” complained Azureclad as he slew another vicious ghost with a thrust of his sword.

After killing a ghost king with one blow, Bloodclad would be the foremost cultivator beneath the titled kings from this day forth. His status would eclipse the venerated enforcer and his feat erase the stain of losing to Dusknow Morningstar!

Executing a king as a superior realm cultivator!

Hua Fengwen had done so a hundred thousand years ago and the Bloodclad Duke repeated the deed today!

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Bloodclad was as if a tattered bag filled with holes. Though he’d killed the ghost king, the resulting backlash almost resulted in his own death as well.

And despite appearances, the ghost king wasn’t completely dead.

It still possessed half a skull and was furiously absorbing the black qi around them, trying to recover its body.

“AHHHH!!!! DIEEEEEEE!!” It suddenly shrieked with rage and shot at Bloodclad like a black meteor.

“The Bloodclad Duke is in trouble!” There were eighteen defending kings facing off ten ghost kings— they could absolutely spare one of their number to rescue Bloodclad, but no one dared break the line.

They knew that one of them was a concealed ghost king. Whoever went to save Bloodclad now might be going to kill him and not rescue him. Since the duke could kill kings before he reached kingship, he was an enormous latent threat. If a spy was among them, they would absolutely try to kill Bloodclad before he grew stronger.

Thus, no one dared make a move. Whoever did so might be attacked by the other seventeen kings.

Judging from the eerie smiles that spread across their faces, their opponents seemed to realize the same thing. Hidden in the black smoke, their eyes glittered with amusement and the speed of their attacks slowed, purposefully giving the kings a chance to rescue Bloodclad.

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Whoosh!

Cerulean sword light pierced through the void and shattered the remaining skull half!

The ghost king immediately dispersed upon the wind.

“Today, this mighty one, the Champion Duke, kills a ghost king outside Cloudexit City!” Lu Yun struck a heroic pose with the Stellar Sword.

Ringling silence spread through the premises as jaws dropped.

“You’re ridiculous!” Li Zhen yelled. “The Bloodclad Duke killed the ghost king! What does it have to do with you?!”

“Doesn’t it have something to do with me?” Lu Yun scratched his head. “Alright then, I killed a ghost king outside Cloudexit City and saved the Bloodclad Duke?”

Lying in a bedraggled heap on the ground, Bloodclad smiled wryly. Only he understood Lu Yun’s good intentions—the young man meant to take credit for killing the ghost king so that the ghosts would focus their ire on him.

In other words, he was purposefully shouldering the repercussions so that Bloodclad wouldn’t be beset by the enemy before he had a chance to recover.

“ROAR!!” As intended, the vicious ghosts charging Bloodclad immediately turned around and made for Lu Yun.

When it came to ghostly intelligence, those with enough intellect to infiltrate Cloudexit City were the cream of the crop and extremely rare. The ghost king had indeed died to Lu Yun and he’d then stepped forward with a yell, projecting the ghost king’s resentment and will with his voice.

Thus, the ghosts followed that bitterness and malice to avenge their king.

“As I thought, he didn’t become an Infernum!” Lu Yun took a deep breath while his expression flickered uncertainly. The ghost king he’d just executed had scattered to the four corners; the Tome of Life and Death hadn’t been able to claim it.

Clang!

Rays of stunning brilliance flared from the Stellar Sword and circled protectively around him as ten thousand streaks of cerulean sword light. Lu Yun smoothly stepped into the gap left by the Bloodclad Duke and battalion of a hundred thousand.

The Stellar Sword was so sharp that each stroke of Stellar Light Magneticus carved through the ghosts like a hot knife through butter if they so much as looked in its direction.

“Aw come fucking on! I take back what I said before!” Flames of envy erupted in Li Zhen’s eyes to see Lu Yun decimate the ghostly army with light swishes of his sword. If he possessed a weapon like that, he’d dare taunt a ghost king too!

Gripping his broken blade tightly, Li Zhen rushed in Lu Yun’s direction. The land outside Cloudexit was filled with ghosts and many were scaling the city walls. They continuously threw themselves at the city’s last line of defense.

Though Li Zhen was drenched in blood and wobbling on his feet, he refused to run back into the city. That would be too embarrassing, and none of the other visiting geniuses had retreated either.

That meant only Lu Yun’s position was relatively safe on the battlefield. Ensnared in Lu Yun’s sword light, the Bloodclad Duke and remaining soldiers from the battalion tended their wounds with peace of mind.

“And what are you doing here?” Lu Yun harrumphed to see Li Zhen.

“I, I can’t really hold on any further,” he responded with a rueful grin.

“Go in then.” Lu Yun cracked open his protective sword light and let Li Zhen in to rest.

When others saw the reprieve, they crowded over for shelter as well—Lu Yun sent them packing with a glare.

The sword light protecting Bloodclad was a sword formation; it’d compressed itself to the limits of its tolerance upon being mercilessly buffeted by the vicious ghosts. It’d break if anyone else entered.

Purpleclad, Azureclad, and Crimsonclad were also drenched in blood. Though they’d suffered some injuries, their eyes shone ever more brightly. This level of fighting was a perfect tempering for experts of their level.

“What are you doing still following me around??” Lu Yun swept a resigned glance at the faint figure next to him and roared, “Move your ass to killing ghosts, I ain’t running!”

“Um...” Qing Ting blinked and walked out of the shadows. “I thought you didn’t know I was here,” she said with some embarrassment.

Chapter 1334: Blade in Hand

Qing Ting hesitated for a split second before erupting with power, rushing toward the Azureclad Duke as a hazy streak of azure light.

Lu Yun jumped with shock at her explosion of strength—she was only a little bit weaker than the Bloodclad Duke!

“The geniuses of the Hongmeng are as numerous as carp teeming in the river, alright. If it wasn’t for two lifetimes’ worth of supplemental dao, I wouldn’t be able to kick up even a splash here,” he muttered to himself. “It looks like someone is purposefully building up the reputations of the Azureclad, Purpleclad, Bloodclad, and Crimsonclad Dukes. They’re meant to lead the cultivators of the realm.”

The four dukes had been bestowed with titles entirely too similar to each other. Their strength was also similar at peak half step kings. It was impossible that this was just happenstance.

As for the venerated enforcer, that was purely an accident. The little fox had learned from Lu Qing that the enforcer was their martial grandson. Lu Yun didn't know where he'd learned Dragonrise, but Lu Qing wouldn't be wrong.

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Nearly thirty kings fought each other in the air and hordes of ghosts filled the land below. The latter steadily increased in number until it was impossible to kill them all. Cloudexit was sustaining extraordinary losses—a million cultivators died from the moment Bloodclad left the city to Lu Yun killing the ghost king.

Of course, the ghosts suffered a hundred times more casualties than the cultivators, but that didn't mean anything to them. New armies gathered in Starspace Region and rolled over everything in their path to Cloudexit City. The stunning geniuses visiting from other regions began to die.

“Bastards!” Purpleclad suddenly howled. “What are you eighteen pieces of trash doing?! Just ten first and second step ghost kings are incapacitating eighteen of you! You're worse than trash, hurry up and kill them!”

He knew what they were concerned about and why they spent every second guarding against each other. The kings wanted to prevent the ghost king hidden among the group from killing the rest of them.

However, the cultivators beneath them were using their lives to stop the ghostly army while the eighteen kings cowered and dithered! Purpleclad was mad with rage.

Expressions darkened on the eighteen kings. They were indeed hesitant to use their full force and couldn't trust those by their side, but Purpleclad's insult made even Earthmartial itch to slap him to death. The Purpleclad Duke was once renowned throughout the Hongmeng and the disciple of the Starspace King. But the Starspace King was dead now, so how dare a genius not yet a king raise his voice at them?!

“Those eighteen kings are all living beings and not ghosts.” Lu Yun quickly scanned them with the Spectral Eye. “Is that ghost king the same kind of existence as the Meteorite King?”

The Meteorite King had been half of a ghost king and half of a cultivator, which meant that Lu Yun could only detect the half that was alive. If there was a ghost king among the eighteen, then it was someone who'd fully converted into a cultivator—like the Moon King.

“How many existences like that are there in the Hongmeng?”

Clang!

A crisp collision sounded by his ear, something had halted one of his downward strokes.

“Die!” A raspy, indistinct voice growled as a ghastly pale face suddenly appeared in front of him. It raised a blade suffused with ghostly qi and smashed it down on Lu Yun.

“What kind of blade is that to block Stellar Light Magneticus?!” Lu Yun raised a brow and shifted a meter to the left, evading the blow by the skin of his teeth.

Rumble.

The sword formation behind him swayed, almost broken by the attack.

Lu Yun looked behind him to see a white-haired man, pale as a sheet and dressed in white robes, appear where he'd been seconds ago. Black ghostly qi wafted around him and eyes lacking pupils stared fixedly at the human.

Lu Yun's attention, however, was on the blade in his hands. It was an uncommonly heavy sword with a snarling ghost face embedded in the hilt; it'd been this ghost-headed blade that'd blocked the Stellar Light Magneticus. Its edge still gleamed threateningly without any chips.

“Don't you dare die, Li Zhen!” Lu Yun suddenly called out. “Your daddy here is gonna get a good blade for you. We'll go again when we're done with all these ghostly rats!”

He jumped into the air and slashed forward with Dragonrise. Recovering on the ground, Bloodclad jerked his head up with shock when he sensed the move.

“It's the Dragonrise technique! How is that possible?? Is he Dusksnow Morningstar? No, he's neither the genius nor the venerated enforcer. Who is he?!” Jaw dropping with incredulity, Bloodclad stared dumbly at the ferocious Lu Yun.

Li Zhen was in the thick of things with his broken weapon; he hadn't remained in the safety of Lu Yun's formation. It was because of this that Lu Yun found himself liking the fellow. He knew when to bend, but also wasn't a coward afraid to die.

After the first battalion left the city, Bloodclad had been the first to follow, then Li Zhen.

“Alright!” Li Zhen shouted back. “That ghost-headed blade's mine! Since you broke my weapon, it's only right that you pay me back with one!”

He roared with laughter as his broken blade flared with light. Unfurling like a snowy white lotus, the brilliance blasted in every direction.

Lu Yun made a decisive second move and marshaled another strike while Dragonrise was in the air—
Dragonsoar!

His sword as a dragon, it could not be stopped as it crashed down on the white-haired ghost. Though the ghost possessed a wondrous weapon, it couldn't deploy all of the blade's power as it was only a half step king.

Dragonsoar was more powerful than Dragonrise as it contained the meaning of Lu Yun's fire of order.

Boom!

Silver sword light exploded in the air. The white-haired ghost shrieked with anguish before it vanished from existence.

“Catch!” Lu Yun kicked the blade to Li Zhen.

“Hahaha, nice blade, wonderful weapon!” Li Zhen put away his broken blade when he got the new one and infused his energy into the ghost-headed blade. Wails of agony echoed from the blade when the energy came in contact with a terrifyingly powerful will.

“You want to take over my mind instead? DIE!!”

BOOM.

Li Zhen flared with an enormous streak of blade light and pulverized the will in the blade.

“Hahaha!! Ghostly scum, come meet your deaths!” Brandishing his newly claimed weapon, Li Zhen charged and sank into the boundless ghostly armies.

“Danger!!” someone roared on the city walls. “The Demonward Formation is about to break, the ghosts will pour into the city! City Lord! Your Eminence Earthmartial! Please return with due haste!”

Craaaack.

Fissures crawled over the golden light of the formation as the golden light lost its hold over the ghosts.

Chapter 1335: The Immortal King’s Decree

Up in the sky, the Earthmartial and Dawn Kings took in the situation with unease. They could clearly see the cracks in the Demonward Formation; once it broke, uncontained tides of ghosts would immediately pour into the city and ravage it.

If Cloudexit fell, that would create a gaping hole in the border, allowing ghosts to penetrate straight into the heart of Cloudruin Region.

As strong as the Purpleclad, Crimsonclad, and Azureclad Dukes were, Cloudexit City was too big and the ghosts too many. They couldn’t stand guard over everything—the most they could do was ensure the integrity of certain passages into the depths of the region. No one had thought that the ghosts would break the city’s formation!

“Bastards!!” Purpleclad clenched his teeth. The eighteen kings still refused to make their move even after his rant!

It was too late now. The ten ghost kings suddenly exploded into a flurry of action and completely preoccupied the kings’ attention. Their ghostly energy also detonated in concentrated blasts against the golden light of the Demonward Formation.

Despair shrouded everyone’s hearts. If the formation broke, the cultivators would lose all defensive maneuvers and be swallowed by the hordes.

“Forget the passages, go back to the city! We need to hold Cloudexit at all costs!” Azureclad shrieked. “Qing Ting, you stay here and guard this one!”

Whoosh!

He streaked back to the city in a tail of light.

Bam!

Dominating force reached out of the void in the form of a bony claw half a kilometer long. It punched Azureclad away from the city.

“Kyakyakya—” A dry cackling that pierced the ears traveled throughout the city’s outskirts. “Azureclad Duke, didn’t you want to kill a ghost king? This seat has arrived!”

Green ghostfire danced in the air while a stark white skeleton walked out of the flames. A twelfth ghost king!

So there was another ghost king hidden in the battlefield! Since it’d resided in the void all this time, it’d heard everything that Azureclad said earlier.

“Good!” the duke snarled. “Since you dare come out, then this duke dares execute you!”

His hair exploded out of its bun and faint azure sword light enveloped his body. Brandishing his sword with fury, Azureclad stabbed at the ghost king.

At the same time, Purpleclad and Crimsonclad also suffered attacks from other ghost kings!

The three were on par with Bloodclad, but the latter had won only through tactics of mutual destruction. If Lu Yun hadn’t saved him at the last possible second, Bloodclad would’ve died to the ghost king. Now that the tides of battle swung in the ghosts’ favor, the three didn’t dare fight at full strength.

This was also because the three new ghost kings didn’t overly pressure them. If the three dukes threw caution to the wind, they could still gravely injure or even kill the kings.

With obstruction from the ghost kings, the three dukes could no longer rush to Cloudexit’s aid. The city’s formation continued to crack and crumble away; many ghosts passed through the light to enter the city proper.

“I’ll go!” Yet to fully recover, Bloodclad stood up within the sword formation and flourished his bloody curved blade. He was about to charge to Cloudexit City, but Lu Yun stood in his way.

“Don’t go, you’ll die.”

Bloodclad considered Lu Yun with a frosty, wordless look.

“There’s another ghost king keeping an eye on you from the void. You won’t make it to the city,” Lu Yun explained with a frown. “Safeguarding this passage is more important than anything!”

Bloodclad heaved a hefty sigh and enveloped himself with sword light, rushing in the direction of Azureclad.

The latter had joined hands with Qing Ting and almost overpowered their respective ghost king. He roared with anger when he saw his peer arrive, “Keep out of it, Bloodclad! It’s mine!”

“You idiot, this is war! We bear the lives of hundreds of millions on our backs!” Already irritated by his exchange with Lu Yun, Bloodclad’s annoyance soared to new heights when he saw how blind Azureclad was to the bigger picture.

“We need to kill this ghost king and help Crimsonclad and Purpleclad with theirs. Then the five of us can work together to kill the ten filth above us!” Bloodclad hectorated.

The wavering Demonward Formation could still hold for a while longer. If they managed to kill the ten ghost kings in the sky, the first ghostly offensive would be completely defused. An army without its kings was nothing to be concerned about; the eighteen kings on Cloudexit's side would be able to exterminate them with a flip of their hands.

"...fine!" Azureclad set his jaw. If he, Qing Ting, and Bloodclad coordinated their moves, they could absolutely kill a first step ghost king.

"Help me!" the ghost king suddenly shrieked.

"Are there more around??" Azureclad's eyes shot wide open when he heard the plea for help. "Attack with full force and kill this ghost king before its brethren comes—"

"Kyakyakya, this king will not save that kind of trash. Instead... break!!"

Rumble!

An earth shattering explosion blasted outside the city, shaking Cloudexit and the Demonward Formation. Ugly fissures snaked through the latter, decimating it into motes of golden light.

The Demonward Formation was broken! The ghost king hidden in the void was a second step king, thus it'd easily destroyed the teetering formation.

"What?!"

"We're doomed..." Collective shudders traveled through the cultivators in the city. All hope was lost, a state reflected in the ashen faces of the eighteen kings and four dukes in the air.

With the obliteration of the Demonward Formation, the golden light protecting six hundred million kilometers of territory also dissipated. The final line of defense was gone and Cloudexit City lay exposed in front of endless hordes of ghosts.

Annihilation was at hand.

"Kyakyakya—" the second step king cackled gleefully. "Little ones, destroy this city and turn all of its residents into one of us!"

Apart from the ghosts that the Moon King had brought, the bulk of the armies attacking Clouduin Region were transformed from former denizens of Starspace Region.

"Scree scree scree!!"

"Gyakgyakgyak!!"

Utter pandemonium broke out as tides of ghosts poured into the city to begin their massacre.

Hummm.

A curtain of lilac light rippled through the void, eradicating all enemies that rushed into the city. It blossomed from the city center and traveled outside, vaporizing any ghost it passed through without even leaving dust behind.

"What is that?!" screeched the second step ghost king. It slapped the lilac curtain of light.

Sizzle.

Black smoke drifted upward as the curtain negated the power of a second step king. Though it was broken in return, a second curtain of light swiftly appeared and expanded through the land.

“Retreat, retreat!” The second curtain of light contained a strength that made the ghosts quail. While the second step king could withstand it, none of the other ghosts here could.

“Retreat? Where to?” a clear voice rang out from Cloudexit City. “I am the Skyfall King of the Immortal City in Multitude Region, here with the Immortal King’s decree to quell the ghostly unrest in Cloudexit City. Die, vermin!”

He flung out a glyph that affixed itself to the ghost king’s head, reducing it to ash before it even had time to cry out.

Chapter 1336: Fan Boy

All was quiet around Cloudexit City. Cultivator and ghost alike paused to stare dumbly at the Skyfall King in the air. He was only a second step king, but he appeared incomparably strong and mysterious in this moment.

He’d slain a second step ghost king with a casual wave of his hand!

What kind of strength was that? Or was the glyph he’d released just that strong?

And, he’d said that he was here with the Immortal King’s decree—did the Immortal King really mean to set up a branch of the Immortal Pagoda in Cloudexit City?

Though Lu Yun had made that claim earlier, general belief held that the Immortal Pagoda would establish a branch only after the ghosts were defeated. Who would’ve thought that its representative would arrive at a crucial moment and save them all?

The Nineturns Sky Curtain Formation operated calmly over the city. Apart from the first curtain that the second step king had destroyed, the remaining eight gracefully spread throughout the land and reached a range of six hundred million kilometers that the previous Demonward Formation had encompassed.

Every single ghost they touched along the way disintegrated into dust.

“Retreat!” The ten ghost kings in the air and three on the ground left without hesitation. Their departure was the signal for hordes of ghosts to retreat like the tides.

“It’s over.” Everyone sagged to the ground. There was no cheering or celebrations, just blank stupefaction at their survival and the Skyfall King in the air.

He was here bearing a decree from the Immortal King. One glyph and one formation had dissuaded a hundred million ghosts! The title of the Immortal King engraved itself on everyone’s hearts.

The Azureclad Duke was silent, the Purpleclad Duke could find no words, and the Crimsonclad Duke sat on the ground. She propped her chin up with her hands and looked at the Skyfall King in the sky—his attention was on the withdrawing ghosts. No one knew what she was thinking.

“Champion Duke, you’re from the Trueriver Sect. Have you ever met the Immortal King?” One of Li Zhen’s arms had been chopped off and foreboding ghostly qi rose from the stump, but he didn’t care. He was more concerned about his whispered question to Lu Yun.

“The Immortal King is the master of the Immortal Pagoda and I’m just a disciple of the Trueriver Sect. How would I ever have the chance to meet him?” Lu Yun immediately denied.

“What a pity.” Li Zhen smacked his lips. “I would die happy if I ever met the Immortal King.”

Lu Yun shuddered and subconsciously shifted to the side.

“He’s only sent a representative, do you really need to go that far?” He tugged his lips up.

“You don’t know shit!” Li Zhen glared hotly at him. “Though the Immortal King isn’t a titled king through cultivation strength, he’s killed sixth step kings! He refined creation, broke the Supplemental Dao Alliance’s monopoly, and is one of the greatest personages in the Hongmeng!”

“He took pity on your sect and compensated you with nine thousand premium crystal veins. That’s endless treasure, and not only do you not cry with gratitude, but you suspect him instead!”

“You’re such a rat, a disgusting ingrate! I’m ashamed to be seen with you!” Li Zhen’s fervent denouncement sprayed spit all over Lu Yun’s face.

“...give me back the blade!” Lu Yun glared.

“Eh... ahem!” The hotly righteous Li Zhen immediately slapped a new expression on his face and asked carefully, “Isn’t the blade my compensation?”

“For what? Your rusted hunk of metal? Is it worth a ghost-headed blade?” Lu Yun harrumphed. “Meh, forget it. You can hang onto it for now.”

He felt a gust of cool air by his side as soon as he finished; Li Zhen was gone.

“But hey, when did I become so popular in the Hongmeng that any random person I meet is my fan boy?” A smile floated onto Lu Yun’s face.

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Cultivators who’d left the city dragged their weary selves back to Cloudexit, sometimes with the corpses of their comrades. No atmosphere of overwhelming sorrow or joy of victory developed—the ghosts still occupied Starspace Region and they would return at any moment. Instead, anxious unease hung over everyone’s hearts.

“A moment.” The Skyfall King unexpectedly spoke up when the eighteen kings were about to reenter the city.

“Yes?” Earthmartial frowned.

“The enemy’s spy is among you. Before we identify who is the ghost king, it would be better for all of you to remain outside,” Skyfall responded brusquely.

He'd been on the scene early on and waited in the background. He'd coldly watched the eighteen kings suspect and take precautions against each other, all of them refusing to act with their full strength due to fear of death. Their refusal to commit almost resulted in the reversal of an advantageous situation.

If the eighteen had brought out their strongest response from the very beginning and destroyed the ten ghost kings before anyone could react, the remainder of the ghosts on the battlefield would've been quickly overcome.

One had to know that out of the ghost kings in this expedition force, the strongest was the second step king that Skyfall had just killed with a Principal Nineheavens Talisman. In the current Starspace Region, the troops in this offensive wouldn't even count as cannon fodder.

"What did you say?!" Instead of Earthmartial replying, the Dawn King grew anxious. "This is ClouDEXIT City and I am the city lord! What right do you have to investigate us?!"

"You are the city lord of ClouDEXIT?" Skyfall sized up the other and nodded. "You're not anymore."

"This is ludicrous!" The Dawn King flew into a rage. "The ClouDRUIN King personally decreed this king as the city lord of ClouDEXIT and I command its core essence! Does the Immortal Pagoda seek to extend its grasping fingers into ClouDRUIN Region?!"

Earthmartial and the others frowned as well, displeased by Skyfall's actions. They were all kings of the region.

"The ClouDRUIN King personally bestowed your position?" Skyfall snorted. "Then I'll go back and ask that king if you're still worthy of being city lord when I have the time to."

"But Dawn King, I must commend your courage. All of the other city lords on the border can't resign their positions fast enough and make themselves scarce, but you hold onto your title with a death grasp," he remarked offhandedly.

Alarm bells rang for Earthmartial and the others; they swiftly widened the distance between themselves and the Dawn King.

"You!!" The Dawn King purpled with outrage before forcing himself to be calm. "How dare you cast aspersions on my character! This king's roots are in ClouDEXIT City and my people are here. How can I throw away my city and flee for my life??"

"Have I said anything about you?" Skyfall put away his supercilious smile. "Alright, all of you can just stay here for now. Someone will be along to determine which of you is the ghost king."

With that, he refrained from speaking further.

The eighteen kings exchanged numerous glances with each other, but no one said a word.

Their earlier performance had not gone unnoticed by the public, so most viewed their current straits with cool indifference. General confidence had wavered in the eighteen kings when Lu Yun killed the first spy, not to mention that no one below kingdom had the right to be involved in the affairs of kings.

Purpleclad and the others reentered the city, wholly unconcerned with the eighteen kings.

“Very well then, let us wait here a while and see what methods the Immortal Pagoda can wield to determine which of us is the ghost king.” Earthmartial nodded with equanimity.

A figure landed beside Skyfall before he finished speaking—the Meteorite King.

His arrival turned the Dawn King’s expression very unpleasant.

Chapter 1337: The Enforcers Arrive

“It’s you, Meteorite King! I thought you were dead!” The Dawn King looked grimly at the Meteorite King.

The latter grinned beautifully back and suddenly unsheathed his sword, slashing someone next to the Dawn King.

“What?!” shouted the king as he raised twin blades to block the attack. “What are you doing, Meteorite King??”

His target was a second step king who didn’t return the blow after he blocked it. Meteorite didn’t respond to his furious question; he pointed his king grade longsword at the man.

Eyes widened as the other seventeen kings first looked at the Dawn King, then at the second step Chime King.

What’s going on here? When I wanted to kill the Meteorite King, it was the Chime King who saved him. Why is he going after the Chime King now? The Dawn King’s head spun.

He and the Meteorite King had fought over a treasure a few thousand years ago and he’d almost killed Meteorite because he was stronger. The Chime King had stepped forward at a crucial moment to save Meteorite’s life.

It was due to that incident that the Meteorite King had had to split himself into two and set up the scheme at Meteorite Peak to attract Dusksnow Morningstar. Instead of him seizing the genius’ body, however, Lu Yun subdued him in the end.

The Dawn King had thought he was dead after all that, but here he was and attacking his savior the moment he appeared!

That matter over the treasure resulted in the Dawn King’s less than favorable impression of the Chime King, but he hadn’t been able to turn the other down when he wanted to help with the ghostly invasion. It now seemed that... there was something off about this Chime King.

“I owe you great thanks for saving me last time, Chime King, and telling me how to split out the part of me that was a ghost king. I was able to shrug off the body of a ghost king and become a real denizen of the Hongmeng.” Meteorite put away his sword with a merry twinkle.

“What?!” Shock rippled through the crowd.

“A ghost king?! The Meteorite King is a ghost king??”

“What’s going on??”

Despite their surprise, Earthmartial and the others didn't take brash action. They surreptitiously backed away and sealed off the void.

"I don't understand what you're talking about." The Chime King's tones dripped with menace.

"I said I was once a ghost king, are you not hearing that?" repeated Meteorite. "I've seen the light and become a real king of the realm, a king under the Immortal King's banner! But I must say, the method you taught me wasn't thorough enough. If my guess is correct, there's still a portion of ghostly power in you that hasn't been fully refined.

"Skyfall King, suppress him with a Principal Nineheavens Talisman!" he roared.

"I see!" Skyfall waved a hand and explosively magnified a talisman made of jade. It transformed into a small mountain and bore down on the Chime King.

"Don't try to hide, Chime King! This talisman only works on ghosts. If you're a being of the Hongmeng, it won't hurt you at all!" Meteorite laughed loudly.

"Meteorite King, you traitor! The Moon King won't let you get away with this!" screamed the Chime King as he abruptly dissolved into black smoke.

"Hah, trying to get away? Do you think the Principal Nineheavens Talismans of my Immortal Pagoda are just for decoration? Crush him!" Skyfall barked with laughter.

The small mountain of a talisman trembled and re-coalesced the black smoke about to fade away in the air. It condensed back into the Chime King's body, dissolved into smoke again, then faded out of existence.

The Meteorite King retrieved the talisman with a wave of his hand.

Earthmartial's eyes quickly darted around. He'd suspected a lot of people and even the Dawn King, but he never imagined that the ghost king among them would be the Chime King. He'd known the other for many years and felt that he knew the Chime King in and out.

A considerate and warmhearted individual, the Chime King loved to help others and was known throughout the land as the second Luminous King.

"Luminous King? Eh, the Lewd King more like, and he's hanging in front of the Immortal Pagoda's doors right now. I suppose that makes the truth about the Chime King less shocking," Earthmartial murmured to himself.

"Everyone, as I was once a ghost king, I should not be present at a place like this. I take my leave." Meteorite raised a cupped fist salute to the kings and left.

Earthmartial and the others wordlessly returned to Cloudexit City to prepare themselves for the coming battle. The ghosts may have withdrawn, but they hadn't retreated. The second salvo would be here soon enough.

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Inside Cloudexit City.

“You see that?? That’s the Immortal King!” Li Zhen once more sidled up to Lu Yun and gazed yearningly at the Skyfall and Meteorite Kings overhead. “He repels an army of a hundred million ghosts without coming in person, destroys two ghost kings, and subdues another one! He is truly the shining example for the realm.”

Lu Yun shrugged and didn’t go along with the conversation.

“Oh right, Champion Duke!” Li Zhen turned grave when he suddenly thought of something. “I didn’t have a proper weapon last time, which made it easy for you to break my sword. I have the ghost-headed blade now, so we can have a real fight!”

“I’m not in the mood.” Lu Yun flicked over a sideways glance and shook his head.

“Nuh uh, you’re the one who said it! We must have a fight or you have to give up your title!” Li Zhen wouldn’t let the matter go.

“I killed a ghost king,” Lu Yun remarked as he walked further into the city.

“That was the Bloodclad Duke!” Li Zhen argued.

“And I saved you and the Bloodclad Duke. We can fight, but after your arm grows out.” Lu Yun couldn’t be bothered. He was in a foul mood—he hadn’t been able to see through the Chime King with the Spectral Eye. How many more ghost kings like him were there in the Hongmeng?

Though his talisman had killed the ghost king, he hadn’t gained a new Infernum like he had with the Meteorite King. This was not a good sign.

“The Starspace King is one of the top ten kings in the Enforcer Alliance. They’ll have to respond to his death.” Lu Yun looked around, but didn’t see anyone from the alliance.

It was highly likely that the same fate had befallen the Scorch King. This was blatant face slapping; that the enforcer had yet to arrive was testament to the alliance’s self-control.

“There are a hundred and thirty-six cities on the border of Clouduin and Starspace Region. They form a massive chain of defense to protect Clouduin Region,” Li Zhen murmured when he heard Lu Yun’s words.

“And?” Lu Yun looked at him.

“It isn’t just Clouduin Region—the Darklight and Skyruin Regions neighboring Starspace also need to staff large quantities of cultivators and arcane beasts for defense. The Enforcer Alliance won’t care about a tiny Clouduin City.” Li Zhen rolled his eyes at Lu Yun like he was looking upon a country bumpkin.

“Do you know why I’m at Clouduin?” Lu Yun smiled.

Li Zhen shook his head.

“Do you know why the four dukes are here? Or why the Immortal King wants to establish a branch of the Immortal Pagoda here?”

Li Zhen paused, at a complete loss for words.

“Because ClouDEXIT lies along the shortest path to Redbud Region. The ghosts want the purple crystal mines in Redbud Region, so the ghosts in Starspace will focus their attention on us,” Lu Yun clarified lazily. “You throw yourself into the thick of things without understanding what’s going on first. Are you trying to protest to the realm that your lifespan is too long?”

“Ah, here comes the Enforcer Alliance. The real battle is about to begin.” He jerked his head upward to see a black mass of cultivators descend from the sky—black robed enforcers.

Chapter 1338: Taking the Ghost-Headed Blade

The black robe enforcers of the Enforcer Alliance carried Justice and Execution Tokens on them. They could easily kill any living being beneath titled kingdom—even powerful half step kings trembled with fear at the sight of the two tokens.

Not only that, but the black robes themselves were immense experts. They were highly experienced, peak superior realm cultivators with hundreds of battles under their belt. These were the elites of the Enforcer Alliance!

Thus, Zhuo Bufan arranging that identity for Lu Yun and the little fox had drawn some criticism at first. But after Lu Yun displayed the power of a supplemental grandmaster in Redbud City and defeated the tide of beasts, the censure faded away.

Black robes were the strongest group in the Hongmeng beneath half step king. The Enforcer Alliance was deeply beloved by the people in their line of work, not only because of the one hundred and eight kings at its helm, but also because of the mighty enforcers.

Kings didn’t have the time or effort to spare for maintaining order between the chaos and Hongmeng. Half step kings were too busy preparing and accumulating strength for their ascension. Only this exemplary group of enforcers could see to the peace and tranquility of the realm.

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“Black robes!” Envy and admiration flashed through Li Zhen’s eyes. “My old man sent me to join the alliance so I could become a black robed enforcer, but they didn’t want me and sent me away.

“According to the stories, the Immortal King was a black robe before he grew into his fame. Tsk tsk tsk, talented heroes abound within the Enforcer Alliance alright! Just look at who was once part of them!” Yearning filled his voice at the sight of the newly arrived reinforcements.

“What? Even you weren’t selected to be a black robed enforcer?” Lu Yun blinked with surprise.

Li Zhen was a powerful half step king with solid foundations and extraordinary battle strength. All of that had been displayed when he fought the ghosts, yet he didn’t meet the bar to gain admittance to the Enforcer Alliance?

Lu Yun knew that while it was Zhuo Bufan pulling the strings for him and the little fox to become black robes, the final deciding factor was the venerated one. These black robes are truly a force to be reckoned with!

“That’s right,” Li Zhen responded dejectedly. “That was almost a hundred thousand years ago, when Hua Fengwen just became a titled king. The alliance sent out their three weakest black robes and told me that I could join them if I defeated any of them.

“But...” He didn’t continue since it was nothing worth talking about.

“It looks like I’ve underestimated the Enforcer Alliance.” Lu Yun sucked in a sharp breath. The alliance’s true power was nothing like what it demonstrated on the surface!

It looked like they counted only a hundred and eight kings among their ranks, but the truth was that no one knew how many they really possessed. That the Starspace King ranked in their top ten was likely another misleading statement.

Were a hundred and eight kings enough to police the entire Hongmeng given the Immortal Region, Ten Valleys of Evil, and countless pockets of mysterious forces?

In the eyes of ordinary cultivators, kings were lofty existences far out of reach. The hundred and eight reigned from above and oversaw the realm. But from Lu Yun’s current heights, if the alliance really did possess only a hundred and eight kings, they’d be overthrown the next day.

He hadn’t understood anything when he first arrived in the Hongmeng; the mists were beginning to part and he could see a bit of the truth.

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“Li Zhen! I hear you’ve gotten your hands on a sweet weapon. Bring it out for a look.” Three young men blocked their way when Lu Yun and Li Zhen reentered the city.

Their leader bore a strong resemblance to Li Zhen, but was taller and more muscular. He leered maliciously at Li Zhen’s ghost-headed sword. The group’s fashionable outfits were clean and lacked traces of any fighting. Plainly, they hadn’t left the city to battle the ghosts.

“Li Quan, this is my weapon.” Li Zhen subconsciously backed away, then stopped when he thought of something and maintained a firm grip on the blade with his singular hand. He coolly stared down their interloper.

“Yo, who would’ve thought that Li Zhen would find his balls after losing his arm? He draws his sword on elder brothers now!” smirked a man with long and narrow eyes standing next to Li Quan. “Not bad eh? You’ve gained some courage after fighting the ghosts.”

His outfit was luxurious and his words oily and smooth. He was evidently a rich young master, but also very strong as he was peak superior realm. It was hard to tell if he was a half step king.

The third member of their group was dressed in a similar fashion and didn’t say anything. Instead, he slowly assessed Lu Yun and Li Zhen with a calculating gaze.

Lu Yun frowned faintly and took a step back, giving Li Zhen some room. This was obviously a Li Clan matter and it wasn’t appropriate for an outsider like him to be involved. Though he’d said that he was lending the ghost-headed blade to Li Zhen, it was a gift for all intents and purposes. It wasn’t up to him to determine ownership of the weapon, and it would only prove that Li Zhen wasn’t destined to wield the blade if he couldn’t keep it.

“At least you’ve got a brain,” snorted the narrow-eyed man when he saw Lu Yun remove himself from the situation. “If it wasn’t for the Azureclad Duke reserving your sword, I’d kill you and take it right now.”

“I back away only because I don’t want to get dragged into your clan’s internal affairs, not because I’m afraid of you. If you dare speak rudely to me again, I’ll butcher you,” Lu Yun sniffed coldly.

“Hahaha!!” Li Quan brayed with laughter. “Kid, do you really think you’re on the same level as the dukes just because you gave yourself the title of Champion Duke? What a prancing clown, get away from me!

“Li Zhen, on your knees and hand over the blade!” He ignored Lu Yun and turned to Li Zhen with a shout.

“Don’t do anything!” Li Zhen took a step to the side when he sensed Lu Yun ready to make a move. “Li Quan is the son of the clan’s patriarch and his status is very lofty—”

Slap!

Li Quan darted forward when Li Zhen was speaking and slapped him viciously across the face. He almost broke the heavily injured youth’s neck.

Li Zhen flew backward, smashed into a wall, and weakly slid down it. Ignoring Lu Yun, Li Quan strode over to his kinsman and snatched the weapon from the one-armed youth’s hand.

“Hahaha, now this is what I call a weapon! Only a blade like this is worthy of me!” Chortling merrily, he hung the blade on his waist and waved at his followers, sauntering off into the distance.

They didn’t bother with another glance at Lu Yun. In their eyes, he was a dead man walking since the Azureclad Duke had set his sights on the young man. It was only a matter of time before the sword in his hands became the duke’s.

“Stop right there!” came a crisp, female shout.

Chapter 1339: Qing Ting

“Give the weapon back to Li Zhen.” A smear of faint azure appeared out of thin air and blocked the three’s way.

“Hoi, where did this girl come from, to stick her nose into the affairs of men?” Li Quan’s two sidekicks hooted with laughter and one of them reached out a hand, wanting to caress the girl’s face.

Lu Yun shuddered, mentally reciting a prayer for him. Indeed—

“Ahhh!!” shrieked the young man in luxurious clothing now that one of his arms was broken.

Li Quan’s pupils constricted violently; he hadn’t seen the girl move at all! This seemingly harmless little girl was an unexpected powerhouse!

“Little girl, who are you and are you sure you want to interfere in the affairs of my clan?!” he shouted.

“I said, give the weapon back to him.” Qing Ting’s expression was frosty and her tones even chillier. Though she’d spent the last part of battle supporting the Azureclad Duke against a ghost king, she’d still kept an eye on Lu Yun’s part of the battlefield.

Thus, she'd witnessed Lu Yun obtain the ghost-headed blade, gift it to Li Zhen, and Li Zhen rushing into endless hordes of ghosts with it.

She'd been stunned by his fearless actions—while he was a half step king, he'd only just reached that threshold and he wasn't very strong. But someone like him remained steadfast in the face of insurmountable enemies and placed himself in the way of death multiple times!

Though he often took shelter in the Champion Duke's sword formation, he only did so whenever he was on death's doorstep.

How dare these three imbeciles—trash who didn't even leave the city—seize the weapon from someone of great merit in war?! That Qing Ting didn't kill them outright was already showing face to the Li Clan!

Qing Ting was the Azureclad Duke's younger sister and the beloved princess of Coiling Dragon City. The Li Clan wasn't part of the city proper, but resided under the Coiling Dragon banner. The city had helped them gain independence from Dragonhollow Mountain, and it was thanks to the city's help that the old dragons of the mountain hadn't exterminated the clan long ago.

Qing Ting had cultivated in secret for most of her life. This time, the vicious ghosts were plainly looking to Redbud Region with their occupation of Starspace, so she was one of many geniuses that various Hongmeng factions and clans sent out to defend the realm.

Li Quan was the son of the Li patriarch; it wasn't a surprise that he didn't recognize her.

As for Qing Ting, she was on the premises because she was executing her brother's mission: keep an eye on the Champion Duke and don't let him get away.

"You've got some brawn, little girl, to hurt someone of the Li Clan and covet our great treasure!" Li Quan chuckled coldly and suddenly struck Qing Ting with the ghost-headed blade.

"Shameless fool!" Flying into a rage, she sent a flash of green light through the air the second he moved.

"AHHH!!" shrieked Li Quan. His hand that wielded the blade was dropping to the ground!

"So fast!" Lu Yun's eyes widened. "Her sword is refined from Earth Stone Magneticus and the flash of green light was sword light from the weapon!"

As a mighty half step king, Li Quan was many times stronger than Li Zhen. However, he'd lost his right hand the second he made a move!

Clang!

Li Quan's right hand and the ghost-headed blade clattered to the ground. Qing Ting imitated Lu Yun of earlier and kicked the blade to Li Zhen.

"Catch," she said faintly.

"Eh? Huh?" Li Zhen looked blankly at his returned weapon, unable to react for the moment. "...right, why didn't I think of that?!" he exclaimed. "I didn't need to go against his sword light when we fought, I could just hack off the Champion Duke's arm!"

“Idiot,” Lu Yun cursed with a smile. “My Stellar Sword is a flying sword and yours is a battle sword. Flying swords can fly, can yours move after it leaves your hand?”

“You’re totally right!” Li Zhen nodded seriously.

Qing Ting:

“Look after your weapon, I’m not helping you if someone else takes it again,” she said shortly.

“My deepest thanks to this lady for helping me. If I might know your name...”

Lu Yun kicked his butt when Li Zhen asked for Qing Ting’s name. “What, are you trying to get a name for your kinsman to take revenge on?”

Li Quan glared at Qing Ting and Lu Yun with malice while the remaining man with narrowed eyes stood helplessly where he was. Slicing off Li Quan’s hand so cleanly meant the girl had the right to be a titled duke.

“No thanks are needed, just use your blade to kill some more ghosts.” Qing Ting waved a hand, puffed her chest out, and left with her head held high like a proud little phoenix.

“Eh? I think I’m forgetting something... Oh, brother wants me to keep an eye on the Champion Duke so he doesn’t run away.” Qing Ting smacked her forehead and melted into the void.

“Hehehe, looks like she’s here to keep you under surveillance!” Li Zhen laughed gleefully. “A man’s wealth is his own ruin because it causes greed in others!”

“Uhh, the same goes for you too? That Li Quan is still staring at your ghost-headed blade.”

Li Zhen quickly fished out a pill and swallowed it, prompting his arm to regrow. His wounds began healing over as well.

“Investigate! Find out who that brat is!” Li Quan commanded savagely when Lu Yun and Li Zhen left.

“Young master, there are only so many in the Hongmeng who have the right to be a titled duke. She obviously has the strength, but she’s not well known. She’s probably no major heavyweight,” one of his followers said.

“Then have my uncle cripple her cultivation and send her to my room! I’ll have her begging for death after cutting off my hand and taking my weapon!” His hand had already grown back; this kind of injury was minor in the realm and could be easily cured by a pill. The humiliation he’d suffered today, however, wouldn’t be so easily erased.

He was the patriarch’s only son and the young patriarch of the clan. That wench had cut off his hand in broad daylight and spat in the face of the entire Li Clan in doing so!

The patriarch of the Li Clan was a sixth step king!

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The Immortal Pagoda officially established a branch in ClouDEXIT City.

City Lord Dawn King emptied one of the most prosperous neighborhoods in the city. A tower nine stories tall rose from it, the same as the one in Multitude City. The day it did so, all sorts of pills, treasures, talismans, and formations filled its shelves.

None of the prices differed from the ones posted in Multitude City. King grade flying swords, treasures, talismans, and formations were available for sale, taking the city by storm.

No one had imagined that the Immortal King would offer king grade supplemental items on top of opening a branch in Cloudexit City! These were the most desired resources in the war against the vicious ghosts.

Even more unexpected was the Haotian Tower's appearance the next day. It was erected in front of the Immortal Pagoda and ninety-nine stories tall just like the first one. It, too, sold a variety of supplemental items, and at half price compared to the Immortal Pagoda.

Chapter 1340: Hongmeng Level Shut-In

Cloudexit City benefited the most from the antagonism between the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower. Countless cultivators flooded both shops the moment they opened for business, furiously buying everything they could lay their hands on.

Of course, Haotian Tower's prices were cheaper and all of their treasures refined by supplemental kings. Therefore, it was the more popular out of the two.

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The Li Clan naturally possessed a stronghold in Cloudexit City, one with three kings in residence. They hadn't offered their help to the other seventeen Cloudexit kings. In their eyes, those seventeen were just a bunch of country bumpkins; they didn't share a similar language.

First step kings of Azure Dragon Region had progressed beyond forcefields to employ influence, but the seventeen kings of Cloudexit City—including Earthmartial—still utilized forcefields.

Back on his clan's grounds, Li Zhen was neither punished nor had his movements restricted. Once his injuries healed completely, he immediately ran back into the city and found Lu Yun.

Does this guy have a dog's nose or something? How did he find me so quickly? Lu Yun was shopping to his heart's content in Haotian Tower. Many of Immortal Pagoda's wares were essentially sold at cost, so Haotian Tower selling theirs for half of that was just losing money while doing business.

He'd be an utter fool not to take advantage of this, thus here Lu Yun was.

"You, you, you!! You're a disciple of the Trueriver Sect, how can you be purchasing goods at Haotian Tower? You're a traitor!" Li Zhen beat his chest with anguish when he found Lu Yun.

"How the heck am I a traitor?" Lu Yun responded with resignation. "The goods here are of excellent quality and reasonable prices, they're half of what's on sale at the Immortal Pagoda! Am I supposed to spend more crystals to buy the same thing?"

“Of course you’re supposed to go to the Immortal Pagoda!” Li Zhen widened his eyes at Lu Yun. “Though they’re a bit more expensive, I believe that you pay for what you get! There’s nothing good that can be found cheap!”

“Blockhead.” Lu Yun rolled his eyes and turned back to the shelves.

“But the Trueriver Sect...” Li Zhen protested feebly.

“The sect was too weak to protect our own territory in Multitude City—it was only natural that we withdrew. Besides, it’s not like the Haotian Tower killed anyone in my sect. It’s just a piece of land, we’ll take it back when we’re strong enough.” Lu Yun grabbed a random talisman and stuffed it in special bags of holding that Haotian Tower had refined for this very purpose.

“Hahaha!! This little brother speaks truly!” Dressed in golden robes, an elder with sunken cheeks approached Lu Yun. “This old man is Situ Qing. I am the grand steward of the third floor of Haotian Tower.”

“Greetings to Steward Situ!” Lu Yun adopted a solemn expression and bowed to the old man.

This steward wasn’t a king, but he was a powerful half step king. He was likely on par with Li Quan.

“Hahaha, is this little brother a disciple of the Trueriver Sect?” Situ Qing asked merrily.

“Champion Duke of Trueriver Sect, at your service!” Lu Yun lifted his chin slightly, every inch a proud genius fresh into his first journey across the realm.

“So you’re the Champion Duke!” Situ Qing turned serious. “They say that the Champion Duke possesses a Stellar Sword refined by the Immortal King himself. I wonder if I may...”

“Take it.” Lu Yun chucked the sword into Situ Qing’s hands before he could finish.

The elder ceased to speak after receiving the sword. He observed it carefully, not to note its ingredients, but its refinement method!

Most items sold in the Immortal Pagoda were the work of supplemental grandmaster puppets; very few of them came from Lu Yun’s hands. The puppets could handle even king grade treasures if a hundred of them, and a time formation, worked on one at the same time.

Haotian Tower had been unable to discern Lu Yun’s level of supplemental dao in all this time, and he’d only become more mysterious after he and the little fox defeated the Alchemist and Wild Formation Kings with pure supplemental dao.

Studying the Stellar Sword was the easiest way to peek into the enigmatic Immortal King’s level of strength.

On Lu Yun’s side, he’d never taken seriously the Haotian Tower and its idiotic way of competing with him. The supplemental kings and grandmasters of the Supplemental Dao Alliance rarely left home. On the rare occasions they did, they headed for areas of danger filled with treasure and scant on people.

In his eyes, these kings and grandmasters were Hongmeng level shut-ins. It'd be one thing if it was the Dao King personally holding down the fort in the Haotian Tower, but with someone like the Runaway King at the helm, it posed no threat whatsoever.

How would a price war affect the Immortal Pagoda? They lacked for everything but purple crystals!

"What a fine Stellar Sword. The Immortal King's supplemental realm is so marvelous that the rest of us cannot hope to aspire to his level!" Situ Qing sighed with amazement.

"But of course!" Li Zhen looked around proudly, as if the words were meant for him.

"Champion Duke, is this sword for sale?" the elder suddenly asked.

"Haotian Tower is as shameless as expected! You cast greedy eyes on the treasures of your customers through the course of a simple conversation!" Li Zhen ranted before Lu Yun had a chance to respond.

Lu Yun grabbed him by the collar and yanked Li Zhen behind him. He smiled apologetically, "My friend fought the ghosts a few days ago and broke his brains. Please don't mind him, grand steward."

"Ahem!" Situ Qing coughed awkwardly.

"It's not impossible for me to let go of the sword... But with the ghosts at the city gates and another great battle about to break out, I would lack a proper weapon if I did so. In that case, a hundred and eight thousand king grade flying swords! Yes, I think that's right, I'll sell the Stellar Sword to Haotian Tower for that price!" Lu Yun mused with an expression of reluctance.

Situ Qing shuddered; the sword suddenly felt hot in his hands. He quickly shoved it back into Lu Yun's embrace and spoke no more on the matter.

A hundred and eight thousand king grade flying swords?

They wouldn't be able to come up with that much if they sold the entire tower!

Though Haotian Tower was staffed by Hongmeng level shut-ins who had no idea how to do business, they still possessed common sense. If they took the sword by force today, the Immortal Pagoda would rise tomorrow and keep them so firmly underfoot that they wouldn't be able to lift their heads.

Though Stellar Stone Magneticus was a treasure beyond imagination to outsiders, it wasn't all that rare to the kings of the Supplemental Dao Alliance.

"Heh heh heh, this old man has business elsewhere and must be on my way." Situ Qing quickly left the scene. He'd used a few tricks to record the supplemental dao achievements on the sword; he had to go make a report to the king in residence at the tower.

Lu Yun shrugged indifferently and continued his shopping, sweeping everything useful, useless, and in between into his bag.

Li Zhen swallowed hard and asked carefully, "You've accumulated at least a few million premium purple crystals on your bill... Do you have that much on you?"

“The sect master gave me ten crystal veins before I left and told me to spend them wisely, but that I can’t lose face for the sect either.” Lu Yun cracked open a seal on one of the veins and allowed its unique aura to seep out.

Li Zhen stared wordlessly at the sky. Why is there such a difference between people sometimes? This guy is so treasured by the Trueriver Sect, but no one loves me in my clan and they wanted to pack me off to the Enforcer Alliance.