

Necropolis 1361

Chapter 1361: Sneaking In

Five billion kilometers away—almost on the edge of Starspace Region—Lu Yun, Qing Ting, and Li Zhen slunk out of a safe spot.

“I’d thought that the Purpleclad Duke had betrayed the realm. Who would’ve imagined that he was pulling this over the Moon King instead?” Lu Yun stroked his chin.

“Betray the realm? You’re kidding. The Moon King killed the duke’s master, how would he ever help her after that?” Qing Ting continued seriously, “Is this the product of your musings from several days ago?”

They’d been surrounded by the light of a formation the second the crystal veins exploded and transported to this spot—the spot where Lu Yun had spent some time contemplating life.

“Yep!” Lu Yun nodded matter-of-factly. “Of course we should press forward with resolve and not be daunted by death, but we can’t just throw our lives away for no good reason either. What’s wrong with fighting the good fight another day? We can beat the shit out of existences on our level or a bit stronger, but if we run into entities we can’t overcome, it’s better to skedaddle as fast as we can.”

“This is a transportation formation! You set up a formation here without us realizing and also set one up for us, then connected the two still without us realizing!” the quiet Li Zhen spoke up. “This is something else from the Immortal King, isn’t it? Are you actually his son?”

He looked suspiciously at Lu Yun, who gifted him an eye roll in return.

This kind of lifesaving formation was one of his new deductions. It was a one-time use invention that transported the user away as soon as they encountered force that exceeded their limits of tolerance.

“Quiet.” Lu Yun’s eyes lit up. “The Moon King is summoning all ghost kings in the region. C’mon, let’s go! This is our perfect chance to get close to the central crystal vein!”

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The explosion from ten thousand premium crystal veins and Detonation Talismans spanned a radius of five billion kilometers. Everything in the heart of the explosion was flattened to level ground. All ghosts beneath kingdom near Starspace City were vaporized, including every single ghost crafting the ghost tomb beneath the surface.

Thus, the Moon King had no other choice but to summon every ghost outside to rebuild the ghost tomb. Completing it to summon an unparalleled existence was her main goal. The ghost tomb’s foundations would remain as long as the central crystal vein remained intact. She wished to finish the layout first; the requisite purple crystals could be slowly collected later.

“But the Purpleclad Duke is still too young.” A smile curved the Moon King’s lips. “Though his sabotage has cost me greatly, he’s also grievously injured the will of the great dragon in the central crystal vein. That takes care of a lot of trouble for me.”

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Sensing the Moon King's summons, Lu Yun and his companions emerged and headed once more to Starspace City.

Hummm.

Blue blade light suddenly descended from the sky and blocked their way. Li Quan and two other half step kings landed from above.

"Hahaha!! There are three first step kings here. If we fight them and hold them off, we'll gain the right to be titled dukes!" Li Quan's injury from his defeat at Lu Yun's hands had completely healed. He grasped a new king grade blade and leered at the trio.

"Li Quan, look at the ghost-headed blade that that ghost king wields... doesn't it look like your brother Li Zhen's weapon?" A man in a blue combat outfit next to Li Quan scrutinized Li Zhen's weapon.

"Li Zhen's weapon is from the Champion Duke taking it from a ghost, so of course they would have more. But... that one really does look a lot like Li Zhen's... Leave that ghost king to me, you guys can take the other two!" Li Quan roared and smashed his blade down on Li Zhen. His move also encompassed the meaning of dragon transformation that Lu Yun had used on him that day!

It would seem that he'd mastered the same lesson when Lu Yun taught it to Li Zhen.

"Let's make this fast!" Lu Yun frowned and shouted lowly. If they spent too much time here, they would lose the opportunity to approach the central crystal vein.

"Come at me!" Li Zhen snarled and released biting ghostly qi through his weapon. It collected as a ghost dragon and howled at Li Quan. The ghost-headed blade was the ghost's treasure to begin with and everything about Li Zhen was now of that race, thanks to the Transformation Talisman. The appearance of ghostly force unleashed the blade's true power.

He riposted with a stroke that also encompassed dragon transformation.

"What?!" Li Quan gasped with shock. His king grade weapon shattered from the blow and he flew out backwards.

Li Zhen had defeated Li Quan with one move!

On their side, Lu Yun and Qing Ting also defeated their opponents with the easiest method possible—in one move.

"The master's summons is urgent, we go!" Lu Yun imitated the raspy voice of the ghosts.

Instead of killing the three cultivators, the trio raised a pillar of black flame and rushed toward Starspace City.

"How... how are those three ghost kings so strong?!" Li Quan and his friends trembled. They'd thought they were infinitely close to becoming titled dukes, that they would gain the experience they needed if they didn't lose to a ghost king and could become titled dukes in full.

But those three first step ghost kings had defeated them with a clean move in the simplest way possible!

Thank goodness they hadn't killed the cultivators because they'd been in a rush.

“Why did that ghost king seem... so familiar?” Li Quan murmured to himself as he looked at where Li Zhen had disappeared to. “That traitor’s son has come to Starspace Region with his sinful blood. I need to find a chance to get rid of that mutt, or it’ll be trouble for us sooner or later. His traitorous father caused so much trouble and loss for the clan a hundred thousand years ago...”

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Having defeated Li Quan with one move, Li Zhen was in fine fettle. He’d punched through a huge bottleneck and his cultivation leapt forward.

This time, the trio kept pace with other first step ghost kings traveling to Starspace Region, as opposed to using any special methods. All of the ghosts scattered around the region were rushing to its capital. There were roughly a thousand first step kings among them—an absolutely staggering number!

If just the first step kings alone charged ClouDEXIT City... it was very likely the city would fall.

Of course, Hongmeng cultivators wouldn’t let the ghosts march unimpeded to Redbud Region. ClouDEXIT City was the closest to Starspace Region, but there were several other major cities and fortresses after it.

While the Moon King’s goal was Redbud Region, she wasn’t in a hurry. Once the ghost tomb was complete, the region would immediately be theirs!

Attacking ClouDRUIN Region and ClouDEXIT City was just to gather the Hongmeng’s kings and geniuses at ClouDEXIT. She was collecting food for the one nurtured in the ghost tomb!

“Enter the central crystal vein and use your ghostly force and fire to nurture it. Assimilate it now!” she commanded when all of the ghosts and ghost kings congregated at Starspace City.

The ghosts burrowed underground without hesitation and melded their bodies into the ghost vein there.

The ghost vein was the corrupted half of the central crystal vein; the other half was occupied by the great dragon of Starspace Region. Its will had been gravely injured by the explosion of ten thousand crystal veins and it was very weak.

Now that countless ghosts added their strength to the ghost vein, the will inside that one flared with power and began devouring the great dragon.

Lu Yun, Qing Ting, and Li Zhen made their way inside with the other ghosts. They didn’t dare move together. Instead, they entered separately and found their way to each other again through the natural movement of the crowd.

So this is the central crystal vein of Starspace Region! Lu Yun exclaimed with awe when he saw the crystal vein that’d already taken the shape of a dragon.

It was mammoth and seemed to run on without end. Reaching throughout Starspace Region, it supplied energy for the entire region, but was also confined to this tiny area by a peculiar force and couldn’t move.

Its upper half sparkled with the radiance of the stars, like a sleeping dragon. Foreboding ghost qi emanated from its lower half—the portion that'd been corrupted. Large tombs towered around it, forming a mausoleum. The layout of the mausoleum was the structure of the ghost tomb.

With mausoleum as tomb!

The great dragon was the heart of the tomb. Once it was buried, the ghost tomb would be truly complete.

It was an intricate method with superb craftsmanship excelling nature, but for the moment, all of the tombs were broken wrecks. Instead of rebuilding them, the Moon King had decided to erode the dragon's will first before rebuilding the ghost tomb.

The dragon was a being born of the Hongmeng and blessed with its favor at every possible second. Unexpected developments might occur if things dragged on, so the Moon King had decided to sacrifice her troops to conquer the great dragon first.

Chapter 1362: Conveying the Dragonquake Scripture

The upper half of the great dragon that had yet to be tainted was occupied by all sorts of ghosts. They furiously injected their energy and ghostfire into the dragon, trying to corrupt it.

Lu Yun, Qing Ting, and Li Zhen imitated the ghosts and laid down on a pristine portion of the great dragon. They aped the movements in their surroundings and seemingly propelled their energy and ghostfire into the dragon.

When ghosts exhausted their ghostfire, they dispersed upon the wind and didn't leave behind even their ghost crystal. Lu Yun and his companions, however, wouldn't be affected by this. Their ghostfire was a result of the Transformation Talisman and not their core essence.

"What should we do? The great dragon is going to be completely corrupted at this rate!" Qing Ting couldn't bear to see it. She could clearly sense a fragmented will that teetered on crumbling in the great dragon. It resisted with every fiber of its being, fighting back against the boundless ghostly force.

Though it wasn't alive, it had its own spirit!

More importantly was that it took roughly a hundred breaths for a first step king to fully channel its ghostfire into the dragon. They fell apart after that interval and went up in smoke.

Thus, the trio would be revealed after a hundred breaths.

In the space that held the great dragon, there were some high level ghost kings keeping a watchful eye over everything. They closely monitored the scene of ghosts, low and mid level ghost kings to prevent anything untoward from happening.

The ghosts were no fools.

Lu Yun and the others had made it inside only through the capability of his Transformation Talismans. It would be difficult for them to do anything else.

Many low level ghost kings were unwilling to give their lives up like this, but as soon as a hint of dissatisfaction appeared, the high level kings cut them down where they stood.

“Jinse!” Lu Yun contacted Jinse. She was in high spirits as she’d ascended to eighth level kingdom by killing the Turtle King. The Tome of Life and Death and hundreds of karmic fruit had played a pivotal role in her victory.

“Send word to Hua Fengwen and the Acclaim King, have them lead cultivators from the City of Immortals and attack Starspace Region! They must start the battle within fifty breaths!” he ordered decisively. A high level king could span the entire region in the blink of an eye.

“Understood!” Jinse snapped to attention and relayed Lu Yun’s command to the Acclaim King and Hua Fengwen.

The two leapt into motion. They knew that Lu Yun was in the Starspace Region—since he’d given this kind of command, that meant his affairs had reached a critical point.

One hundred and eight kings rose into the air, forming a troop of sixth step kings by the border of Starspace Region. The Acclaim King fully unleashed her cultivation as a ninth step king as well, howling at the head of an army that streamed out from the depths of the Immortal Pagoda.

“A ninth step king!!”

“The presence of a ninth step king!” Cloudexit City boiled over. Why had a ninth step king suddenly appeared and started the final battle against Starspace Region?

“They’re from the Immortal Pagoda! Something must’ve happened in the region, let’s go take a look too!”

“Chaaaaarge!!”

All of Cloudexit and other cities on the border sensed the disturbance in the situation. After slight hesitation, cultivators in the cities followed the Immortal Pagoda’s troops. Everyone knew that something big was about to happen.

The pagoda wouldn’t reveal their ninth step king and charge into Starspace Region for no reason at all.

“The Immortal Pagoda is on the move, we need to go too,” a king in residence at the Haotian Tower said indifferently. “They’ve already taken the first mover advantage when it comes to the ghost crystals. If we fall behind again, they’ll eclipse us entirely!”

“CHAAAARGE!” A ninth step king appeared in Haotian Tower the next moment and led a hundred mid level kings into Starspace Region.

The Purpleclad Duke paled when he saw the vast armies streaming into his former home.

“It looks like I was wrong... though I took vengeance on the Moon King with my attack, I also grievously injured the great dragon’s will. The Immortal Pagoda has discovered that and started the last battle ahead of time!” Purpleclad murmured to himself.

It wasn't yet time for the final push as neither Hongmeng morale was high enough nor the ghosts' foundation sufficiently undermined. There were still countless high level ghost kings lurking in Starspace Region.

Starting the final fight now would only lead to a pyrrhic victory—more a loss than a gain.

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“Moon King!” The Acclaim King sent the Purple Stellar Mountain crashing down with a wave of her hand. Crackling with the vivid blue of Stellar Light Magneticus, it bore down on the Moon King.

She jumped with shock; she knew of Acclaim's existence, but hadn't imagined that the king would come for her head now! And it wasn't just her, there was another ninth step king with her at the head of a host of cultivators!

“So the final battle is finally upon us...” A silver moon rose behind her to smash brutally into the Purple Stellar Mountain.

Kabooooom.

Scintillating silver and blue radiance exploded in the air.

“Heavens above, we need to get out of here!” Unaffiliated kings following behind the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower contingents gaped and turned tail. It wasn't until now that they understood the great battle of Starspace City wasn't something that low or mid level kings could participate in.

Anyone below titled kingdom would just be cannon fodder—the Azureclad and Purpleclad Dukes included!

“Get out of here? Where too?” Strange laughter brewed around them as another ninth step ghost king materialized in the void.

There was another ninth step ghost king in Starspace Region, and it commanded multiple high level ghost kings in reinforcement!

“Kill!” The ninth step king from Haotian Tower revealed himself and blocked the new ghost king. Meanwhile, kings from the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower rushed the group of high level kings. Jinse and Hua Fengwen were also among them.

Ringling explosions rocked the void—king grade Detonation Talismans and a variety of other explosive treasures that sent the ghost kings into a frenzied caper to avoid injury.

King grade treasures demonstrated their greatest strength only when grasped by kings! Those below titled kingdom, even those such as Azureclad and Purpleclad, at most borrowed the treasures' power. Those were two different concepts entirely.

Additionally, the treasures that the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower kings wielded were customized for them. The items contained their own dao rules, granting sixth step kings enough power to temporarily withstand a seventh step king if they grouped up in teams.

The purple crystal cannons once more flared with pillars of light and blasted Starspace Region with a thundering barrage. An image of Lu Yun appeared in Cloudexit City again and he lobbed terrifying formations into Starspace. They began dispelling the ghostly qi of the region as soon as they landed.

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The space below ground that held the great dragon was also flung into disarray. Ghosts howled and wailed when the ripples of battle affected their location, and the high level ghost kings holding down the fort also left to meet the enemy on the surface.

“You two should stay here and absorb as much of the big dragon’s power as possible. I’m going to use a combat art to cleanse it of its ghostly qi!” Lu Yun said solemnly.

“Cleanse the great dragon? You?” Li Zhen and Qing Ting looked skeptically at Lu Yun.

“Why would I be called the Champion Duke if I didn’t have some tricks and skills to my name? And why would I carry so many treasures on me?” Lu Yun smiled proudly.

“That’s true. Anyone else with as many treasures and struts around as cockily as you would’ve died at least ten times over,” Qing Ting nodded solemnly.

“He’s definitely the Immortal King’s son!” Li Zhen piped in.

“How am I cocky? It’s always trouble that comes looking for me, I just passively respond,” Lu Yun grumbled and sat down cross-legged.

“Aren’t you going to cleanse the great dragon?” Qing Ting raised her eyebrows at him.

“I am, and aren’t I doing so right now?” Lu Yun responded with confusion.

“Right here?” Qing Ting was lost.

“Where else is a tiny half step king like me going to go? This is the safest spot in the dragon’s lair. If I go anywhere else, the great dragon will crush me if it turns over. Alright, both of you be quiet and leave me alone.” Lu Yun closed his eyes and sent out his consciousness toward the dragon’s will. It was infinitely close to shattering, but there was another fragment of a soul in it! ...the Starspace King!

There was a portion of her soul living under the great dragon’s protection—she wasn’t fully dead!

“Who are you??” Her soul fragment retained her entire spirit and she immediately issued a challenge when she saw Lu Yun.

“Damn, you got lucky and received approval from the great dragon’s will. But right now, you need to leave me alone!” Lu Yun’s consciousness ignored the Starspace King after he took in her condition. Starspace Region wouldn’t be in its current straits if it wasn’t for her continual protection of the Moon King and raising a snake in her own backyard.

He found the great dragon’s will and sent the Dragonquake Scripture through their connection. Lu Yun didn’t know what consequences would result from this, but this was his only option now. The dragon was too strong for him to utilize the Dragonshift Method and safely move its power. Any slight tremor in its energy would obliterate him.

Even if the great dragon somehow didn't crush Lu Yun, he would be hunted by certain nebulous existences in the Hongmeng if they knew about him possessing the method. The Dragonquake Scripture was absolutely forbidden in the third realm.

Chapter 1363.1: Pacification

"Aouuuu!" A piercing dragon croon emitted from the great dragon's will as rays of purple magnificence flared from its wavering mind. A snarling purple-golden dragon flew out—the great dragon's true spirit!

A marvelous strength converged from the four corners of the land and wrapped around the dragon spirit.

The dragon shifted, obliterating all of the ghosts that hadn't made it out yet and crushing every tomb that had been built around it.

The spot that Lu Yun had chosen happened to be the lifepoint of the underground area; it anchored the dragon's fortunes and the dragon's strength wouldn't reach this locale.

The great dragon churned continuously through the subsurface world, dispelling the ghostly qi that'd invaded it as streams of smoke. When it was pristine again, it soared into the sky like a real dragon and coldly regarded the cultivators beneath it, as if it was the sovereign of the land.

"What's going on??" The high level kings battling each other regarded the change with alarm.

"How has the great dragon recovered?? And it's broken free of the shackles of the crystal vein, it's evolving into a real dragon! What's happening?!" The Moon King didn't know what to do. Only now did she truly understand the timing of the final battle.

The great dragon now rivaled a ninth step king—one that nurtured boundless strength.

"Roar!!" howled the dragon as it trembled and dived at the ghosts beneath it. The Moon King and another ninth step ghost king were in its range of attack.

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The dragon didn't employ combat arts since it didn't know any, but its movement and method of attack followed a most primitive and perfect trajectory of its existence.

Every blow conformed to dao and logic.

It instantly crushed hundreds of ghost kings and gravely injured the Moon King and other ninth step ghost king.

"Retreat!" Jinse could tell that Lu Yun had succeeded. She slew the eighth step ghost king in front of her with one explosive move and turned to leave. The great dragon would now commence a purge of Starspace Region and attack indiscriminately. Whether it was cultivators or ghosts, everything would die to its rage.

The Acclaim King and Hua Fengwen understood the situation as soon as she left, then the sixth step kings of the Immortal Pagoda ran off the battlefield as well. Once those from the Immortal Pagoda were gone, the kings of Haotian Tower naturally wouldn't linger any longer and swiftly withdrew.

The sudden final battle lasted less than fifty breaths before it was over. It ended with the eruption of the great dragon from Starspace Region's central crystal vein and a furious slaughter of all ghosts in the region.

The other ninth step ghost king burst into ghostly gore when the dragon clenched its claws around it. The Moon King barely managed to escape Starspace Region through deploying her silver moon and promptly disappeared without a trace.

"Who dared ruin my plans!!" The Moon King's enraged voice echoed through the region.

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"Ghosts are dead, after all, and far removed from the realm of the living. They're not very smart." Lu Yun curled his lip when he heard the Moon King shrieking and raging.

He wouldn't dare be this brazen or expose himself like this if he was facing cultivators or arcane beasts, but ghosts? What he feared least were ghosts.

Though the five hellfires had given rise to the flame of order, they still existed in the Tome of Life and Death. If he sent out all five of them, he would've eliminated the scourge of ghosts in Starspace Region within the blink of an eye.

He just hadn't wanted to do so.

Once hellfire blazed, so would his identity be exposed. Not the identity of the Immortal King, but the one as headmaster of the Dao Academy in the world of immortals. At that point, he'd face the entire Hongmeng.

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The great dragon swept through Starspace Region for three full days and nights. Everything, whether cultivator or ghost, was crushed by its violent and undiscerning attacks.

Lu Yun, Qing Ting, and Li Zhen remained within the safe pocket of space and cultivated during this time. There'd been an explosion of Hongmeng qi in the area that was tens of thousands of times more concentrated than the outside world.

Consolidating and further advancing their cultivation here saw them make progress at a tremendous pace. They were able to fully digest the gains they'd made since setting foot in Starspace Region.

The great dragon returned after three days.

It couldn't speak, but there was a deep sense of goodwill in its thoughts. It opened its mouth and regurgitated nine thousand premium crystal veins, scattering them at the trio's feet.

"This..." Qing Ting and Li Zhen swallowed hard. They wanted to accept the crystal veins, but didn't dare to. If they left with these veins, they'd instantly become shining beacons in the dark. If someone set their sights on them, they wouldn't even make it out of Starspace alive. The aura of purple crystal veins wasn't something that anyone below kingship could conceal.

“I’ll accept these for them.” Lu Yun didn’t share their reservations as he was already a king—a supplemental king. He put away the mountain of crystal veins with a wave of his hand. “I’ll give these back to you guys when we get to Cloudexit City. Li Zhen, yours should stay with me for now. Your clan won’t think any better of you if you take the crystal veins back to them.”

When they’d run into Li Quan earlier, they’d clearly heard him say that Li Zhen was the son of a traitor and would be trouble sooner or later. This was most likely the reason behind the Li Clan’s attitude toward Li Zhen.

“Alright.” Li Zhen nodded gently.

As curious as Qing Ting and Li Zhen were about how Lu Yun had purged ghostly qi from the great dragon, they didn’t seek to satisfy their curiosity.

Let’s just pretend he’s the Immortal King’s son.

Happiness drifted through the dragon’s murky purple eyes when it saw Lu Yun accept the crystal veins. It then lowered its body and spat out a purple pearl.

Its dragon pearl.

“You need to think this through, great dragon. This is your life pearl and the equivalent of an ultimate treasure of the Hongmeng. If you keep it, you’ll keep growing and ultimately break free of the shackles of an earthen vein to become a real living being,” Lu Yun enunciated carefully as he looked deep into the dragon’s eyes. “But if you give it to me to repay your karmic debt, your new dragon body will slowly revert to a dead thing without ever having the chance to live again.”

Hesitation flashed through the dragon’s eyes.

“I know why you’re in a rush to sever the karmic relationship with me. But if you don’t speak or teach others that thing, no one will know what it is.” Lu Yun was naturally speaking of the Dragonquake Scripture.

It was taboo. Lu Yun had saved the great dragon and Starspace Region with a taboo. The great dragon knew this, too, so it wanted to use its dragon pearl to pay off the debt. It would also forever seal away the Dragonquake Scripture and put it out of reach.

“It’s also not necessarily a bad thing to have a karmic tie with me. Don’t I stand before you, well and healthy?” Lu Yun chuckled.

Qing Ting and Li Zhen had listened with complete bafflement at first, but as Lu Yun spoke further, Qing Ting quickly sealed off her senses and knocked Li Zhen out with a punch.

Some things were not for the likes of them.

“It’s not that the great dragon wants to sever the karmic tie, but that this debt is too great for it not to repay you,” came the Starspace King’s voice.

“Do you think I saved the great dragon just to put it in my debt?” Lu Yun shook his head. “Once the ghost tomb was complete, several hundred regions in the vicinity would’ve turned into ghost regions and life would dwell in utter misery. I’m no saint, but I don’t want to see that happen either.

“Zhuo Bufan is my friend and I know Dusksnow Morningstar. I would’ve saved the dragon if only to avenge what happened to them. I cannot accept this dragon pearl.” Lu Yun pushed it back. “If you want to repay this karmic debt, go find the Redbud King and Dragon Butterfly in Redbud Region. Tell them that I, the Immortal King, sent you. They’ll accept you then.”

Chapter 1363.2: Pacification

“Immortal King...” The Starspace King nodded slowly. This king had just begun his rise when she died and he was yet to be renowned throughout the Hongmeng. She didn’t know who he was.

“Ah yes, Starspace King, Purpleclad came to fetch your body. If you recover your body, you can come back to life,” Lu Yun suddenly thought of the earlier matter.

“...let it be. Disaster descended upon Starspace Region because I sheltered the snake. How can I face the Hongmeng again? I can be dead to the realm,” sighed Starspace.

Lu Yun nodded and pursued the matter no further.

“Great dragon!” he said instead. “You do not have to repay this karmic debt, I lack not for these things. It’s none of my business if you become a blight upon the realm or massacre innocents—that is your dao.

“But if you dare swear fealty to the Immortal Region or Supplemental Dao Alliance, then I will hunt you down and scatter you to the four winds!”

The dragon listened carefully to Lu Yun’s words and nodded, committing the two names to memory. The Immortal Region and Supplemental Dao Alliance!

“In that case, we should go to Redbud Region. If my guess is correct, those of the Enforcer Alliance will soon come to clean up the battlefield and invite the great dragon to join them. You three should leave quickly as well.

“The waters are deep at the alliance. The Immortal Region and Supplemental Dao Alliance you just mentioned, even the Ten Valleys of Evil, have something to do with them.” Starspace spoke no more on this matter.

The dragon took a deep look at Lu Yun and the other two before soaring into the sky and vanishing from sight. Where it’d once occupied turned into a pitch black, underground cavern.

“Let’s go.” Lu Yun patted Qing Ting awake.

“I didn’t hear anything, I don’t know nothing!” she mumbled with a pout.

“You know best if you heard anything.” Lu Yun flicked a sideways glance at the girl. Though she’d sealed off her senses, it was still easy for her to eavesdrop if she wanted to listen in.

He didn’t care.

Qing Ting shrugged and kicked Li Zhen awake.

“You’re definitely the Immortal King’s son!” Li Zhen shouted when he woke up.

Lu Yun smacked him upside the head. “We’re leaving, the Enforcer Alliance is coming.”

“Oh,” Li Zhen grumbled and quickly followed Lu Yun out of the massive cavern.

Tranquility returned to Starspace Region after the great dragon left and endless cultivators surged in once more, wanting to pick the battlefield clean of any loot.

They were gravely disappointed to find that everything had been razed to the ground. All ghost crystals and treasures were ground to dust; even the crystal veins underground were gone.

The Enforcer Alliance swiftly sealed off the region. The great dragon had taken all of the crystal veins with it. Without the energy from the crystals, Starspace would soon wither into a desert. This was the heartland of the realm and Enforcer Alliance territory, so they would never allow that to happen.

Crystal vein after crystal vein poured into the region’s earth and slowly restored its vitality.

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Cloudexit City was as bustling as ever. It’d vaulted to the heights of importance after the disturbance in Starspace Region—even the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower had set up branches here!

Thus, many were unwilling to leave when war was concluded.

“Li Zhen!” came an explosive shout when Lu Yun and the others returned to the city. Wielding a large blade, Li Quan suddenly landed in front of Li Zhen. “Return immediately with me and hand over everything you’ve found!”

Violence rampaged through his face when he looked at his kinsman. He hadn’t thought that Li Zhen would come back alive! When Li Quan traveled through Starspace Region, a first step ghost king had strangely defeated him with one move, yet that highly inferior Li Zhen had come back in ruddy health!

It even looked like he’d gained a lot from his trip!

As long as he goes back to the clan, everything he’s found and that blade of his will have to be turned in!

The ghost-headed blade... that damned ghost-headed blade!

“Qing Ting, we should get going as well.” Azureclad appeared and took a deep look at Lu Yun before addressing his sister.

“I’ll leave my babies with you for now, give them back to me next time you see me. If I take them back now, my dad and Qing Yan will take them and leave nothing for me,” Qing Ting murmured to Lu Yun, her lips almost on his ears.

Flames ignited with a fury in Azureclad’s eyes.

“What have you taken from Qing Ting?!” he roared.

“None of your business!” Qing Ting snorted and winked at Lu Yun before running over to take her brother’s hand.

As loath as the duke was to leave matters like this, there was nothing else he could do in public view. Li Quan didn’t speak again until the brother and sister duo left. “Li Zhen, return to Azure Dragon Region with me.”

"I don't want to." Li Zhen shook his head.

"Oh?" Li Quan blinked, then laughed. "You don't want to go home huh? That's fine. You don't have to go back if you can survive one of my hits."

An ugly grin spread across his face and his killing intent didn't abate in the slightest. He'd waited three days for Li Zhen. After much thought, he felt that it was better for the son of the traitor to die. He really did intend to kill his younger brother!

"Mm." Li Zhen nodded and brought out his ghost-headed blade. "I, Ghostblade Duke Li Zhen, accept your challenge!"

"Ghostblade Duke? A mutt like you dares call himself a duke?!" Li Quan shrieked with outrage. "DIE!!"

Hummm.

His king grade blade blossomed with a greenish black radiance. It transformed into a dragon shadow and swooped down on Li Zhen.

Several months ago in Cloudexit City, Li Zhen had lost his hand and blade when Li Quan chopped off his arm with one move. The same scene repeated itself now—it wouldn't take a second move for Li Quan to kill his kinsman.

"Die? You and I come from the same clan, so at the very least, I won't kill you."

Whoosh!

Li Zhen's ghost-headed blade flew out of its scabbard and he slashed at the greenish-black dragon sword light.

Boom!

Li Quan flew backwards and smashed so heavily into a wall that he was deeply embedded into it.

"W-what?!" Agog with disbelief, Li Quan's wits were scattered by what'd just happened.

Craaaaack.

The battle blade in his hand shuddered and shattered into pieces. He could borrow the strength inside it, but not wield it. King grade material alone wasn't enough to withstand Li Zhen's stroke.

"It's you!!" Li Quan suddenly thought of what'd happened in Starspace Region. A first step ghost king had shattered his king grade weapon in the exact same way, delivering the same blow of despair! "It wasn't a ghost king that day, it was you..."

"I, the Ghostblade Duke, will take on all challengers who think me unworthy!"

Schick!

Li Zhen slammed his blade into the ground and regarded his surroundings with a frosty look. He was the center of attention for a good portion of the city.

“That Li Quan of the Li Clan is seriously unlucky... The Champion Duke defeated him with one blow last time and proved that he has the right to be a titled duke. Now Li Zhen defeats him with one move and also proves that he has the right to be the Ghostblade Duke.”

“Tsk tsk tsk, I think I should challenge him too. I’ll probably be a titled duke as well!”

Li Quan’s eyes rolled back in his head and he fainted dead away.

“Since there’s no one who wants to challenge me, then I am the Ghostblade Duke.” Li Zhen picked up his blade. “All of you say that my father was a blood traitor. As the son of the traitor, I will not be returning. The debt I owe for my upbringing... Fuck it, no one ever cared about me. If it wasn’t for my master after my father went missing, I would’ve been beaten to death a long time ago. My master died because of this too!” A flicker of hatred rose in Li Zhen’s eyes.

“Forget it.” Lu Yun patted his shoulder. “They say that blood is thicker than water, so don’t leave with hate in your heart.”

“Mm.” Li Zhen nodded and promptly released the malevolence building in his being.

Chapter 1364: Bastard?

Instead of remaining with Lu Yun, Li Zhen decided to venture forth on his own. After leaving the clan, the only path available to him was to find his father—the one that the Li Clan denounced as a traitor long ago.

Lu Yun could not foresee what would happen to the young man; everyone had their own road to walk. When he unsealed the three thousand premium crystal veins and gave them to Li Zhen, he thought for a moment and handed over another hundred million purple crystals.

“Ah.” Li Zhen sized up Lu Yun before he left and asked in a quiet voice, “Are you really not the Immortal King’s son? Maybe his bastard son?”

Pow!

Lu Yun punted him out of Cloudexit City.

“Hahahaha!!” Li Zhen roared with laughter. “When I return, the name of Ghostblade Duke will be known throughout the Hongmeng! And, I have a recording of the Robber King on his knees begging for mercy. I’ll be rich after I sell it!”

Chortling, he ran off into the distance.

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“Aren’t you afraid of painting a target on his back by giving those three thousand crystal veins to him?” Hua Fengwen’s voice sounded in Lu Yun’s mind.

Three thousand premium crystal veins were a frightening sum in the realm. Li Zhen was just a minor titled half step king—he wouldn’t be able to hang on to such fortune. Though Lu Yun hadn’t openly given the wealth to the young man, it wouldn’t be hard for someone to discover it if they’d really wanted to.

The Li Clan certainly wasn't going to permit him to sever ties like this. Inexhaustible pursuit was in his future and the three thousand crystal veins would become a primary reason for it.

"One must rise through unending slaughter in order to become a formless dragon and execute tangible dragons. I have high hopes for him to surpass you." Lu Yun turned in the direction that Hua Fengwen stood in.

The latter shifted uncomfortably. "If I'd met you a hundred thousand years ago, I might've ascended as a high level king when I broke through."

"A hundred thousand years ago?" Lu Yun blinked. "I wasn't even born then."

Hua Fengwen:

"The Azureclad, Crimsonclad, Purpleclad, and Bloodclad Dukes gathered in ClouDEXIT City for the occasion and the Enforcer Alliance sent a hundred thousand black robes. Too bad the venerated enforcer didn't come," Lu Yun sighed softly with regret. He really wanted to see the man for himself and find out how the enforcer had learned Dragonrise.

"What, do you want to fight the venerated enforcer?" Hua Fengwen smiled.

Lu Yun remained noncommittal.

"Eighth King!" A demanding yell echoed in the air like a clap of thunder. "Eight King Eight KingEight KingEight KingEight KingEight KingEight!! Get your sorry ass out here and face me!"

Repeats of Hua Fengwen's title reverberated in the city, painting strange expressions on many people's faces.

"Is he... calling for the Eighth King... or saying king eight... which happens to be..." someone ventured cautiously.

"Eh... the... characters... for bastard. No wonder Hua Fengwen never uses his title."

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Hua Fengwen's face fell. The title of "Eighth King" was meant to be the eighth in the Hongmeng and first in this generation. Who would've thought that people would connect it to another meaning instead?

"Hua Fengzhan, do you want to die?!" He took to the air and screamed at the insolent upstart outside.

A gallant young man stood in the skies around ClouDEXIT City. He was dressed in long blue robes, wielded a blue longsword, and considered Hua Fengwen with an amused expression.

"Little bastard, you've been on the run for a hundred thousand years. You finally dare show your face, huh?" smirked Hua Fengzhan. "Don't call me Hua Fengzhan anymore, I'm the Windcarver King!" [1]

Whoosh!

He stirred up gusts of blue wind around him with a shake of his longsword. They churned into sharp blades of wind.

Seventh step king Hua Fengzhan!

“The Windcarver King?” Contempt curved Hua Fengwen’s lips as he flashed out of the city.

“You finally dare meet me, huh? Come on, my dear little brother. It’s time that our battle delayed for a hundred thousand years began!” Hua Fengzhan roared with laughter and slashed forward the moment Hua Fengwen stepped out of Cloudexit.

His move completely melted into the wind and dispersed again into countless strokes, instantly surrounding Hua Fengwen. Tiny sword edges rended the void, turning it into spatial turbulence that lacked any light.

“Ant,” Hua Fengwen snorted and twisted around, summoning the shadow of a dragon upon his body. His riposte contained a certain degree of meaning from Lu Yun’s sword dao, but it didn’t purposefully pursue that dao. Hua Fengwen had carved out his own path.

Rumble.

The void exploded as the two furiously hacked and stabbed at each other in the air.

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“That Hua Fengzhan is Hua Fengwen’s older brother? What feud do they have that they fight like this the moment they see each other?” Lu Yun’s jaw dropped.

“Hua Fengzhan was a stunning genius five hundred thousand years ago—he became a titled king at fourth step kingship after he slew a king!” whispered a nearby superior realm cultivator enjoying the show. “The king that Hua Fengzhan killed was Hua Fengwen’s dao partner... Hua Fengwen could’ve risen to titled kingship five hundred thousand years ago, but he wanted to accumulate even more foundations and put off his breakthrough.”

“An elder brother killed his younger brother’s dao partner??” Lu Yun couldn’t wrap his mind around it.

“Yes!” The cultivator nodded. “Not only did Hua Fengzhan kill Hua Fengwen’s dao partner, but he beat his younger brother nearly comatose. He left after saying that he would wait for Hua Fengwen to become a titled king.

“So when Hua Fengwen ascended to kingship a hundred thousand years ago... heh. He’s a tough one alright. He charged into Hua Fengzhan’s manor by himself and killed everyone in his older brother’s household, including Hua Fengzhan’s wife and children!

“He left behind word that he would wait for Hua Fengzhan in Multitude Region, then vanished without a trace until today.

“Hua Fengzhan and Hua Fengwen are both stunning geniuses. Hua Fengzhan broke through to peak six step king a hundred thousand years ago, and he’s a seventh step king now!

“After disappearing for a hundred thousand years, Hua Fengwen is also a seventh step king now. If they worked together, the brothers could most likely change the layout of the Hongmeng!”

“Thank you for your enlightenment, fellow daoist.” Lu Yun nodded. The two brothers had likely formed their feud prior to Hua Fengzhan killing Hua Fengwen’s dao partner five hundred thousand years ago.

“Not at all, that’ll be a hundred premium crystals please,” chuckled the cultivator.

“Huh?” Lu Yun blinked. Asking a question cost a hundred premium crystals?

“This humble one is a disciple of the Ingenium Gazebo, we’ve established a branch in Cloudexit City as well. Champion Duke, you’re a cultivator of our Multitude Region. You should know the rules, yes?” The Ingenium disciple stretched his hand in front of Lu Yun.

Grumbling, Lu Yun took out a hundred crystals. One did indeed need to pay Ingenium disciples after asking them for information.

The battle outside the city was about to reach its climax. Both brothers were heavily injured, but neither were willing to retreat. Their combat arts returned to the most basic level of existence and in the end, they resorted to the most primitive method of hand-to-hand combat.

Chapter 1365: Feud

The great battle between the Hua brothers drew a tremendous amount of eyeballs. High level kings rarely appeared in the Hongmeng—not only were two at Cloudexit City at the same time, but they were fighting with no holds barred! A battle between two seventh step kings was very beneficial for low and mid level kings.

Lu Yun also made use of this opportunity to depart from Cloudexit.

Starspace Region was at peace once more and anything regarding the fugitive Moon King was out of his hands. There was nothing he could do about the possibility of her stirring up future trouble. He was only a humble half step king, was he to stick his nose into the entire realm’s affairs?

It should be the Enforcer Alliance in charge of the whole affair, anyhow. And of course, the Moon King was now listed on their Bounty Ranking after the dust had settled.

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All was as quiet as usual within Redbud Region. The Redbud King remained firmly inside her territory’s boundaries, but the outside world directed significant dissatisfaction at her. Countless Cloudexit cultivators had been sacrificed in this war to protect Redbud Region, yet she remained aloof and indifferent from beginning to end. She didn’t even express any condolences or sentiments!

As the criticism grew, the Immortal Pagoda came out to clarify that all of the purple crystals awarded for ghost crystals came from the Redbud King. Even the mission and bounty were her ideas; the pagoda was just the administrator.

Only with that announcement did Redbud Region’s outlook stabilize and a chorus of grumbings silenced. Otherwise, persons with ulterior motives might’ve further fabricated problems or false flags as an excuse to redistribute the land and resources of Redbud Region.

Likewise, Lu Yun couldn’t be bothered with the fight between Hua Fengwen and Hua Fengzhan. The brothers were evenly matched, making it impossible to determine a victor within a short period of time. A duel to the death was even more outside the realm of possibility.

The two restrained themselves somewhat after he left. It was important to be on guard against ambush from third parties—the dao rules of seventh step kings were very valuable.

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“What did you teach that big dragon... Why can it escape the fetters of the Hongmeng and begin evolving into a true life form?” Dragon Butterfly regarded Lu Yun with discontent.

The great dragon of Starspace Region had arrived with the Starspace King a few days ago and flashed into Redbud Mountain. Its arrival reinforced the mountain immensely and increased the strength of the landmass’ innate Hongmeng qi. The dragon also found it easier to cultivate inside, forming a complementary relationship.

Dragon Butterfly knew everything having to do with the realm’s dragons. When she saw the changes in the Starspace dragon, she immediately knew that Lu Yun had taught it something unusual.

“Would you dare learn it if I taught it to you?” Lu Yun grinned at Dragon Butterfly. “That great dragon’s already regretted the knowledge and constantly thinks about how to end the karmic tie with me.”

Dragon Butterfly paused. “It can’t be... that?! You know that?!”

She instantly realized what Lu Yun had taught the big dragon.

The Dragonquake Scripture!

Only the Dragonquake Scripture possessed the ability to propel a dragon with a tiny bit of true spirit and will down the path of a true life form.

“Yep, that.” Lu Yun nodded. “But you’re already a real life form, so you don’t need it, do you? All you need is the ancestral dragon blood for you to recover your true body.”

He’d made some preliminary deductions to determine Dragon Butterfly’s current condition. The first azure dragon of the Hongmeng had also evolved from a great dragon, one unfathomably more colossal than Dragon Butterfly. Prior to the azure dragon, Dragonhollow Mountain in Azure Dragon Region had claimed the title of the greatest dragon of the realm.

If Dragon Butterfly could obtain the blood left behind by the azure dragon, she would possess the will it once had and completely subdue her body beneath Redbud Mountain.

“Are we going to Dragonhollow Mountain now?” Dragon Butterfly’s eyes lit up and she flushed with excitement.

“Yes, right now!” Lu Yun nodded. “But... how are you planning to get that ancestral blood? Are you going to lay careful plans after getting inside, or just outright take it? There are ninth step kings inside the mountain, after all.”

“Um...?” Dragon Butterfly cast a blank stare at the Redbud King next to her, who smiled faintly back without a word. Redbud was also a Hongmeng-level shut-in. Whatever perplexed Dragon Butterfly would also stump her.

“How much time will you need to refine the ancestral blood after you obtain it?” Lu Yun asked with a frown.

“Just a split second!” she answered quickly. “The azure dragon shares the same roots as me. Theoretically speaking, we’re brothers and sisters. I can refine his blood in the blink of an eye and my will and true spirit will immediately ascend to controlling my body!”

“In that case, let’s head into Dragonhollow Mountain and search for the dragons’ ancestral blood. Bear in mind, though, that they’ll certainly erupt with open hostilities toward you after that and view you as their most hated enemy,” Lu Yun explained solemnly.

Everyone knew of Dragon Butterfly’s existence and cultivators within the realm didn’t dare covet Redbud Mountain because of her.

It wasn’t because they feared her, since they could gravely injure her by paying the price of a few ninth step kings. It was that there were countless kings in the Hongmeng and those hidden in the shadows the most voracious of them all. There were certainly people just waiting to swoop in after someone was seriously wounded upon attacking her.

For instance, the goal of the Starspace ghosts had been very clear—Redbud Mountain of Redbud Region. Despite that, very few high level Hongmeng kings had come to support Cloudrui Region. They’d at most sent their disciples or descendants for an adventure and to temper themselves.

If it hadn’t been for Lu Yun, the ghost tomb in Starspace Region would’ve come to fruition and Redbud Region invaded by ghosts. This was also a tacitly understood outcome accepted by certain people.

As frustrated as they might’ve been with the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower intervening, there was nothing they dared say about it. The Ten Valleys of Evil were very likely behind the Immortal Pagoda, and it was the Supplemental Dao Alliance behind Haotian Tower.

It wasn’t for no reason that Lu Yun commanded the Autumn King to hold down the fort in Redbud Region.

“Dragonhollow Mountain... it isn’t the first time that they’ve schemed against me. I wouldn’t be in such a rush to take tangible form otherwise and could’ve crafted a ninth step king body for myself!” Anger dawned in Dragon Butterfly’s eyes when she mentioned the mountain. “It’d be one thing if it was any other faction, but Dragonhollow Mountain? I won’t forgive them for this!”

The mountain had done certain things and inflicted serious losses to her before the Redbud King’s birth. She nursed a death feud with them!

“In that case, let us go to Azure Dragon Region now.” Lu Yun nodded, all of his concerns assuaged.

Dragonhollow Mountain also had their eyes set on the world of immortals and had created something as terrifying as the Abyss of Divine Burial in his home. They were his enemy as well.

“Just a moment, let me take human form. If I leave just like this, Dragonhollow will detect it and they might do something to Redbud.” Dragon Butterfly looked worriedly at the Redbud King.

Redbud was a peak sixth step king and invincible against peers when physically present in her own region, thanks to the one hundred and eight thousand layouts that Lu Yun had set up. However, she was still no match for high level kings.

“Don’t worry, I already have a ninth step king hidden on the region’s borders. Whoever comes will get quite a nasty surprise,” Lu Yun chuckled.

“That’s right, and there’s also the big Starspace dragon.” Dragon Butterfly relaxed. “It rivals a peak ninth step king...”

Chapter 1366: Vixen

Azure Dragon Region was situated in the east of the Hongmeng, bordering the endless Hongmeng Sea. It was a major region that was markedly stronger than Multitude Region. Its greatest city— Azure Dragon City—was also superior to Multitude City.

The Coiling Dragon City that the Azureclad Duke and Qing Ting hailed from was the second most important city of the region. Coiling Dragon City was on par with Multitude City—countless sixth and seventh step kings were in residence here.

Being a historic major region in the Hongmeng set Azure Dragon apart from Multitude.

Multitude Region was strong because of the Endless Reaches. The infinite bounty of resources and treasures to be found in the area called to powerhouses from around the realm. However, those without qualifications to enter the Endless Reaches could only remain on its outskirts, in Multitude Region.

That was how the region gradually developed and became a stage for various Hongmeng heavyweights to prove themselves. Compared to Azure Dragon, Multitude was much too young. Any one of Azure Dragon’s cities could destroy the entire region.

Lu Yun and Dragon Butterfly had arrived at Azure Dragon Region.

“Compared to this region, the others that I’ve been to are practically primitive backwaters not worth mentioning.” Lu Yun looked around with awe as he strode through the magnificence of Coiling Dragon City.

It wasn’t on a gigantic scale like Multitude City—the latter was so mammoth because it’d never had a true ruler, resulting in continued uncontrolled expansion.

Coiling Dragon, on the other hand, was firmly ruled by its city lord. All of the citizens were his subjects; even the seventh step kings were no exceptions.

The main city spanned roughly one hundred million kilometers; there were numerous satellite cities beyond that formed a protective ring around Coiling Dragon City. As its name might indicate, the city did appear to be an enormous coiled dragon from a distance.

Lying in wait, claws unsheathed, ready to soar to the heavens.

It was a terrifying layout—the Coiling Dragon layout, and countless tiny layouts further made up its dragon scales, horns, and claws.

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“Well, naturally. Azure Dragon Region is the land where the dragon ancestor soared into the skies. It is one of the ancestral regions of the Hongmeng and nothing that a place like Multitude Region can hope to measure up to.

“But... what are you doing in Coiling Dragon City? Is the entrance to Dragonhollow Mountain here?” Dragon Butterfly tilted her head up to Lu Yun with bafflement.

“The mountain’s not here, it’s in the Hongmeng Sea to the east of the region.” Lu Yun shook his head. “It’s almost impossible for us to get inside with our strength alone, so I have to borrow the influence of others to do so.

“And, don’t call me the Immortal King from now on. Call me the Champion Duke!”

“Yes yes yes.” Impatience crossed Dragon Butterfly’s face and she paused, “You want to borrow Coiling Dragon City to enter the mountain, don’t you? Aren’t you worried about dragging the city into this? The ancient dragons of the mountain are nothing good. Once they lose their minds, they’d rather kill an innocent than let a suspect get away.”

“That’s right. So therefore, you can’t appear in public from now on.” Purple light flashed next to Lu Yun and whisked Dragon Butterfly’s diminutive body away.

“Is this uh... that Purple Stellar Mountain of yours?” She looked around at the inside of the crystal mountain.

“Yes,” Lu Yun confirmed. “You can cultivate in there—just make sure not to say or do anything! I’ll release you when we get into Dragonhollow Mountain. You have nothing to do with me or Coiling Dragon City, and nothing to do with the Immortal King or Immortal Pagoda. You’re just a wild dragon!” Lu Yun declared solemnly.

“A wild dragon? Fine, fine, I’m a wild dragon then,” Dragon Butterfly grumbled before nodding in agreement. She sat down cross-legged, not to cultivate, but to adjust her body so her true spirit would integrate more fully with her current form.

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“Champion Duke! What are you doing here?! Do you really have designs on my sister?!” The Azureclad Duke roared in Lu Yun’s face the second he saw the young man. “Don’t even think about it, I won’t let you be with my sister! You’ve, you’ve been a bad influence on her!”

“Um...” Lu Yun blinked and rubbed his head, asking subconsciously, “Where’s Qing Ting?”

“Piss off!” Azureclad glared furiously and swung his sword at the visitor.

Lu Yun jumped with shock and ran this way and that, clutching his head protectively. He was here to ask a favor from Coiling Dragon City, not make trouble!

There were now ten tendrils of order in his body; his strength had grown so explosively that he was far ahead of Azureclad. If he faced a second step king again, his opponent wouldn’t even have a chance to self detonate. Sadly, ten tendrils of flame still weren’t enough to fight a third step king.

“You’re here, Champion Duke!” came Qing Ting’s delighted voice. “Seriously, you’re too much, Qing Yan! He’s here to visit me, but you’re not even letting him in!”

They were standing outside the main doors of the Coiling Dragon city lord’s residence. A runner had reported to Azureclad the moment Lu Yun arrived, which was why the duke had come out baying for blood straight off the bat.

“Hmph!” Azureclad snorted with dissatisfaction and retracted his sword light, inwardly mourning his current circumstances. His sister had completely let loose after they returned home. She no longer listened to his every word and didn’t show much respect to him anymore.

She’d once viewed Azureclad as her idol and had eyes for no one else other than him. But she didn’t even call him brother after they came back, she called him by his name! He wanted to vomit blood, especially after he tragically discovered that he was no match for her anymore!

It’d only been a few days!

Though she’d taken a Pill of Creation and eaten a bag of Aureate Fruit, that would only become part of her foundation and slowly enhance her strength. It wouldn’t vault her to new heights overnight like this.

Her battle strength had once rivaled that of a titled duke’s and could withstand a first step ghost king, but she was far above that now.

When they first returned home, he’d been unhappy about her friendship with the Champion Duke and tattled to their father. After Qing Ting found out, she’d beaten him black and blue.

That marked the moment in which he’d lost complete authority as her brother; a heart full of rage boiled over when he saw that Lu Yun was here. He knew that Qing Ting’s rapid increase in strength and strong foundations had something to do with the young man, but he was annoyed by the very sight of that brat!

It disgusted him to see them walk side by side!

“If you keep bullying the Champion Duke, Qing Yan, I’ll hang you up by the front door!” Qing Ting grumbled at her brother with a pout.

“Er... that... wouldn’t be nice? He’s your brother, after all,” Lu Yun protested feebly. Would this brother and sister duo become the next Hua Fengwen and Hua Fengzhan?

“I don’t need your good guy act!” Azureclad gnashed his teeth.

“It’s his fault for hanging around that hateful vixen all day!” Qing Ting harrumphed. “I’ve been annoyed by him for a very long time, I just couldn’t fight him before!”

“Vixen?” Lu Yun paused, subconsciously thinking of the little fox.

“The Crimsonclad Duke!” Qing Ting snapped.

Chapter 1367: Azuresky Sword

“None of that nonsense!” Azureclad turned beet red and hectored, “Crimsonclad and I have gone through life and death together. Our families are also friends as well! What is wrong with the two of us discussing cultivation and dao together?”

“So have the Champion Duke and I gone through life and death together!” Qing Ting wasn’t going to accept his explanation so easily. “What, are you the only one allowed to have friends?”

Azureclad had the sudden misconception that the cutely naive Qing Ting was filling out her wings and no longer needed him anymore. When he came back to his senses, his sister had already taken Lu Yun’s arm and dragged him into the city lord’s manor.

“Your Grace,” commented a disgruntled young man dressed in traditional Chinese garb. “Do we let that Champion Duke go inside just like that?”

“And you!” Steaming mad, Azureclad rounded on the young man next to him. “Don’t you dare think about my sister!”

The young man blinked and fell quiet with embarrassment.

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“Where are my crystals where are my crystals?” Qing Ting whispered as soon as they entered the residence.

“Right here, down to the last crystal,” chuckled Lu Yun.

“Good... You have perfect timing! I saw something in the marketplace yesterday and was worrying that I didn’t have any purple crystals. Let’s go to the marketplace right now!” She changed her mind and dragged Lu Yun back out.

He smiled ruefully the entire way. Though he’d barely just set foot over the manor threshold, he didn’t make any protests.

“Where are you going now, Qing Ting?” Having just entered himself, Azureclad frowned to see the two leave again.

“None of your business! Why don’t you go brave life and death with your vixen again!” Qing Ting blew a raspberry at her brother and pulled Lu Yun into the air, heading in the direction of the marketplace.

“It’s all because of that little bastard! Leng Che, we’re going after them to see what they’re doing!” A livid Azureclad rushed off in pursuit.

Anger flashed through the traditionally dressed young man’s face when he saw Qing Ting take Lu Yun’s arm. Just like Azureclad had said, he did have certain thoughts about Qing Ting.

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Coiling Dragon City’s marketplace was enormous. Located in the southern quadrant of the city, it occupied roughly one and a half million kilometers of land. Shops and storefronts abounded, all of the major trading companies in the realm had set up branches here.

However, the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower hadn't had a chance to establish one of their own yet.

Now that the monopoly over supplemental dao was lifted, previously elusive supplemental kings emerged from their residences and entered the world. Many trading companies hired them as guest elders.

Such dealings used to be forbidden, but the Supplemental Dao Alliance had no other choice after the Immortal Pagoda appeared. Their blockade was aimed at the Ten Valleys of Evil, yet the Immortal Pagoda was plainly backed by the ten valleys. With the pagoda's success, there was no point in continuing to enforce the monopoly.

If only the Immortal Pagoda distributed supplemental dao products in the Hongmeng, all of the realm's treasures and purple crystals would flow to the ten valleys in an unceasing stream. That would result in tremendous losses for the Immortal Region over time.

But now with the revitalization of supplemental dao in the realm and increasingly frequent appearances from supplemental grandmasters and kings, that bestowed more choice upon Hongmeng cultivators and restricted the Immortal Pagoda's development.

The treasure that'd caught Qing Ting's eye came from the hands of a supplemental king. She hauled Lu Yun along in her wake and flew like the wind to the marketplace, barreling toward the biggest building in the district.

It was magnificently grand and sat in the core area of the southern quadrant, occupying nearly a third of the neighborhood and was the clear mover and shaker.

Firmament Pavilion was one of the top ten trading companies in the Hongmeng, It did business in all corners of the realm, and it was rumored that even arcane beasts and ghosts transacted with them. It'd poured significant effort into the second largest city of Azure Dragon Region, which had resulted in it dominating the Coiling Dragon Market.

Of course, this also played into the rules between the realm's trading companies. Since it was the largest player in Coiling Dragon City, its peers monopolized other major cities and shunted the Firmament Pavilion to the sidelines.

This was the store that Qing Ting entered with Lu Yun. It was made of thirty-three floors, each with its own space formation. A dazzling variety of wares filled its shelves; the further up one climbed, the more valuable the products.

King grade treasures began to appear on the tenth floor. Qing Ting's footsteps showed no signs of stopping and she continued rushing upward.

Lu Yun took note of the pavilion's treasures as they climbed. The ones here were refined in a different manner compared to the Haotian Tower and they were extraordinarily expensive. Many prices were several thousand or tens of thousands of times greater than the Immortal Pagoda and Haotian Tower.

But they had no shortage of customers.

King grade treasures available at the Immortal Pagoda came from Lu Yun's supplemental grandmaster puppets. The same at Haotian Tower were random baubles that supplemental kings refined for practice. Their quality and quantity from both places were much lower than the Firmament Pavilion.

Hongmeng denizens were no fools. After some comparison, they were much more willing to spend more crystals for higher quality king grade treasures. After all, these treasures were life-saving at critical moments.

"Can it be that a supplemental king is also in residence at the pavilion? Well, that shouldn't be a surprise since they're ranked number seven among trading companies in the realm. They're a mogul in the Hongmeng, so of course they'd have at least one supplemental king among their number.

"He probably didn't dare show himself before the monopoly on supplemental dao was lifted." Lu Yun came to a reasonable conclusion after momentary guesswork.

None of these king grade treasures showed signs of being recently refined—they had only been recently put on sale. Every single one of them was painstakingly crafted with scrupulous attention to every detail. The supplemental king of Firmament Pavilion was an extremely conscientious person.

His supplemental dao should be that of equipment dao; all of the treasures displayed were the product of at least a hundred million years of meticulous polishing.

"Stop!" When they reached the nineteenth floor, Lu Yun suddenly yanked Qing Ting back from charging up to the twentieth floor.

"What is it?" Qing Ting was highly flushed and incredibly excited—her beloved treasure was close at hand!

With a wave of his hand, Lu Yun summoned a flying sword sealed in purple crystal to his grasp. It was less than a meter long and sparkled with hazy light. When he infused his own force into it, the weapon rang with an imperceptible dragon croon.

"The dao rule within this sword is similar to the combat arts you practice. If you activate it, you'll deploy force that's double your current lethality," he said to Qing Ting.

The sword was priced at a hundred premium crystal veins—the true price of a king grade flying sword.

"This gentleman has a keen eye!" A woman dressed in black quickly walked over with a flattering smile. "This sword is named Azuresky and its dao rule comes from a king grade evil dragon that one of our kings killed.

"Miss Qing Ting is the daughter of the Coiling Dragon city lord and possesses a dragon bloodline within her. If she refines this sword, not only will her strength increase to a new level, but so will her future cultivation greatly benefit from the addition."

She plainly knew Qing Ting, but not Lu Yun. "This humble one is Heilin. Greetings to Your Highness Qing Ting and this gentleman."

She bowed to the two guests. Although she didn't think that they could afford the sword, Qing Ting was of noble status. As the overseer of the nineteenth floor, Heilin didn't dare show less than perfect hospitality to the Coiling Dragon princess.

“The dao rule of an evil dragon?” Lu Yun paused, then continued with a chuckle. “The Firmament Pavilion is certainly bold! To use the dao rules of other creatures in your treasures! Aren’t you afraid of being attacked by the other cultivators of the realm?”

King grade treasures were labeled thus because of the dao rules they contained. However, they were conventionally derived from the supplemental kings themselves. If a king wanted to obtain a treasure tailored for their dao, they would split off a strand of their dao rules for the supplemental king to use.

Killing other kings and stripping their dao rules for use in refinement was strictly prohibited. This ban had been in place prior to the monopoly of supplemental dao. The Immortal Region, Supplemental Dao Alliance, Enforcer Alliance, Ten Valleys of Evil, Dragonhollow Mountain, and various heavyweights of the realm were in full agreement. It was a rule imprinted on the collective consciousness.

Even if someone nursed a blood feud with a king, they could only kill their enemy. The king’s dao rules had to be permitted to disperse into the Hongmeng.

If someone started this unsavory practice, it would inevitably lead to imitation and the hunting of low level kings for use in treasure refinement. The Hongmeng would dissolve into utter chaos.

Thus, Lu Yun was quite taken aback to hear that this sword was refined from a dao rule taken from a king.

“If I may, sir,” Heilin smiled. “The evil dragon was a first step dragon king and slaughtered untold innocents in its rise. After it massacred tens of thousands of cities on the realm’s frontier and devoured countless lives, it was listed on the Enforcer Alliance’s Bounty Ranking.

“When one of our kings slew the evildoer, one of the alliance’s kings personally stripped the carcass of its dao rule and gifted it to the Firmament Pavilion.”

Chapter 1368: Dragonling Assembly

“I see... wait, tens of thousands of cities?!” Lu Yun shuddered.

There were at least several billion citizens in a regular minor Hongmeng city—the Enforcer Alliance had to have been thoroughly enraged to strip the dragon of its dao rule and gift it to the Firmament Pavilion!

“Are we buying it?” Qing Ting gently tugged the corner of Lu Yun’s shirt.

“We’re buying it.” Lu Yun nodded. “It’s a good sword that’s a rare match for you.”

“Yippee!” Though her goal wasn’t the Azureclad’s sword, she was thoroughly entranced by the weapon when she took a proper look at it. “I don’t need you to pay this time, I got it!” she declared with gusto. “Hmm... my sword is nice too, it’s much better than Qing Yan’s current king grade flying sword. I’ll give it to him instead.”

Quietly observing off to the side, Azureclad’s expression darkened. “She’s paying for it? When did the lass get so many crystals? That’s a hundred premium crystal veins!”

He couldn’t believe what was playing out in front of him.

“But her current sword is indeed better than mine.” He stroked his chin.

“Your Grace,” Leng Che said quietly. “It’s still that kid paying for the items.”

“Eh?” Azureclad paused with confusion.

Heilin was likewise dumbfounded. These guests really were buying the Azuresky Sword! The little princess was already refining it.

“Why are there only ninety crystal veins here?” She was further surprised when she looked down.

“The treasures on this floor are mostly for show. You can’t really sell them, can you?” Lu Yun flashed a grin. “Our first and final offer is ninety crystal veins. If you accept, we can conclude the deal.”

Heilin agreed with a rueful smile. It was true, none of these items could find a ready buyer. A treasure that cost hundreds of premium crystal veins was useless to high level kings and unaffordable to low level ones. The Firmament Pavilion still came out solidly ahead with a discount of ten crystal veins.

Qing Ting cheered to see the transaction complete and quickly stored the sword she’d initially refined into her body.

“When did the little princess of House Qing become so rich?” Heilin put away ninety premium crystal veins with a smile. A treasure like the Azuresky Sword was indeed more decoration than anything else, on display to demonstrate the deep pockets of the Firmament Pavilion. They’d never thought to actually sell it—but of course, it would be most ideal if they could. As it were, no one in the pavilion had any use for the sword. Selling it meant earning several years of revenue in one go.

“Welcome, Azureclad Duke and Sir Leng Che!” Heilin happened to catch sight of a glowering Azureclad and rushed over in greeting.

“Go about your business, Leng Che and I are just going to have a look around.” Azureclad waved her off.

“But of course.” Noticing the foul mood he was in, Heilin had no desire to run afoul of the duke at this time.

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Qing Ting tugged Lu Yun up to the thirty-second floor. There were also king grade treasures here, but they were the cream of the crop. Take Qing Ting’s new sword—it only had one dao rule within. The treasures here, however, contained six or even seven.

The more dao rules a king grade treasure encompassed, the stronger it was. Naturally, this was also how king grade treasures were ranked. Whether it was the Immortal Pagoda or Haotian Tower, the treasures they sold contained only one dao rule. Additionally, treasures with the same number of dao rules could be further categorized. The one in Qing Ting’s new sword was far superior to her previous sword both in terms of power and quality.

“That’s...” Lu Yun’s attention was immediately caught by something as soon as he set foot onto the thirty-second floor.

“How is this possible, why would something like this exist in the Hongmeng?!” Meditating in the Purple Stellar Mountain, Dragon Butterfly awoke with a start. When she looked closely at what was exhibited in the center of the thirty-second floor, she shrieked with disbelief.

“That’s what I want to buy!” Adoration filled Qing Ting’s eyes as she gazed upon a foggy purple bead. It was only the size of a fist and crystalline throughout, exuding wave upon wave of incredibly profound pulses.

An ultimate treasure of the Hongmeng!

One of these precious masterpieces was on the thirty-second floor of the Firmament Pavilion!

It was very different from any other treasure, as if it nurtured a complete world within.

“No, this isn’t a complete treasure of the Hongmeng. What a pity, it was only a step away from becoming an ultimate treasure. The world inside of it is just a seed instead of a finished result. This treasure wouldn’t be placed here otherwise.” Lu Yun sighed softly after a careful round of observations. What a shame.

Ultimate Hongmeng treasures were connate treasures nurtured by the realm’s great dao instead of being created by others. The Hongmeng great dao they contained within was boundless in its might. Even ninth step kings would fight for such a treasure if they saw it.

In Starspace Region, the Robber King had detonated an ultimate treasure to escape from Lu Yun’s king grade formation. Though it’d been only the lowest levels of ultimate treasures, it was still far superior to all king grade treasures.

“Is this what you want?” Lu Yun looked at the fist-sized purple bead in front of him and at Qing Ting.

“Yes!!” She nodded emphatically.

“It costs five thousand premium crystal veins,” he chuckled wryly.

“Can, can you lend me two thousand crystal veins? I’ll pay you back later!” Qing Ting proposed with unease.

“You’re borrowing two thousand crystal veins from him??” Azureclad could no longer hold it in when he heard the preposterous request. He flashed to their side in a fit of rage. “And how will you pay him back?? With yourself?!” He sneered frostily, “Champion Duke, is this your plan to own my sister when she can’t pay you back?!”

“Qing Yan!!” Qing Ting screeched.

“Shut up!” Azureclad whirled around with a roar. Qing Ting trembled and spoke no more. Though she regularly bickered with her brother, he’d never shown this much anger at her before. It petrified her with shock.

“The Azureclad Duke seems to have misunderstood something.” Lu Yun furrowed his brow slightly.

“Misunderstood?” Azureclad scoffed. “What I see is far from a misunderstanding! My sister is young and innocent—the excursion to Cloudexit City was her first journey outside of Coiling Dragon. I told her to keep an eye on you as a trial to temper her. Do you really think that I’d sell my sister for a sword?!”

“Or do you think that sprinkling favors and offering presents will win my sister’s heart and permit you to marry into Coiling Dragon City?! You can take that ridiculous thought and shove it where the sun doesn’t

shine!” Now that Azureclad looked at Lu Yun, he felt like he was looking upon a big bad wolf who specialized in seducing innocent girls. The little bastard’s shopping spree in Cloudexit had completely beguiled his sister!

“Marry into Coiling Dragon City?” A strange expression crossed Lu Yun’s face and he took a look at Qing Ting. The girl was so red that a painfully bright blush crept down to her neck.

“I already have a dao partner,” Lu Yun explained solemnly. “My intentions toward Qing Ting are... hmm, the same as yours toward the Crimsonclad Duke. We are friends forged through life and death, nothing more.”

“The same as me toward the Crimsonclad Duke?! You’re a debauched lecher alright!” Azureclad condemned.

“And you say you’re just friends with her,” Qing Ting muttered.

“Be quiet!” It was Azureclad’s turn to blush hotly and he glared at Lu Yun. “Speak! For what reason have you come to Coiling Dragon City?!”

“I want to participate in Dragonhollow Mountain’s Dragonling Assembly, but I’m not a citizen of Azure Dragon Region. Therefore, I’ve come to Coiling Dragon City to gain a spot,” Lu Yun said ruefully.

It was only natural that the Azureclad Duke be protective of his sister. Lu Yun was no naive child fresh on his first jaunt into society. He wouldn’t turn hostile toward the duke because of this attitude. Plus, he really did have a favor to ask.

“You can also see that my cultivation path is connected to the dragons. The Dragonling Assembly is very important to me.”

Dragonhollow Mountain’s azure dragon vein shook once every million years. The power of the azure dragon seeped out from that disturbance. As the ancestor of all dragons in the Hongmeng, the azure dragon’s power was very useful for the realm’s dragons, descendants, or cultivators practicing draconic combat arts.

However, one had to be younger than ten million years old to participate in the assembly.

Though there was no order of time in the Hongmeng, the Hongmeng qi that cultivators absorbed throughout their journey could be considered a degree of time. The accumulation of ten million years was enough to cause a qualitative change in their bodies—they wouldn’t be able to comprehend the azure dragon’s power after that.

It was incredibly difficult to participate in the Dragonling Assembly. There were multiple rounds of selection to pass and one’s strength had to be acknowledged by the mountain.

Citizens of Azure Dragon Region naturally possessed the proper qualifications, but cultivators in the outside world needed to be sponsored by certain Azure Dragon factions.

This grand assembly was one of the reasons why Azure Dragon Region was able to maintain its illustrious lineage of being in the top ten. Lu Yun wanted to enter not only to help Dragon Butterfly infiltrate the mountain, but to also see for himself what kind of power the azure dragon possessed.

“You want to participate in the Dragonling Assembly?” Azureclad blinked. “That’s why you’re scheming after my sister and want to marry into Coiling Dragon City?”

Lu Yun didn’t know whether he should roll his eyes or punch the guy.

Chapter 1369: Participant Quota

Lu Yun didn’t know what to say anymore. He highly suspected that the Azureclad Duke had a complex about his sister.

Qing Ting recovered her senses as well and glared furiously at her brother, almost grinding her teeth to pieces.

“You say you want to join Coiling Dragon City so you can participate in the Dragonling Assembly?” Leng Che stepped forward in his traditional robe. He’d noticed that the duke’s mentality was unbalanced—likely due to Qing Ting’s thorough beating of him.

“Yes.” Lu Yun nodded.

“My name is Leng Che, I am titled the Poisondragon Duke. I will be representing the city for this time’s Dragonling Assembly. The entirety of Coiling Dragon possesses only five spots—His Grace and the miss each have one. The other three are going to me and two other titled duke half step kings. By what right or virtue do you claim one of the spots?”

Leng Che wasn’t a Coiling Dragon citizen or even a cultivator of Azure Dragon Region. He was like Lu Yun—an outsider who’d joined Azureclad’s banner.

“I’m the Champion Duke. Have you not heard of me before?” Lu Yun blinked.

“A nameless nobody who relies on sharp weapons to win a little bit of fame. What’s there to be proud of?” Azureclad snorted. “But, it’s not impossible to join Coiling Dragon and represent us at the Dragonling Assembly either. Leng Che, You Cang, and Ghost Dragon are all titled duke half step kings. Pick any one of them to challenge and you can replace whoever you beat.”

Far from being a simple training opportunity, the Dragonling Assembly was an exhibition to the death. Vast swathes of geniuses died in historic assemblies, but those who could emerge from the pack and receive the power of the azure dragon rose to tremendous heights. Many of them set foot into titled kingdom as third step kings.

The assembly was called thus because only cultivators younger than ten million years old and not yet a titled king could participate.

“Ghost Dragon?” Lu Yun frowned slightly when he heard the name. Is there a Ghost Dragon in the Hongmeng too? Or is it just a coincidence?

He quietly called upon formula dao after hearing this name and discovered it to be shrouded in mist; there was nothing he could deduce about it.

Lu Yun’s heart sank. The Ghost Dragon and Ghost Phoenix of the world of immortals had disappeared in the Nihil Hell, very likely becoming one of its denizens.

Of course, the Nihil Hell was a pale shadow of what it used to be—it was filled with endless yin and dead spirits now. Lu Yun suspected that the ghosts in the third realm also came from that hell. Likewise, the origins of the demon of immortal dao were hardly as simple as they appeared.

Can it be that someone suspects I've come to the Hongmeng, so they've released Ghost Dragon on purpose to test me? A variety of thoughts flew rapidly through Lu Yun's mind while he kept a straight face.

"That's fine." He nodded. "Anyone, you say?"

"Take your pick of Leng Che, You Cang, and Ghost Dragon, or you can attempt me or Qing Ting if you feel so inclined." Azureclad nodded.

The Dragonling Assembly was a solemn affair. As Coiling Dragon City only had five spots, each one was extremely important. The assembly and its results were pivotal to Coiling Dragon's status and interests in Azure Dragon Region, and would also directly impact its alliances with various other factions in the Hongmeng.

Apart from Qing Ting and the Azureclad Duke, its other three spots were claimed by outsiders. If Lu Yun wanted to throw his hat into the ring, the city's senior council had to approve. They needed to accept the Champion Duke's strength and his background.

The city would've been more than happy to accept him if he'd been a wandering cultivator with no background to speak of—a wild genius, in other words. But given his background of the Trueriver Sect of Multitude City and his patron the Immortal Pagoda that had more money than sense, the city was theoretically perfectly fine with the duke as well.

However, Azureclad couldn't make the definitive decision in this matter. Though he was the city lord's son, he was still a half step king at the end of the day and had no right to make decisions on his father's behalf.

"Then, what about that?" Qing Ting took a step forward and pointed at the foggy bead. "Father will advance to a new level of strength if he obtains this partial ultimate treasure of the realm. He won't have to bow down to those guys from Azure Dragon City then."

These were her true thoughts. She didn't want the treasure for herself, but for her father.

"I'll pay the two thousand crystal veins for you first. You can pay me back if I can't represent Coiling Dragon City in the Dragonling Assembly. If I beat one of the three and represent the city, then we're all one family and it's just two thousand crystal veins." Lu Yun waved a hand and materialized all five thousand premium crystal veins in the thirty-second floor of the Firmament Pavilion.

Their combined aura shocked some of the shoppers on the premises, but no one dared make a move in the store. If they did, they would elicit undying fury from the pavilion's high level kings.

A sixth step king elder of Firmament Pavilion quickly appeared and personally attended to Lu Yun and the others. He put away the five thousand crystal veins and wrapped up the foggy bead for Qing Ting.

The elder then decided to list Lu Yun, Qing Ting, the Azureclad Duke, and Leng Che as very important customers of the trading company and gifted them a token of their status, as well as a king grade treasure each.

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“How, how do you have so many premium crystal veins?” Azureclad and Leng Che swallowed hard at the bounty that’d appeared without forewarning.

“When Starspace Region’s central crystal vein rampaged throughout the land, Champion Duke and I robbed it blind. We got three thousand crystal veins each,” Qing Ting responded matter-of-factly, skipping over the detail that the crystal veins had been a gift. That would mean exposing some of Lu Yun’s secrets.

“What about that Ghostblade Duke Li Zhen?” Leng Che blurted out.

“Him? Piece of trash,” Qing Ting snorted. “He didn’t contribute anything, so why should he get a cut?”

“I see.” A sharp light twinkled in Leng Che’s eyes, but he asked no further.

Qing Ting naturally wouldn’t tell anyone that Li Zhen also had three thousand crystal veins. That would set sixth step or even high level kings on his trail. Three thousand crystal veins were worth the while for a high level king to take action.

Azureclad’s heart bled to see his sister spend five thousand crystal veins in one go and buy a half step ultimate Hongmeng treasure. Though the treasure was a rare find, the five thousand crystal veins were premium cultivation resources! The energy within them could raise Coiling Dragon’s overall strength by an explosive amount! Numerous new superior realm cultivators would develop and some kings stuck at a bottleneck would also break through.

But since Qing Ting was gifting the treasure to their father, there wasn’t much that he could say.

“No wonder she kept talking about the Champion Duke after she came back. I thought she had a crush on him, but it was because her crystal veins were with the kid!” Azureclad felt much more understanding and a little relieved by the situation. No—wait, new fires of anger quickly licked at his heart. The lass had gotten her hands on this incredible wealth but hadn’t handed it over, and had even stored it with an outsider!

But that kid didn’t keep the crystal veins for himself. He may be someone worth befriending after all. Azureclad suddenly found Lu Yun much more pleasing to the eye.

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Champion Duke’s name was known throughout Coiling Dragon City; there didn’t exist a single person who didn’t know him. He was their little princess’ good friend and had gifted her a full set of king grade treasures, arming her to the teeth. He’d also brought her thirty-six Aureate Fruit so she could form a golden body.

He was here in Coiling Dragon City now and issued a challenge for one of the three spots for the Dragonling Assembly. He wanted to represent them on this grand occasion!

That sent the entire city into an uproar.

Chapter 1370: Soldiers

Not all comers had the right to participate in the Dragonling Assembly—even the major factions of Azure Dragon Region were limited in the number of representatives they could send. As the foremost faction, Azure Dragon City could send seven, second tier faction Coiling Dragon City could send five. The rest could only send three.

Thus, each spot was incredibly precious. Not only did each faction have to consider their own interests, but they also had to use the spots to recruit allies.

Everything came down to strength.

It wouldn't do the weak any good to participate in the Dragonling Assembly. At best, they'd be heavily injured and at worst, they'd lose their lives. It was a frightfully common occurrence for geniuses to die at the gathering.

Coiling Dragon City had started preparations for the assembly ten thousand years ago, then later recruited Leng Che, You Cang, and Ghost Dragon to its banner. When Qing Ting traveled to Cloudexit City, she'd been preparing for the occasion as well.

She was extraordinarily talented, her potential even greater than her brother's. However, her breadth of experience and knowledge of facing actual enemies were extremely lacking, so the city lord had sent the Azureclad Duke out with his sister.

When Lu Yun met Qing Ting, she'd already crossed paths with ghosts numerous times and was slowly growing into her own. Lu Yun's reputation in Coiling Dragon City was so substantial partially because of her. She talked about him constantly upon her return, mentioning his name in almost every other sentence.

As time went on, the entire city learned of this character.

The other reason was due to the Azureclad Duke. When the Champion Duke's recognition grew, he immediately had servants spread word that this was a good-for-nothing upstart who heavily relied on his weapons. His own strength was very mediocre and his strength too subpar to be a titled duke.

Thanks to the actions from the brother and sister duo, everyone in the city knew of this person and he was even rather famous.

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There was nothing more important than a spot for the Dragonling Assembly, so rounds of discussion needed to commence before a decision could be made. Lu Yun was assigned a separate residence within the city lord's manor.

Leng Che, You Cang, and Ghost Dragon didn't live in this august residence. They had their own businesses in Coiling Dragon City and the factions behind them were allies with Coiling Dragon, nothing more.

After he moved in, Lu Yun shut himself away in closed door cultivation. Qing Ting came to find him a few times, but caught no sign of him.

Inside the Army Pagoda.

Drenched in blood, Lu Yun wielded a regular flying sword and knelt on a single knee, heaving for breath. The last “soldier” toppled heavily onto the ground and transformed into a strange power wanting to melt into Lu Yun’s body. He declined the attempt.

The Army Pagoda was a very particular treasure. If one fed it purple crystal veins, it would produce endless soldiers.

The kings of Origin World only knew it to be a treasure for use in cultivation, but didn’t know that if it consumed enough purple crystals, it would produce king grade soldiers or ones even stronger, forming a terrifying army.

Lu Yun was using the pagoda to hone his sword dao. There were ten tendrils of order within his body, making him stronger than Qing Ting and able to defeat a second step king.

The flame of order could enhance his strength, but its effects were less apparent the more it came to life. It’d been a qualitative change when the first tendril of fire appeared; Lu Yun had advanced rapidly then, progressing with tremendous strides. After the flame of order began its transformation, further tendrils of fire resulted in diminishing rates of return.

This wouldn’t change until Lu Yun coalesced three hundred and sixty-five tendrils of flame, forming a flower of fire and evolving once more. Since the flame of order couldn’t supply him with more strength at the moment, he chose to practice with the Army Pagoda.

The soldiers it projected were no different from real people. Every one of them was an independent entity, rather than a puppet on strings. Their combat arts ran the gamut, many of them techniques and methods that he’d never seen or heard of before.

He continued to grow and develop as he fought the soldiers, gaining experience that couldn’t be found in the chaos and world of immortals. Most importantly was that when the soldiers were defeated, they transformed into a wondrous power that melded into their attacker to enhance one’s strength and cultivation level.

However, what he needed now was to improve his sword dao and battle techniques. The power wouldn’t do anything for him other than accelerate his rate of reaching titled kingship. It was more worth his time to refine the flame of order.

Since he didn’t want to break through just yet, he declined the power and scattered it throughout the Army Pagoda, returning it to the treasure’s core essence.

“What combat art did the last soldier deploy? If I hadn’t formed the third stroke of my sword dao at the last possible second, I would’ve died to it.” Cold sweat and fresh blood oozed out of his back.

Death in the Army Pagoda was permanent—there were no second chances. This was a primary reason why Origin World was unwilling to use it to train its disciples. Not only was it a waste of purple crystals, but there was incredible risk involved.

Combined attacks from a hundred and eight half step king soldiers had almost resulted in Lu Yun's final end.

"The first move is Dragonrise, the second move is Dragonsoar. So what's the third?" Lu Yun mused over the third stroke he'd just grasped. Though he'd formed a rough concept, it hadn't crystallized into a complete move.

"Again!" Lu Yun swallowed a healing pill and swiftly recovered from his wounds. With a quick thought, another one hundred and eight half step king soldiers materialized in the void.

Women, men, elderly, young, tall, short, fat, skinny, and all manner of forms charged at him. They each displayed different combat arts, but their moves formed a complete whole that perfectly complemented each other. If it wasn't for their lack of information in the Spectral Eye and only the presence of a marvelous rule, Lu Yun would've thought that they were a crowd of living people.

They were far more terrifying than the disorderly ghosts. Ordinary ghosts and even ghost kings rarely used combat arts. They more often threw themselves in headfirst without care or concern. These soldiers, however, wielded inordinately sophisticated combat arts.

With a wave of his hand, Lu Yun summoned the ordinary sword he'd stuck into the ground to him as a streak of sword light. He slashed forward with the will of the third stroke, transforming into a purple dragon shape that rushed the one hundred and eight soldiers.

"First stroke of Dragonrise, second stroke of Dragonsoar, third stroke of... of..." Lu Yun slashed forward again and again with the third move, but couldn't quite grasp its true form.

"Charge!" A keen light flashed through one of the soldier's eyes and it roared, stabbing straight at Lu Yun's back.

"You again!" Lu Yun reacted swiftly. "I almost died to you just now, so I'm not repeating my mistake!"

He twisted around and evaded the harrowing stroke, striking back on his return swing.

The soldier simply shifted to the side and evaded Lu Yun's attack by the slightest margin, then continued with a second slash at Lu Yun's neck.